

THE STRIKES IN WINNIPEG IN MAY 1918

THE PRELUDE TO 1919?

A Thesis

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A. Ernest Johnson

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PREFACE

While realizing the necessity of being aware of the work of others, in order to get a reasonably adequate view of the events of May 1918 in Winnipeg, it has been necessary to make extensive use of primary sources, contemporary newspapers, interviews, and archival material. Wherever possible the information closest to the source has been used.

Contemporary newspapers have been particularly valuable primary sources because they tended to report in depth about meetings, speeches, agreements, and announcements. Fortunately, by making comparisons with official documents, now available, it has been possible to verify that in general, newspaper reports were reasonably accurate. Except for the Telegram, most newspapers kept their news gathering function quite sharply separated from their editorial function.

Interviews have been conducted with the realization that elderly people do not always remember the past as it really was. Their perceptions are, nevertheless, interesting.

Archival material has been invaluable in corroborating newspaper reports and in discovering the involvement of officials of the City of Winnipeg and of the government at Ottawa. Much of this material, often marked secret and confidential, has been so fascinating that it was difficult to decide what to exclude.

I wish to express my thanks to all who have assisted and encouraged me in the preparation of this thesis. The staffs of both the Public Archives of Canada at Ottawa, and the Public Archives of Manitoba at Winnipeg, were always particularly helpful.

My adviser, Professor W.D. Smith has provided me with many valuable suggestions, for these and for his patience, I am most grateful.

Finally I am indebted to the J.S. Ewart memorial fund for making it possible for me to conduct essential research in Ottawa.

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ABBREVIATIONS

P.A.C.: Public Archives of Canada
P.A.M.: Public Archives of Manitoba
R.N.W.M.P.: Royal North West Mounted Police
C.P.R.: Canadian Pacific Railway

CHAPTER I

... in a few days approximately fifteen thousand, six hundred workmen were on strike, absolutely demoralizing all business in Winnipeg and seriously affecting trade throughout all the Western Provinces due to interrupting the shops and freight sheds ...¹

In these words Senator Gideon Robertson,* the federal government mediator, reported to Ottawa about a major strike in Winnipeg. Superficially, the circumstances described appear to be yet another reference to the well known Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. The date of the report, however, is May 25, 1918.

Other contemporary estimates of the number of workers involved ranged from fourteen thousand to seventeen thousand.² In wartime with labor in short supply this extent of unrest would have disrupted the operation of

¹ P.A.C. Borden Papers, Vol.394, p.2247. Letter from Senator Gideon Robertson to the Honorable T.W. Crothers, Minister of Labor at Ottawa, May 25, 1918.

² Regarding the number of workers on strike in 1918: The Manitoba Free Press, May 24, 1918, p.3, suggests that a fairly accurate up to date estimate might be 14,412. The Voice, the labor paper, May 31, 1918, p.1, uses the higher figure of 17,000. However, Senator Robertson's figure of 15,600 is probably the most accurate estimate of the number on strike available to anybody. Because of his intimate involvement in confidential negotiations as mediator in the dispute, he would most likely have been informed of the true situation.

Winnipeg industry.³ Not surprisingly, although by strict definition it had not at that time expanded to the point at which the epithet was valid, newspapers in Winnipeg, and across Canada, repeatedly labelled these 1918 disturbances as "a general strike," "une grève générale."⁴ In fact, had the course of events been only slightly different, this strike of 1918 rather than that of the succeeding year may well have become more generally known as The Winnipeg General Strike.

The Borden government considered the 1918 Winnipeg strike to be serious enough to take Senator Gideon Robertson from other pressing duties in Ottawa and to send him to Winnipeg to attempt to settle the dispute. And in general it was considered such a dangerous threat to wartime industrial efficiency that the strikers themselves were branded traitors and enemy sympathizers,

³ Because of the demands of the military, both for men in uniform and labor in war industry, it is possible that the impact of this 1918 strike was even greater than in 1919 when many men became available from overseas and from closed war plants. The wartime shortage of manpower is examined in Chapter III.

⁴ Le Devoir, 17 Mai, 1918, p.2. The Voice, May 24, 1918, p.1. The Winnipeg Telegram, May 7, 1918, p.3. The Winnipeg Tribune, May 16, 1918, p.1.

and were threatened with arrest and immediate compulsory military service.⁵ The Winnipeg "general" strike of 1918 aroused intense feelings among the participants, and without doubt would have eventually involved workers in numbers sufficient to rival those that did go on strike in 1919. Only the very special circumstances of wartime 1918 prevented the strike from embroiling many more workers in the labor dispute.⁶

Even so, numbers alone cannot be the sole criterion of eventual impact. The 1918 labor troubles are intimately connected with those of 1919. Certain organizations and groupings that were conceived in 1918 were reactivated in 1919. Individuals prominent in 1918 became central figures in 1919. And significantly, attitudes and ideas which originated during, and as a result of, the 1918 strike became important in the 1919 strike. But few authors of the many who have offered interpretations of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 pay more than passing attention to the background of events in 1918. More

⁵ Winnipeg Tribune, May 2, 1918, p.1. The Voice, May 10, 1918, p.5. Winnipeg Telegram, May 15, 1918, p.3. Winnipeg Tribune, May 17, 1918, p.9. Journal Press, May 21, 1918, n.p.

⁶ The total number involved was diminished by the particular labor strategy followed in 1918. Many more workers had indicated their willingness to go out on strike but were not called out on strike by the Trades and Labor Council of Winnipeg. The origin of the labor strike strategy is examined in Chapter VI.

importantly, even those studies which consider the 1918 situation do not seem to give full importance to the all pervasive influence of World War One.

Therefore, the specific purpose of this study is to attempt to reinterpret the strike in Winnipeg in May 1918, by examining its origins, its events, and its surrounding circumstances. While actions and events can usually be authenticated, motivations tend to be hidden, and may be obscure even to the participants. Nevertheless, through the examination of the viewpoints and actions of individuals, labor men, city officials, and officers of the government at Ottawa, it should be possible to make some reasonable speculations on the motivations behind their various courses of action. It is possible that this examination of 1918 antecedents will throw new light on the events of 1919, and will provide a basis of comparison, which may lead to a reassessment of the interrelationships between these two disputes.

While this is a thesis dealing with labor difficulties on the local scene, to apprehend properly the significance of these events of the strike of 1918 it is necessary to provide background information. Instead of proceeding directly into a resumé of the facts and immediate origins of the strike and then analysing it in comparison to the overall war and labor situation, it is intended to prepare

a background in depth against which the events themselves may appear to be more starkly outlined.

Accordingly, the order of presentation of the various topics to be discussed will be as follows: First to be examined will be the general living and working conditions of workers before and during the early years of World War I, in order to emphasize the importance of their wages and the gravity of strikes to workers. The background will be continued with an examination of the wartime manpower situation and its ramifications during the first half of 1918. The examination of the Winnipeg labor disturbances begins with the April wage negotiations between the City of Winnipeg and its employees, and continues with the origin of the war bonus. The implementation of the war bonus led directly to the first, rather ordinary phase of a strike by the civic workers against the City. Subsequently, just when the strike appeared to be settled fairly and amicably, the City Council overturned all the previous negotiations with the "Fowler Amendment", thus beginning phase two of the civic workers strike. Because of City Council's intransigence and its attachment to principle, phase two of the civic workers strike rapidly took on a national, strategic, and historic importance. Finally it

will be necessary to examine the immediate outcome of the strike and attempt to make some assessment of its long term effects.

CHAPTER II

Before proceeding directly to an examination of the actual origin and course of the Winnipeg Civic Strike in May 1918, some general background in relation to the precarious conditions under which the ordinary man lived and worked should be examined, to show just how serious a step a strike was for the worker whose economic and personal survival depended almost wholly on his wages and employment. The large issues of labor political action, socialism, and Bolshevism have been used to explain labor activism, but the fact remains that ordinary men are generally more concerned with personal grievances. It would have been terribly difficult to make a decision to strike knowing that it could jeopardize one's job or offend one's employer, especially at a time when alternative support was not readily available. It is their collective concern with matters which directly and personally affect them that leads workers to organize and to take action which they hope will improve their circumstances. While circumstances had been gradually improving up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the years immediately preceding World War One, and the first years of the war were still not at

all easy for the ordinary working man. He and his family suffered from many injustices, poor living conditions, low wages, long hours, and arbitrary treatment from his employer.

During his term (1907-1913) as Superintendent of the All Peoples Mission of the Methodist Church, the Reverend J.S. Woodsworth wrote the book My Neighbor which reveals some particularly depressing conditions in Winnipeg. One of the visitors for the Mission described the home of three little girls and their parents in a tenement:

A small room at the back, very crowded, with double bed, small stove and table. The air was very, very bad. ... Father was out looking for work. The mother was out washing. ... The table showed signs of breakfast - dirty granite dishes and spoons, two whiskey bottles and part of a loaf of bread from which the cat was having its breakfast.

The bed was like all beds in this class of home - mattress covered by an old gray blanket, two dirty looking pillows and some old clothes. This was the children's playground, for there was no floor space uncovered. Under the bed ... some cooking utensils, white wash brush, an axe, spade, a dozen or more empty bottles, some clothing and a sack of bread.¹

The above "home" was uncrowded in comparison to the Polish immigrant home described below:

Shack - one room and a lean-to. Furniture - two beds, a bunk, stove, bench, two chairs, table, barrel of saurkraut. Everything was dirty. Two families

¹ J.S. Woodsworth, My Neighbor, The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, Toronto, 1911, p.108.

lived here. Women were dirty, unkempt, barefooted, half-clothed. Children wore only print slips. The baby was lying in a cradle made of sacking suspended from the ceiling by ropes. The supper was on the table - a bowl of warmed-over potatoes for each person, part of a loaf of brown bread, a bottle of beer.²

Incredibly, the poor single man, whether unmarried or separated from his family, endured even more crowded conditions. He was what was known as "the five cent boarder" because for as little as five cents per night he could get a roof over his head.³ Woodsworth cites the example of a Mrs. Chudek operator of a "home" for single men at 47 Austin Street, Winnipeg. When the health inspector paid a surprise midnight visit he found "thirty-two men living where there should be seven according to the laws." Mrs. Chudek was called before a magistrate who commented, "People are supposed to live like human beings and not like hogs" and fined her "twenty dollars and costs."⁴ While the action of the City of Winnipeg in this matter reveals a certain commendable concern for living standards, the fact remains that such miserable living conditions were typical of many of the poorer homes in Winnipeg.

One might assume that a low standard of living would be the lot of only the poorest segments of the labor force,

² Ibid., pp. 108-109.

³ Ibid., p.219.

⁴ Ibid., p.220.

the transient and casual worker, the unskilled laborer and the non-English speaking immigrant. It is true they usually suffered the most, but even the ordinary working man with a regular job was habitually in very tight circumstances. Mr. A. Scoble*, former business agent of the Street Railwaymen's Union, recalled that \$65. per month did not go very far with a family of five, and, somewhat ruefully, that he had "seen more breakfast times than breakfasts." Even the occasional glass of beer at five cents was beyond his slender means.⁵ And, he was working long hours every day. Mr. Les Paulley, brother of the Honorable Russ Paulley, the former New Democratic Party Minister of Labor, remembers:

I come from a working class family, and I very vividly recall eating porridge three times a day. And, as in countless other families, I wore the cast off clothes of my older brothers which was all we could afford to wear. New boots for anyone were a special occasion.

It is significant, that in relation to his childhood experiences, he adds the comment, "The condition of the

⁵ Taped interview with Mr. A. Scoble, August 5, 1972.

Mr. Scoble then in his eighties, had an excellent memory for events even back to a street railway strike in 1906 and beyond. He also served as an official correspondent for the Ottawa Department of Labor publication, The Labor Gazette. The Labor Gazette maintained a system of informants, correspondents, throughout the country, for first hand information about strikes and cost of living.

working class was intolerable from any point of view."⁶

The low standard of living for the working class was the direct result of high prices and low wages. After a three hour telephone strike in May 1917, the Manitoba Telephone Commission conducted an investigation into the cost of living of telephone girls. It concluded that "Forty dollars per month was the least possible minimum on which a self dependent girl can exist in Winnipeg with any degree of decency or comfort."⁷ This was equivalent to a weekly wage of about nine dollars. It was also discovered that the average cost of board and room for a girl was six dollars per week. Nevertheless when the Woolworth girls went on strike for more money later in May 1917, it was revealed that they were being paid only six dollars per week. This prompted The Voice to remind its readers that the telephone enquiry had shown that " nine dollars per week was the least a girl should be expected to live on."⁸ Employers apparently had the attitude that as long as the worker ate, that was enough.

Wages were low even in relation to prices of the day.

⁶ Taped interview with Mr. Les Paulley and Mr. Fred Tipping*, February 12, 1969. Oatmeal was the cheapest food per pound available, 4.5 cents per pound in 1914. See appendix for additional prices.

⁷ The Voice, May 4, 1917, p.1.

⁸ Ibid., June 1, 1917, p.1.

Common laborers employed in the seasonal building industry made as little as 25 cents an hour in Manitoba in May 1918; they made a little more in the City of Winnipeg, 30 cents, and worked at least 60 hours a week. The highest paid worker in the building trades, a stone carver, received 87½ cents per hour for a 44 hour week in Winnipeg. Teamsters had the longest work week, 66 hours. These figures were part of the Manitoba Government's Fair Wage Schedule and did not necessarily describe the lowest wages nor the longest hours worked.⁹

The hourly rates above take on meaning when related to what an hour's work would buy of the necessities of life. In Winnipeg at 30 cents per hour a laborer would be able to buy for one hour's work:

1 lb. sirloin steak	@ 30.0¢
less than 1 lb. bacon	@ 37.3¢
1 lb. lard	@ 30.1¢
3 lbs. sugar	@ 10.0¢
about 1 lb. cheese	@ 31.7¢
2 lbs. beans	@ 14.5¢
4 lbs. flour	@ 7.7¢
about 8 lbs. potatoes	@ 4.2¢
about 5 lbs. rolled oats	@ 6.1¢

One and one half hour's work purchased one pound of tea,

⁹ The Manitoba Gazette, Vol. 47, Winnipeg, April 27, 1918, pp. 348-9.

or butter, or one dozen eggs.¹⁰ It can readily be seen why the Polish family ate bowls of "warmed over potatoes" and why Les Paulley's family ate oatmeal "three times a day".

It was very difficult for labor to extract more than a subsistence wage from employers under the existing conditions. One important factor, economic depression beginning in 1913, has been attributed to the beginning of war in the Balkans in 1912 which caused the British capital to be diverted from investment in Canada to the "machines of war".¹¹ What ever the cause, times were very hard at the beginning of the war. The Department of Labor, in a confidential report in May, 1918, to Prime Minister Borden, outlined the extent of the problem:

The outbreak of war occurred at a period of intense industrial depression which had set in during the year 1913. There was a very large amount of unemployment, and the enlistments in the fall of 1914 and the following winter of many thousands of young men did not affect the industrial situation harmfully. The unemployment continued, though in a less acute form, in the spring of 1915. At this time statements appeared in the press that there was an acute shortage of labor for munitions work in Great Britain. The Minister of Labor received many representations urging that arrangements should be made whereby the skilled labor still idle in Canada might be transferred to Great Britain ... The Mission

¹⁰ P.A.C. Department of Labor Records, Vol. 158, file 611.1. For a more complete list of products and prices see Appendix V.

¹¹ David Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, Queens University Press, Montreal, 1974, p.22.

[a British Mission recruiting for their munitions industries] visited the chief industrial centres in Canada and engaged between 1700 and 1800 skilled workers who were willing to remove to Great Britain. The number of workers so engaged would no doubt have been much larger, but about this time, early summer, 1915, a general industrial revival began, due largely, no doubt, to war work. ... Apart from workmen removing under engagement with the British Mission, as indicated, some hundreds crossed the Atlantic voluntarily and chiefly as the result of arrangements made between their trades unions in Canada and trades unions of the same craft in the United Kingdom. ...¹²

The fact that numerous skilled workers were ready to leave Canada to get a job is an indication that unemployment had reached a difficult level as far as the working man was concerned.

In hard times the working man suffered first, last and longest. Unemployment was hard in a time when there was neither Unemployment Insurance nor easily obtained welfare assistance. Hard times prompted employers to save money, so with plenty of workers available, they tended to hire those who would work for the least pay. In the absence of minimum wage or fair wage laws, rates of pay declined to subsistence levels or less. Young women like the Woolworth girls already mentioned could accept low pay because many were still living at home with their families. The presence of immigrant labor in large numbers did little to help the

¹² Department of Labor Records, Vol. 125, file 601.3. Special report dated May 16, 1918, prepared especially for Prime Minister Borden on his "secret and urgent" request dated May 3, 1918.

situation. The "foreigner" was willing to work very cheaply, at any kind of work he could get, because he supposedly did not need as much money to live.¹³ Not surprisingly, under such conditions English speaking workers tended to feel somewhat hostile toward the "foreigner" even though neither group was being fairly treated.

Fair treatment of labor was seldom considered. The prevailing employer attitude was to get as much work out of the employee for as low a wage as possible. One good example is provided by the Board of Control of the City of Winnipeg. In February 1916 a controller wanted to cut civic salaries by as much as forty percent. His explanation for such a drastic proposal was simply that he felt "that certain reductions of salaries should be made on account of hard times".¹⁴ Various labor men interviewed were convinced that some employers, to save money during hard times, fired workers who by long service

¹³ Woodsworth, My Neighbor, pp. 98-99. Woodsworth reports that "the standard of living of the Anglo-Saxon single man is far more costly than that of the foreigners". For example, "the Anglo-Saxon patronizes the dollar-a-day hotel, the bar-room, and the house of ill fame, whilst the foreigner swarms as cheap boarders into already overcrowded family homes, and club together to purchase drink, barrels at a time, and satisfy their passions indiscriminately among their women folk". If Woodsworth, known for his humanitarian view points, looked on the "foreigner" this way, ordinary men would have been less charitable.

¹⁴ The Voice, February 4, 1916, p.3.

had gradually reached the maximum pay rate. The employer would then hire others to take their place at lower beginner rates. If he was lucky the worker who was fired might also have the option of being rehired - at the lower rate. Unfortunately for a long time workers were at the mercy of the employer, and their only alternative to the minimal charity available was to work when, how, and at whatever wages the employer dictated.¹⁵ The wage situation was somewhat alleviated by Manitoba's fair wage law which was passed in 1916.¹⁶

¹⁵ Taped interview with Mr. A. Scoble, August 5, 1972. Mr. Scoble exemplifies the working man's perception of the situation. He recalls that "There was a real need for unions". The only reason he went into the Street Railway-men's Union himself was because of the terrible working conditions. For example, "A ten hour day stretched from six o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night with breaks in between and pay for only ten hours". And, during the breaks in the split shift the employee was expected to be available in case he was needed for a special run. "Men had to be at work at ten minutes to six in the morning but were not paid until six o'clock. If you arrived at nine minutes to six the run was gone and you got two days off without pay." And during those two days the employee still had to report four times a day. Workers "did exactly what the boss told them" declared Mr. Scoble, and emphasized that "Employers made labor men". Mr. Scoble's memory went back to transit strikes before the war. He may have been remembering conditions before the Fair Wage Act was passed. The working hours approved under the Fair Wage Act in 1918 ranged from 44 to 66 hours per week.

¹⁶ Canada, Department of Labor, Labor Legislation in Canada, 1916, Ottawa, 1917, pp. 43-47.

Working conditions were no better than the wages. In his continuing attempts to maximize profits the employer saved money on his plant and its equipment in every way possible. The most common places where money was "saved" were on items for employee comfort, and incredibly, even on those items which would ensure employee safety. Sanitary facilities were rare, ventilation was often inadequate, and foul, contaminated air was common. Owners of factories and warehouses saved money by installing machines that had no safeguards to protect the worker. Machines with shafts, belts, gears, pulleys, and blades out in the open were widely used, and many a moment of inattention led to serious injury. Stair wells could be traps through which the unwary person could fall to the floor below because they were often unmarked and without railings. Freight elevators were one of the worst areas of flagrant abuse and were responsible for many serious injuries and deaths. Elevators were often in poor repair, overloaded, and operated by untrained and careless personnel.¹⁷ As long as safety was a cost and not a profit item it was seldom considered, especially because under the Common Law the employer could usually avoid responsibility for the injury or death of his employee.

¹⁷ Manitoba, Department of Public Works, Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor for the year ending November 30, 1918, Sessional Paper 20, 1919.

During the early part of the twentieth century Common Law continued to govern the liability and the responsibility of employer and employee to each other. Unfortunately the law generally operated to the detriment of the worker. The very act of taking a job, and remaining on the job, was construed as evidence that the worker willingly accepted all the hazards of the job, including unnecessarily dangerous working conditions and incompetent fellow workers. The newly hired worker could get injured before he knew what to watch out for. Unless the cause of death or injury was clearly the result of gross negligence on the part of the employer, the worker or his family would get nothing. Even if the employer were at fault the worker or his dependents might get less than they were entitled to receive. A widow's letter to Borden reveals how one company limited its liability for an industrial accident by taking immediate advantage of the stress and grief of the wife of the victim.¹⁸ The Prime Minister's office replied with regrets "that there is no means by which the Federal Government can aid you".

¹⁸ Borden Papers, Vol. 237, pp.132242-8. Letter to Prime Minister Borden from Mrs. Shortrede, widow of a man killed in a munitions plant explosion at Rigvad, P.Q., August 18, 1917. She was fifty years old, had two children, was in poor health, and could not get work to support herself and her children. It seems a week after the accident the company sent her a cheque for two thousand dollars and asked her to sign, which she did. Later she asked the company for a pension but was told she had none because she had signed away liability.

And then, the office added the comforting comment, that "had the accident occurred in Ontario, you would have been able to appeal to the Workmen's Compensation Board!"¹⁹ It is obvious that lack of workmen's compensation created many hardships for workers and their dependents.

Fortunately Manitoba was in this respect ahead of Quebec. In 1916 the Legislature of Manitoba passed its first Workmen's Compensation Act, and at the same time abrogated the Common Law which had previously governed this area of labor relations.²⁰ Because the cost of Workmen's Compensation to the employer was directly related to the frequency and severity of accidents and therefore to the number and size of claims, it became to the employer's advantage to create safer working conditions.²¹ Also, because of new laws relating to safety standards and safe working conditions, provincial inspectors began to examine places of work for compliance with the new laws.²²

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 132248 A.

²⁰ Labour Legislation in Canada 1916, pp. 48-63.

²¹ The cost of Workmen's Compensation is wholly borne by the employer, and the fund is administered by a government board. It is compulsory for the employer to pay into the Workmen's Compensation fund a percentage of his gross payroll. The percentage varies according to the industry's accident experience. The more accidents in the industry, the higher the percentage, and therefore the greater cost to the employer.

²² Labor Legislation in Canada in 1916, pp. 48-63.

Although Workmen's Compensation for injury received on the job was a giant step forward for the worker, there was still much poverty and hardship caused by any sickness which prevented the breadwinner from working. The general secretary of the Winnipeg Social Welfare Association reported that enlistment had practically eliminated able-bodied English-speaking unemployment from the entire city, but "there was a great deal of poverty, much of it caused by sickness!"²³ Employers felt little if any responsibility for the sick worker. Sick leave with pay was rare,²⁴ and a worker was probably lucky to get his job back when he returned. Basically everyone was expected to look after himself.

In the matter of sick benefits, even the Federal government followed a very strict policy when dealing with its own employees. An examination of Privy Council Records reveals that there was no automatic assistance for civil servants when they became ill. If they were to

²³ The Voice, December 17, 1915, p.5. The Special Report of May 16, 1918, stated that there was "heavy recruiting from all classes during the first year or two of the war ... the number of members of the trades union organizations voluntarily enlisting, according to returns received in the Department of Labor at the end of 1917, stood at approximately 25,000. Department of Labor Records, Vol. 125, file 601.3.

²⁴ Interview July 10, 1971, with Mr. H.W. Blake, retired former employee of the Winnipeg Light and Power Company. In 1916, this company paid no sick benefits.

receive sick leave with pay, a petition had to be submitted by the cabinet minister responsible for that department to the Cabinet itself. Although it appears from direct inspection these petitions were put through the Cabinet in batches, and may have been a formality, the important point to consider is that there was no automatic sick leave with pay.²⁵ Under such a system it is obvious that the Cabinet could have refused to approve these petitions, but it is more likely that the Cabinet acted on the advice of the Minister responsible. The screening of worthy applicants probably took place at a lower administrative level, where it is perfectly conceivable that some would have been refused. The main reason for this whole involved procedure seems to have been to limit expenditure, because most of the petitions contained one of the following statements: N's "absence will not necessitate the employment of additional assistance to carry out the work" or "no additional expenditure being entailed thereby if the sick leave be granted!"²⁶

²⁵ P.A.C. Privy Council Records, Series 2, Volumes 826-7, April, May, 1918. This procedure of Cabinet approval was followed by all departments, not only for sick leave but also for appointments, transfers, and superannuation benefits. The May 7, 1918, file P.C. 2054 extends to four thick parts for these purposes. Other files examined were P.C. 1090 and P.C. 1233.

²⁶ Ibid., file P.C. 2054.

But there was little philanthropy and few handouts available for anyone. The widow of the victim of the Rigaud explosion previously mentioned received sympathy from the Federal government but nothing concrete in assistance. While that situation may have been outside the government's jurisdiction, where it did have the final say, it was notably unsympathetic. For example, there existed a Patriotic Fund which was intended to aid the relatives of persons killed or disabled in the war. To determine the eligibility of a family for assistance from the Fund, the government issued the following regulation:

Where the father ... is able bodied or where there are other males over fifteen years of age ... the family generally is not entitled to the consideration of the Fund. Unemployment is not allowed to affect this decision.²⁷

Although the ability of a sixteen year old boy to support a family may be questioned, there could have been some justification for the first part of the regulation. But to disregard the possibility of unemployment seems to be a particularly unreasonable position to take with citizens who had already sustained the loss of a close relative. This position of the government may be considered subtly indicative of a generally negative opinion about the working class, that is, they would not work if they could avoid it.

²⁷ Borden Papers, Vol. 393, p.1955.

An important point to consider is that similar attitudes, perhaps intensified by the profit motive, would have prevailed in private business.

One might have assumed that the great war with its insatiable demands for more and more industrial production would have alleviated the worker's chronically poor economic condition by providing more and steadier employment. But, while the demand for his services markedly increased after 1915, the wages the worker received tended to remain as low as employers absolutely had to pay to maintain production. Most workers were paid by the hour, but some received payment according to the amount they produced, that is, "piece work". The employer's main reasons for wanting a piece work system were to create maximum production from available facilities, and to stabilize his cost per unit. An ancillary benefit appeared if production was halted for any reason; the worker then did not get paid. The worker's incentive for working piece work was to make more money in the same time than he ordinarily would receive if he were paid by the hour. The piece worker worked harder and faster with fewer rest breaks than the hourly worker, who, with no immediate incentive, tended to work at a more leisurely pace.

But in practice the system seldom intentionally operated to the advantage of the worker and tended to inspire mutual distrust. The problem was to determine a

rate for piece work that both parties considered equitable. If the rate paid was too low, no man would want to work by the piece. If the rate was relatively high, the worker would make considerably more than his former hourly wage, but the employer would then think he must be paying too much per unit. Therefore bonuses were sometimes offered to increase production, and, to find out what was the most a worker could produce. Production usually immediately increased. But, even if the employee had worked himself to exhaustion to produce more, the employer was not necessarily pleased. He was just as likely to complain that the increase in production was proof that the employee had not been working hard enough previously for his regular hourly wage. Then, like as not the bonus would be withdrawn, but the employee would still be expected to produce at the higher rate. An example of this bonus procedure is documented in a letter from Mr. E.G. Barrett, Vice President of Vulcan Iron Works of Winnipeg, to Sir Joseph Flavelle, Chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board. Mr. Barrett complains:

Our foreman reported several times that he did not think this man was doing an honest day's work ... we decided to put a special bonus on this operation ... For two months his daily output was 85 shells per ten (10) hours, after the bonus was put on, his output was from 160 to 180 per ten (10) hours. This will show you what the Union men are like.²⁰

28 P.A.C. Flavelle Papers, Vol.2, file 11. Letter from Mr. E.G. Barrett to Sir Joseph Flavelle, September 15, 1916.

The employer may have been thoroughly frustrated, but the worker must certainly have been even more so.

Specific experiences with a company's manipulation of wage rates to maximize its profits tended to accentuate the conviction of the average worker that industrialists generally were making vast profits out of the war. Mr. Fred Tipping, President of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council in 1918 recalls the vast dissatisfaction of the working man:

Those who fought and those who worked had the spectacle of others making a darn good thing out of the war. They thought wages were low and that products and food were pretty bad and rotten. They were working long hours and the guys in the trenches were getting \$1.10 per day. Then they learn others were making millions ... Why do those hogs want it all?²⁹

Public disclosure of scandals like those related to Steadman boots and the Ross rifle only served to confirm the rumors, and did little to inspire confidence in the good will and the good faith of the industrialist. The introduction of the Income War Tax Act in 1917 and other measures were partly in response to strong public pressure to limit profits during the war.

Taking all these rather negative conditions into consideration, the working man can hardly be blamed for feeling that his only hope for economic survival was in the brotherhood of the union, which would provide assistance to him during times of illness and to his family in the

²⁹ Taped interview with Mr. Fred Tipping and Mr. Les Paulley, February 12, 1969.

event of his death. Unions in existence, generally craft and trade unions, were usually only concerned with their own members, and had very little interest in the problems of the unskilled, unorganized worker. They tended to be small and to guard jealously their independence from other unions. The concept of an industrial union which would have protected all classes of worker both skilled and unskilled within an industry was not yet accepted as desirable by these independent unions.³⁰ The example of the Industrial Workers of the World, the I.W.W., which was outlawed for its activities first in the United States and later by the Canadian government did little to promote the large union idea with either the average trade unionist or the employer.³¹ Yet, it would only be by the union of unions in a common front that labor could eventually have real influence.

But employers tended to regard unions as infernal nuisances and preferred to deal with their employees

³⁰ Taped interview with Mr. A. Scoble, August 5, 1971. Mr. Scoble, former business agent for the Street Railway-men's Union said he resigned his position in 1920 in protest when his union made plans to join the One Big Union. It was evident that Mr. Scoble's trade union membership still meant a great deal to him.

³¹ Borden Papers, Vol. 104, file O'C 519. During the war the Canadian government kept a watchful eye on the activities of the Industrial Workers of the World. Many reports by the Royal North West Mounted Police and the Dominion Police were received in Ottawa. It was only when labor troubles began to escalate rapidly that the Industrial Workers of the World was outlawed in Canada. Many other details of the Cabinet's concern with the I.W.W. can be read in Borden Papers file O'C. 519 (1).

directly. The wide latitude of action permitted the employer in this unequal relationship was occasionally limited by the ideal of paternalism, which required the employer to feel a direct responsibility for the welfare of his employees. Ideal operation of the concept required the employer and employee to know each other well, as was possible in a relatively small factory, perhaps up to about one hundred employees, in a community where they might have gone to the same church and attended the same social functions, and certainly spoke the same language. Such an interrelationship would have constrained both parties to deal more fairly and honestly with each other. But, because ideals are seldom realized, workers began to understand that in order to make the employer-employee relationship less unequal they would have to organize into unions. It was these Ontario unions, according to Senator Eugene Forsey* which caused many Ontario proprietors to move their operations to relatively unorganized Western Canada, and to bring with them their rather egotistical ideal of the paternalistic employer.³² But paternalism, which may have been moderately possible in the relatively static society of the smaller towns in Ontario, proved

³² Interview with Dr. Eugene Forsey in Ottawa, July 3, 1969. Dr. Forsey, now Senator, was at that time writing a labor history for the Canadian Labor Congress.

generally unsuitable for Western Canada.³³

In general, unions had a terrible fight to get recognition. There was no legal requirement either to recognize unions, or to bargain collectively, and some firms refused to deal at all with unions. A notable example, the Vulcan Iron Works at Winnipeg, would deal only with its own employees, and would fire anyone who joined the union. This company was able to maintain its anti-union policy in time of peace, but as an important munitions plant in time of war, its labor relations policy was potentially disruptive and dangerous to the war effort. Anything that could even potentially interfere with the war effort became the concern of the federal government, and Vulcan Iron Works' attitude to worker organizations was soon recognized as a problem in Ottawa.

The Minister of Labor, The Honorable T.W. Crothers, wrote to Sir Joseph Flavelle as early as 1916 about the Vulcan Iron Works "absolutely refusing to meet a committee of its own employees!" His expressed opinion was: "It seems to me that it is an unreasonable position to take,"³⁴ and requested Sir Joseph to write to the Vulcan Iron Works.

³³ P.A.C. C.B. Sissons Papers, Vol.3. Letter from the Reverend J.S. Woodsworth to his cousin Mr. C.B. Sissons, letters 95-7, pp. 343-5, no date.

³⁴ Flavelle Papers, Vol.2, file 11. Letter Hon. T.W. Crothers to Sir Joseph Flavelle, September 11, 1916.

There was no delay; Flavelle considered the matter important enough that he immediately wrote a letter to the Winnipeg firm which stressed the importance of labor peace in war time:

May I remind you ... of the grave significance attached to labor troubles in munition factories ... even if everyone cooperates Canada will not succeed in carrying out the promises ... for the delivery of munitions ... every labor difficulty adds to the danger of labor troubles somewhere else ... the employer ... should recognize the possible bearing that his troubles have ... in other factories.³⁵

This direct appeal by the Chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board underscored the employer's patriotic responsibility for avoiding labor problems. Nevertheless, E.G. Barrett's reply also direct and to the point, was not in the least conciliatory or contrite:

We established this business in 1872 ... and we have been running an open shop for the past ten years. We had a long fight with the unions ten years ago, and since then we have refused to meet any Committee, and what is more we never will. This is a free country and ... as far as we are concerned the day will never come when we will have to take orders from any union.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., Letter Sir Joseph Flavelle to Vulcan Iron Works, September 12, 1916. Note the date; it was probably written the same day Crother's letter was received.

³⁶ Ibid., Letter from Mr. E.G. Barrett, Vice-president of Vulcan Iron Works to Sir Joseph Flavelle, Chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board. Letter was dated September 15, 1916, but only received in Flavelle's office September 25, 1916.

Barrett's letter would have left no doubt in Sir Joseph's mind where Vulcan Iron Works' priorities lay. Although throughout the war the worker was expected to sacrifice his own interests and to expend every effort, this employer for one would not subordinate his "principles" to patriotism. And, it is not unreasonable to assume that there were other employers with views similar to those of Mr. E.G. Barrett of Vulcan Iron Works.

No matter how intense the provocation, it was extremely difficult for working men or their unions to even begin to resist strong minded employers like E.G. Barrett. But eventually continued frustration led the worker to employ the only weapon he had, which was to withdraw his services at the most opportune time that he could arrange. For maximum impact it was necessary to strike whenever it was possible to attain the maximum disruption in production, and the maximum inconvenience for the public.³⁷ The timing of the strike was most important because generally neither workers nor unions could endure a prolonged strike. Unsuccessful strikes weakened unions and decimated their

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Taped interview with Mr. F.G. Tipping, February 12, 1969. When questioned on the propriety of striking during the war and of causing public inconvenience, Mr. Tipping was adamant and unequivocal: "A working man has only his labor; he has the right to withdraw it at any time; and furthermore he should choose the time he withdraws his services to achieve maximum effect. No one has the right to tell him he cannot withdraw his services!"

membership with the result that unions were generally low in funds.³⁸ This meant there was little or no strike pay available. The worker himself, plagued with low wages and periodic unemployment, seldom had any cash reserve. Unfortunately the strike was a double edged weapon which often sliced more deeply into the worker than into his employer. But as the war continued, economic pressures, and threats to organizational rights already fought for and considered won, left many workers feeling there was no alternative but to strike. The government in its efforts to conduct a successful war effort inadvertently created aggravations which added to the working man's discontent.

³⁸ Interview with Dr. Eugene Forsey, Director of Research for the Canadian Labor Congress, in Ottawa, July 3, 1969. It was Dr. Forsey's opinion that the trade union movement in Canada was not really strong enough to resist the tough employer, because unions were generally short of money during the war.

CHAPTER III

It is necessary at this point to discuss the war as a factor in labor-management relations. The course of events, the results, and the historical impact of the strike in Winnipeg in 1918 was heavily dependent upon war conditions. The strike in 1919 was not affected by war conditions, but the aftermath of war. A war requires vast quantities of manpower on both the home and battle fronts, while one important aftermath of war is the availability of manpower because of the return of soldiers to civilian life and the release of workers from war industries. With peace, returned a feeling of "normalcy" in which a government, particularly a Conservative one, would tend to withdraw from direct involvement in industry in favor of private enterprise. But during the war with some priorities of necessity kept secret, the government had to get involved in order to keep the war effort at top performance.

Government intervention became increasingly necessary as the war placed increasingly heavy demands upon the Canadian nation. The months immediately preceding the May 1918 labor disturbances in Winnipeg were filled with worries, frustrations and aggravations for both the ordinary Canadian citizens and the ministers of the Canadian government. It

was absolutely essential to keep all kinds of trouble, including labor problems to a minimum in Canada. A secret, official, cypher telegram from the Colonial Secretary in England brought the Canadian government up to date on the manpower situation at the European battle-front, on the terrible "continuous wastage", and on the urgent need for reinforcements.

The Canadian casualties in 1917 were 84,347. The four heaviest months were:

April	(Vimy-Ridge)	13,461
May	(Lens)	10,134
August	(Hill 70)	10,180
November	(Passchendale)	24,530

Thus in one month of victorious fighting the Canadian Army Corps lost nearly 25,000 men. If in the probable battle ahead (in May 1918) it loses as heavily as it did in November last we must expect 25,000 casualties. If the losses are in proportion to those of the 1st Division in April 1915, (at the second Battle of Ypres) the casualties will greatly exceed 30,000. They may be still heavier.

Reinforcements were needed more than ever in that fateful year of 1918. Although in 1917 the United States had entered the war on the side of the Allies, Russia had withdrawn from the war because of internal problems. With the pressure removed from the eastern front, German leaders were able to shift forces to Western Europe, and in March 1918, launched a powerful offensive to defeat the Allies before the full strength of the Americans could be effective.

¹ P.A.C. Borden Papers, Vol 394, p.2367. Secret cypher telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor General, April 29, 1918.

The heavy casualties in future battles forced the Canadian government to make some very difficult decisions in relation to manpower.

It became obvious that there was no alternative but to ensure that enough men would be made available for Canada's fighting forces. The Honorable N.W. Rowell, President of the Privy Council, wrote:

In view of the developments on the Western Front, which give such grave cause for anxiety ... We are taking drastic action here in Canada to very substantially increase our forces. The Government is asking authority to withdraw all exemptions with respect to all men covered by the Military Service Act. ... If approved the government will immediately call to the colors all the young unmarried men and widowers without children between the ages of 20 and 23 ... we hope over 50,000.²

It was not as obvious to those outside the government that the decision to conscript more men under the Military Service Act had forced the government to develop priorities in relation to other necessary components of the war effort. The Honorable N.W. Rowell in a letter to Prime Minister R.L. Borden reveals that those other needs were in fact seriously considered. After referring to the critical character of the military situation, and the increasing possibility of a prolonged struggle, he writes:

² P.A.C. Rowell Papers, Vol.4, p.2574. Letter from the Hon. N.W. Rowell, President of the Privy Council to Colonel C.N. Mitchell of the Headquarters Staff B.E.F. Italy, April 19, 1918.

We all recognize that the most vital and urgent needs of the Allies are men, food, munitions and ships. But, as our population and resources are limited, we cannot meet all the needs to an unlimited extent. ... We must have definite objectives, and plan, organize and increasingly work to secure these objectives, and to subordinate less important interests to this supreme task. ... One of the first problems we must face is what emphasis shall we place upon the various branches of our war activities. Shall we take more men from agriculture for the army, or is the food situation so urgent that we should call the remainder of the men from other occupations? Mr. Crerar, as you know is greatly concerned about this. Should we throw our energies into greatly increasing our ship building program owing to the vital necessity of ocean transportation?... Which are more urgent, munitions or ships? The labor and much of the raw material are drawn from the same source for both. On which should we place the most emphasis?³

Considering that Mr. Rowell was also Vice Chairman of the War Committee of the Canadian Cabinet,⁴ one can truly appreciate the dilemma of the government ministers and the difficulty in making decisions.

As expected, farmers and their advocates in the

³ Ibid., pp.2709-10. Letter from Hon. N.W. Rowell to Sir Robert Borden, June 8, 1918, at Savoy Hotel, London, England.

⁴ The War Committee of the Cabinet was charged with the responsibility of coordinating the work of the various war activities, so that Canada could put forth her maximum effort in the struggle. It was arranged in December 1917 that the Honorable N.W. Rowell would become the vice chairman of the War Committee and to attend the meetings of the Imperial Conference and the War Cabinet in London to secure information regarding priorities. Rowell Papers, Vol.4, p.2711. Letter Rowell to Sir Robert Borden, June 8, 1918.

government objected strongly to the cancellation of exemptions under the Military Service Act.⁵ In a letter to Mr. C.M. Bowman, M.P.P. for South Hampton, Ontario, Rowell defends the government:

We realize that the action will affect the food situation to some extent, but the situation at the front is so critical - much more critical than any public statements have indicated - that we have deemed it necessary to secure reinforcements and to secure them at once. ... I am sorry, therefore, it does not appear possible to meet the views of the agriculture community with reference to the exemption of farmer's sons.⁶

It is possible that by this revelation Mr. Rowell hoped to secure Mr. Bowman's cooperation, but the government had been campaigning vigorously for increased food production, and its action in cancelling exemptions for farmers' sons would have appeared quite inconsistent to observers. The removal of men from the vital area of agriculture only serves to underline the serious need for men.

In Quebec the Conscription Issue had already caused problems and the cancellation of exemptions for divinity students threatened to create further controversy. The Roman Catholic Church in Quebec vigorously protested the

⁵ Ibid., p.2636. Letter from Rowell to Mr. C.M. Bowman, M.P.P. Southampton, Ontario, May 11, 1918. "We expect to have a large delegation of farmers here on Tuesday next!"

⁶ Ibid., p.2616. Letter from Rowell to Bowman, May 4, 1918.

call up of its seminary students and announced "that it is the Church which has the right to determine a question of this kind". Mr. Rowell reported to Borden the concern that students were "taken into the seminaries and tonsured with the obvious intention of relieving them from the necessity of serving under the Military Service Act", and raised the point that the Church's interpretation of the "relation of the Church and the State" was "incompatible with the sovereign power of the State", but suggested a "firm and reasonable attitude would make for peace and understanding".⁷ Again the government would have seemed quite insensitive to the wishes of the Church, and perhaps a little anti-Roman Catholic. But the appearance of inconsistency and insensitivity was preferable to the alternative, which was to reveal the real seriousness of the war situation. It would have been extremely detrimental for morale if, for example, the real and projected casualty information were made public. It was probably preferable that the government appear to act arbitrarily and to keep its terrible secrets.

Something had to be done however to rally the Canadian people. Borden in a letter to Sir George H. Perley, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, discusses

⁷ Ibid., p.2622. Personal and confidential letter from Rowell to Borden, May 7, 1918.

the reasons and necessity for calling a secret session of the House of Commons:

The reasons for the proposal ... are two fold, first to impress the House of Commons with the extreme gravity of conditions that confront allied nations, and second to impress the country. There is perceptible among the people an inevitable lagging of interest rather than of spirit and a failure to appreciate the tremendous seriousness of the situation. I am confident that the time has come for holding a secret session and I am equally confident that the mere fact of holding it will not only arouse our people but perhaps aid in awaking a better spirit in Quebec.⁸

Borden's use of the phrase "lagging of interest" was really a euphemism for the terrible war weariness which was afflicting the nations at war. Unanimous support from the House of Commons would have made the government's attempts to rally the people of Canada to the war effort considerably easier.

The government sorely needed the people of Canada to maintain the necessary war production. Heavy casualties had forced the changes in the Military Service Act, but the large numbers of casualties had been in part the result of deficiencies in war production, in particular, the means for adequate artillery support. In April 1915 the Allies had been driven to artillery rationing:

⁸ Borden Papers, Vol.242, RLB 2620, p.135787. Secret message to the Prime Minister of England to be relayed by Perley. April 12, 1918.

an eighteen pounder was allowed to fire two rounds of ammunition a day; a field howitzer could fire three, and a medium howitzer six.⁹

The chronic shortage of ammunition meant that the infantry had almost no artillery support against a German army with overwhelming artillery superiority. The secret cypher telegram of April 29, 1918, states:

The Germans seem again to have artillery superiority. It was known some weeks before their offensive began that they had on the west front between 13,000 and 14,000 guns. This number probably has been increased.¹⁰

It should be noted that this reference to German artillery superiority is part of the estimates of future casualties in the summer of 1918. Clearly, every shell produced was important. So, while manpower had to be found to replace casualties, it was also necessary to maintain the labor force at its peak efficiency in war production in order to lessen casualties.

The government therefore made every effort to maintain production, and production everywhere in Canada was considered important. The Imperial Munitions Board (I.M.B.), under its chairman Sir Joseph Flavelle, monitored and coordinated

⁹ Ralph Allen, Ordeal by Fire, "Life and death in the trenches", Chapter IX.

¹⁰ Borden Papers, Vol. 394, p.2367, Secret cyphers telegram, April 29, 1918.

war production in several factories owned by the government itself, and in privately owned manufacturing plants under contract to the Imperial Munitions Board for the production of shells and ships. Sometimes component parts of shells and ships were manufactured in different cities and sent by rail for final assembly in another city. The railway transportation system accordingly was of prime importance, and absolutely essential in the maintenance of schedules and deliveries of war materials.¹¹

The Director of the Department of Labor of the Imperial Munitions Board, Mark Irish, followed up every report of labor disturbances or disagreements between workers and employers in war plants and reported directly to the chairman, Sir Joseph Flavelle. Labor problems, issues and concerns everywhere in Canada were continually monitored by the Department of Labor through a system of correspondents, and a newspaper clipping service. Often

¹¹ Winnipeg's contribution to the war effort has been minimized by the comparison of Winnipeg's dollar value production to that of the rest of Canada. This however cannot be the sole criterion of contribution. As indicated above, every shell produced was important, and maintenance of railway service was essential. Winnipeg had several large machine shops and was (and is) a major railway transportation center. Because of its strategic geographic position and because its production was integrated into the Imperial Munitions Board plans, any labor problems involving Winnipeg would have the potential to threaten at least two sensitive areas of the war effort, munitions and railway transportation.

investigations were initiated by letters to the government from groups and individuals involved. These were immediately passed on to the Department of Labor. In any event, labor peace was of high priority during wartime. High productivity depended upon labor peace, and labor peace depended upon the satisfaction of the workers.

Unfortunately government efforts to solve the labor shortage sometimes interfered with labor peace. One major concern of organized labor which appeared was the so called "dilution of labor" issue.¹² The government agency, the Imperial Munitions Board was not anti-labor but was severely criticized as having a "hostile attitude to organized labor in Canada", because it allowed women and semi-skilled workers into the war plants.¹³ An official pamphlet of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada directly accused the Imperial Munitions Board of the "Unnecessary dilution of labor by the introduction of female labor before proper steps had

¹² . Interview July 3, 1969. Senator Forsey emphasized that labor was very concerned over the dilution of labor during the war.

¹³ P.A.C. Flavelle Papers, Vol.22, F.A. Acland file. Official pamphlet of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada entitled "Pronouncement of Organized Labor in Canada on War Problems" issued June 11, 1917. Copy mailed to Sir Joseph Flavelle from F.A. Acland, Deputy Minister of Labor, June 16, 1917.

been taken to utilize available skilled mechanics" and further complained: "Where dilution has occurred no general effort has been made to maintain the same standard of wages as received by men for the same class of work!"¹⁴ The Voice in Winnipeg had earlier expressed the same concern about the tendency to pay women less and projected the post war result:

Women are fully able to take the places of men - yes, and after the war the wages of the men will be brought to the women's wages and not the women's wages to that of the men.¹⁵

It can be seen that organized labor's concern over the employment of women was really a concern about the effect such employment would have on the wages of the working man. This could also be interpreted as an expression of distrust of the intentions of employers in general.

It was not only the employment of women that was a concern; dilution of labor also included the semi-skilled worker. The complaint against the Imperial Munitions Board included the "Substitution of cheap semi-skilled labor from rural districts for construction work because of their willingness to accept less than union rates!"¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., Reference was also made to a Munition Board plant where women worked "Seventy-two hours and upwards a week without any recognition of standard overtime rates!"

¹⁵ The Voice, March 17, 1916, p.1.

¹⁶ Flavelle Papers, Vol.22, F.A. Acland file.



This practice would have threatened union membership in their ability to maintain standard union wage rates. As with employment of women the ultimate concern was the effect on future economic welfare of the union membership.

Complaints such as these led the War Committee of the Dominion government to invite representatives of organized labor, the executive of the Trades and Labor Congress to a conference in Ottawa, January 16, 1918.¹⁷ The objective was to persuade the labor hierarchy to give their utmost support for the war effort. During the course of discussions between labor and government officials, the issue of the dilution of labor was expanded to include alien labor in two very broad categories, Asian and non-English speaking white Europeans. Aliens in the work force had complicated the relationships between management and labor since before the war. There were misgivings about aliens because of their different social customs, their foreign languages and because of their willingness to work for less money so long as they had a job. Asians, Chinese coolie labor in particular, were not at all wanted because it was feared their much lower standard of living, even lower than Central Europeans, would cause the Canadian worker's standard of living to drop.

¹⁷ Borden Papers, Vol.100, file O'C 505(1), p.54035. The War Committee of the Dominion government included the Premier Sir R.L. Borden, Hon. N.W. Rowell, Hon. Dr. Reid, Hon. T.W. Crothers, and Hon. Senator G. Robertson.

Because the labor delegates feared the government planned to use Chinese to solve its manpower problems, one resolution declared opposition to "The importation of Coolie labor".¹⁸ The government however had no intention of publicly revealing its plans.

But because the importation of Asians seemed to offer a ready solution to the manpower shortage, labor objections did not prevent the government from giving the Asian option serious consideration. A letter from a Canadian missionary in China, Lillie Danford, proposing that she "bring over some Chinese to engage in farming and gardening to help win the war"¹⁹ was one of the first of many letters in Borden's oriental labor file which suggested the use of Asian workers. Employers across Canada wrote letters to Borden: A letter from a Toronto business man stated that he "would have established a business on the Pacific Coast but for the lack of dependable labor" and suggests "oriental labor ... as a solution for the handicap which is crippling the country".²⁰ Other letters making equally strong requests were received from the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Kelowna

¹⁸ Ibid., p.54122.

¹⁹ Borden Papers, Vol. 1223, RLB 1690, p.125084. Letter from Lillie Danford to Sir Robert Borden, July 12, 1917.

²⁰ Ibid., p.125086. Letter from Wm. McBain to Sir Robert Borden, August 1, 1917.

Farmer's Institute, the president of the Dominion Steel Company of Canada, Mr. Mark Workman and the Builder's Exchange of Montreal.²¹ This wave of requests would have made it extremely hard for the government not to comply if there had been no opposing view.

However this was the sort of agitation which really aroused labor fears, and parallel to the requests was a steady stream of protests. These protests came not only from labor organizations but from veteran's associations, rate payer's associations, and farmers, from coast to coast, from New Westminster, through Calgary and Toronto to Glace Bay, Nova Scotia. All were in vehement opposition to "coolie labor!"²² The following examples demonstrate the depth of feeling. The Honorably Discharged Soldiers of Canada resolved that they were:

"unalterably opposed to the importation of Asiatic laborers deeming such action to be both unnecessary and contrary to rules of British fair play ... and will assist to the last ditch any movement to defeat such a project!"²³

The City Council of Niagara Falls was even more emphatic:

²¹ Ibid., pp.125090, 125096, 125111, 125202.

²² Ibid., pp. 125165 to 125220A. Correspondence dates from July 1917 to Nov.2, 1918.

²³ Ibid., p.125130. Letter, Jan.16, 1918. Also telegram from British Imperial Association, Jan.14, 1918, p.125135.

"Asian labor imported into this country would be a menace to the citizens generally of the Dominion of Canada and therefore not desirable".²⁴

The "menace" of coolie labor existed in their willingness to endure a low standard of living. It was feared that if they were permitted to remain after the war, they would depress wages, living conditions, and employment opportunity for Canadian citizens.

In the face of such contradictory demands it is not surprising that the government would neither confirm nor deny any policy concerning Asiatics. They were certainly not ready to disturb labor peace over the issue.²⁵ All letters were answered, but in a non committal manner, promising "attentive consideration of the matter".²⁶ In this way the government reserved for itself freedom of action, while promising and doing nothing. Nevertheless, it seems that if the efficient conduct of the war effort were at stake, the Borden government would have without hesitation brought in Asiatic labor. The railway was, for the government, in a high priority category. A cable from Borden to Sir George H. Perley in London, April 25, 1918,

²⁴ Ibid., p.12514. Letter, Feb.22, 1918.

²⁵ Ibid., p.125204. Letter from Borden to Rowell, Crothers, and Robertson, stressed "the importance of the running trades of the railroads' opinions being considered" in the matter of Asiatic labor.

²⁶ Ibid., p.125221. Sample answer to Feb.28, 1918, letter from Todmorton Ratepayers' Association.

shows that the government intended to bring in as much Chinese labor as would be necessary to keep the railways in operation:

Regarding 3600 Chinese in B.C. consigned through British Admiralty ... Our railway facilities in serious condition for want of repairs. Can you arrange with Admiralty to allow this lot remain in Canada five months to do our repairs.
Rush reply Borden.²⁷

The reply from Perley in London was negative:

Have seen War Office who control matter. They state Chinese urgently needed in France ... quite unable comply with request.²⁸

The important point to notice in this exchange is that in his deep concern for the railway transportation system, Borden was prepared to go against a wide spectrum of public opinion. In April 1918, when the demands of the war were becoming even more intense, any interference with the railway system by strikes would have been regarded with great dismay and impatience.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., p.135887. Cable from Borden to Perley, April 25, 1918.

²⁸ Ibid., p.135889. Cable from Perley to Borden, April 27, 1918.

²⁹ The file on oriental labor in the Borden Papers, RLB 1690, has been examined in relative detail to demonstrate how the government interacted with the people of Canada, and to point out again the importance of railway transportation. The Winnipeg civic strike was rapidly involving railway labor just before it was ended. This is examined in Chapter VI.

As indicated earlier, as far as Canadians were concerned aliens were in two broad categories, Asians and white Europeans of foreign language. Asians had never been welcomed into Canada as immigrants but the immigrant from central Europe, "the stalwart peasant in the sheepskin coat", was actively encouraged to come to Canada. These people were predominately from countries which spoke German or some Slavic language. English speakers on the whole have not been particularly comfortable with "foreigners" in Canada and the Slavic languages posed the additional confusion of being written in "strange" characters, the Cyrillic alphabet. Before the war the foreign workers had created some strains in the labor force simply because they had different customs and different languages and sometimes got jobs wanted by English-Canadians. After the war was declared against Germany and the polyglot Empire of Austria-Hungary, the latent distrust of foreigners became a rather disturbing xenophobia. Slavic and German workers regardless of their origin were all classified as "alien enemies",³⁰ and were generally regarded as an

³⁰ "Alien enemy" was a popular contraction for the official term "Aliens of enemy nationality" which is far less offensive. The aversion to Slavs as well as Germans comes from the fact that Austria-Hungary was multi-national. While Russia was initially an ally, Slavic peoples of the same ethnic groups could be Austrian citizens. There fore there was a suspicion of all Eastern Europeans as well as active hostility toward Germans. This suspicion and hostility extended to long time residents of Canada if they had a Slavic or German sounding name.

untrustworthy but necessary addition to the labor force. Citizens were quick to demand that the "enemy" be removed from war industries if there was even a remote chance that a returned soldier or an English speaking person could be used instead.³¹ It was this kind of public pressure which caused Sir Joseph Flavelle reluctantly to issue a circular letter to all Imperial Munitions Board contractors and National plants regarding the use of alien labor:

As ... the matter is claiming public attention I think it desirable ... that every effort should be made to exhaust the available supply of our own work people, and in particular that of returned soldiers before employing alien labour.³²

As always there was some basis in fact for this negative attitude. Newspapers took every opportunity to present heart wrenching stories and drawings of German atrocities.³³ Their front pages brought a continuous series of stories concerning rumors and reports of

³¹ Flavelle Papers, Vol.69, file 94. Petition of the City of Toronto, Feb. 25, 1918, to the Privy Council of Canada, that it be made "illegal to employ in any munition factory or on any government work any alien enemies."

³² Ibid., Circular letter Flavelle to all Imperial Munition Board plants, April 3, 1918.

³³ Winnipeg Tribune, April 29, 1918, p.3. German atrocity, a French girl, discovered by French soldiers, tortured, nude, and nailed to a wall with a bayonet.

industrial sabotage, bombings, derailments, and enemy raids on the border and coasts. Immigrants from Europe had been pouring into Canada for more than two decades. Many had been trained in the military service of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Their discharge from these armies was not always unconditional because many were classified as reservists who could be called up in time of war. They retained this status even if they had emigrated to North America.

Accordingly when war broke out Canadians and Americans were faced with the spectacle of German and Austrian nationals returning to Europe to fight in their respective armies.³⁴

This reinforced hostility to foreigners. The government responded to this situation with a proclamation on August 15, 1915, which provided for the arrest and detention of "All German or Austro-Hungarian officers or reservists who attempt to leave Canada or any subjects of those countries whose departure might assist the enemy."³⁵

Reports of German subversive activity intensified the concern over the "alien enemies". The Chief Press Censor for Canada sent a copy of the latest German "Plan

³⁴ Borden Papers, Vol.191, RLB 674(1), 1914. Contains correspondence concerning German Army officers and reservists in Canada.

³⁵ Borden Papers, Vol.104, file O'C 519 (1), p.56665.

for a raid on Canada" to the Commissioner of the Royal North West Mounted Police. This paper, in German, explained how "500,000 men, Germans and Austro-Hungarian, might be had in the United States, in Canada, Mexico, etc. for a raid on Canada!" It explained how Canadian war materials would be destroyed and ended with the unusual exhortation, "Up, to Arms, against Race Betrayers!"³⁶ The raising of five hundred thousand men for a raid would have been somewhat difficult to believe, but it was nevertheless investigated by Canada's intelligence agencies, the Dominion Police, The Royal North West Mounted Police and the Intelligence Branch of the Department of Naval Service. Canadians tended to blame every problem or accident from the burning of the Parliament Buildings to the Halifax explosion on enemy activity, and by extension, on the immigrants from enemy countries.

Employers were ambivalent about the use of foreigners, tending, naturally, to be primarily concerned with production. The results of another circular letter to defence industries employers under contract to the Imperial Munitions Board

³⁶ P.A.C. Royal Canadian Mounted Police Records, Vol.923, file 138-164. "Plan fuer einen Einfall in Kanada" 500,000 Mann, Deutsche Und Oesterreicher und Ungara duerften in den Vereinigten Staaten, in Kanada, Mexico, etc. fuer einen Einfall in Kanada zu haben sein ... Zerstoerung Canadischer Kreigmaterialien ... Auf, zu Waffen, gegen die Rassenverraeter!"

proved to be quite interesting. Mr. Mark Irish, Director of the Department of Labor of the I.M.B. had requested information regarding the extent to which alien labor was used. The reply of the Russell Motor Car Co. Ltd. shows concern for public opinion but not for the aliens:

October last ... we cleaned out all of the foreigners that were on our payroll ... and since have not taken on any more. There was some injustice in this to certain foreigners who came from countries allied with us ... but in view of all the friction ... we decided on the rule above.³⁷

The other extreme is represented by the Port Arthur Ship Building Company which advises that:

We have in our employ slightly over 1200 men, 56 per cent are aliens, of whom Austrians comprise one half ... These aliens form a very important part of our staff and in the main are inoffensive and among them are many capable workmen ... were the foreign element to be entirely removed, our work would be seriously handicapped.³⁸

This response, while in a minority of one out of twenty-three replies, appears to present the most realistic view, unclouded by phony patriotism or xenophobia. After all labor for some classes of work was in short supply and war production had to be maintained.

Having examined the war background and in general the labor situation, it is now necessary to see if there were

³⁷ Flavelle Papers, Vol.69, file 94.

³⁸ Ibid.

any other particular aggravations which might have made the labor force more discontented and unsettled. The government's use of the legislative device of the Order-in-Council proved to be controversial. The government saw the Order-in-Council as a flexible method of rapid and effective response to war time exigencies. Citizens, in particular the working man on whom most of the Orders-in-Council seemed to take effect, tended to look upon them as a restriction of liberty and a mockery of democracy. There were some Orders-in-Council which could have fitted that description, such as P.C.915 of April 16, 1918, which made it an offense: "To print, publish, or publicly express any adverse or unfavorable statement, report or opinion!"³⁹ Although it was ostensibly intended to limit criticism, the Order-in-Council itself provoked negative comment. The Voice printed S.J. Farmer's comment on that Order-in-Council entitled "Ukase!"

By Ukase, criticism by members of parliament may be censored by the speaker, erased from records, and so held from public knowledge. Thus is Canada being made safe from democracy. We shall doubtless

³⁹ Canada, The Canada Gazette, Extra, Ottawa, April 17, 1918.

continue to receive these manifestations of democratic idealism with the same Christian meekness and fortitude which we have always shown under similar visitations.⁴⁰

To a person in Winnipeg the criticism would have seemed well deserved, but again only the government knew the real reason for the order. It may have been considered a necessary precaution for the secret session of parliament mentioned above.

Most Orders-in-Council, however, especially in April 1918 were intended to redirect manpower into high priority areas, the battle front and the war factories. In rapid succession several Orders-in-Council appeared all related to the pressing need for men. P.C.815, April 4, ordered all men between 16 and 60 to be regularly employed in some useful occupation:⁴¹ P.C.968, April 19, allowed any officer or NCO at anytime to enter any premises if he suspected there was a deserter or absentee inside, and if refused admittance, had the right to break into the building:⁴²

⁴⁰ The Voice, April 26, 1918, p.1. Mr. Farmer was probably referring to section 4 (e) which limited publicity of any proceedings of any secret sessions of Parliament to "what may be officially communicated through the Director of Public Information!"

⁴¹ Canada, Department of Labor, Labor Legislation in Canada, Ottawa, 1918, p.6.

⁴² P.A.C. Privy Council Records, Series 2, Vol.830.

P.C.962, April 20, ordered the no exemption ruling for the operation of the Military Service Act;⁴³ P.C.953, April 22, ordered the registration of all persons over sixteen years of age - male or female - British subject or alien;⁴⁴ P.C. 1013, April 30, required all men who may reasonably be suspected of being class one call up material to carry identification.⁴⁵ Each of the above added to the irritations of citizens already tired of the war and increasingly concerned about its effect on their personal liberty and welfare.

Surprisingly, P.C.968 which most seems to infringe upon personal liberty aroused little local comment, nor did P.C.962, or P.C.1013, beyond a simple newspaper announcement. Since each of these measures appeared to be aimed at rounding up the supposed "shirker", the deserter, or the man with an exemption from military service, public opinion supported the government action, perhaps because there was little sympathy for eligible men who did not go

⁴³ Ibid., P.C.962, April 20, 1918, wording re-examined, and modified because cases of extreme hardship were occurring under the no exemption rule. Modification: "in cases of extreme hardship man will report but will be granted leave of absence without pay" designated P.C.1259.

⁴⁴ R.C.M.P. Records, Vol.921, file 138-117.

⁴⁵ Privy Council Records, Series 2, Vol.828, P.C.1013 was amended before it went into effect by P.C.1226 which allowed additional forms of identification to be presented.

to war. The orders that tended to affect everyone, P.C. 953 and P.C.815, brought some notice. P.C.953 after Prime Minister Borden's declared opposition to conscription⁴⁶ of labor, must have created a few doubts, but because only registration had been ordered, there was little complaint; one comment was: "All between 16 and 60 must register or can't draw any pay envelope!"⁴⁷

Of all the April Orders-in-Council P.C.815, commonly known as the Anti-loafing law, aroused the most interest and speculation as to how it should be applied. Although not intended as an instrument of persecution, the Anti-loafing law allowed the harassment of individuals not highly regarded by the majority in Winnipeg society, unemployables, pool room habitués, and foreigners. The Winnipeg newspapers announced:

Raids for idlers ordered ... Police to take steps to enforce new law here ... to raid poolrooms and other places for loafers and they will lose no time in rounding up all the won't works that are strewn about the city.⁴⁸

By April 30, within three days after the police began to enforce the law, the first anti-loafing case came before

⁴⁶ Borden Papers, Vol.394, p.2245.

⁴⁷ Winnipeg Telegram, April 22, 1918, p.1.

⁴⁸ Tribune, April 27, 1918, p.1. Telegram, April 27, 1918, p.3. Similar.

Magistrate Sir Hugh John Macdonald and by May 2, 700 men were reported arrested for idling.⁴⁹ The law was enthusiastically enforced, especially against foreigners. On May 3, seventeen out of eighteen men reported convicted appeared to have Slavic or Jewish names.⁵⁰ The one exception, Andrew Derry, might have been Irish. Although ostensibly arrested for "loafing", it seems fair to say that the law was applied more diligently against the "alien enemy". To this select company many citizens would have unhesitatingly added the "unpatriotic" striker. The operation of the Anti-loafing law would have aroused severe resentment among the many immigrant alien workers in Winnipeg. Speculation as to its application to strikers, although in error, would have aroused the opposition of all labor men.

Orders-in-Council therefore added to the aggravations and irritations already being experienced by the workers during the civic wage negotiations in April. Food was

⁴⁹ Ibid., May 2, 1918, p.3.

⁵⁰ Tribune, May 3, 1918, p.1. The report on magistrate's court reads:

"27 Nabbed as Loafers, 18 Convicted and Fined -
The following men were fined \$50. and costs:
Wm. Wine, Paul Elchysczn, Sam Kowal, Alex Horobul,
John Stenik, Wawryzmiec Byczek, Andrew Derry,
Nazar Bojczuk, Joseph Mischiell, Henry Rudoski,
Roman Holobrowski, Dimytro Holman, John Maraj,
Kakzmus Zacchysyn, Wadislaw Edwidzoski, Wasyl
Zadorojnick, Stefan Marteniuk, Sam Karpik."

supposedly in short supply; hoarding and waste were illegal.⁵¹ It was feared there would not be enough coal for the winter of 1918-19; and the price of coal was reported to be going up. The Street Railway monopoly, and the "jitney Issue" made workers who had to wait in crowds for street cars, question the priorities of the Winnipeg city council.⁵² The telephone system was reputedly about to be automated and many female telephone operators were worried about losing their jobs.

Even taking into consideration all the aggravations already discussed, perhaps the single most important issue threatening labor peace everywhere in Canada was the workers declining standard of living caused by rising prices and the failure of wage rates to keep pace with the cost of living.⁵³ Joseph Harry Sutcliffe in his Master's

⁵¹ Borden Papers, Vol.241, RLB 2589, p.135260. An error in the management of the cold storage plant in Winnipeg which led to the spoilage of 8500 pounds of poultry was closely examined by agents of the I.M.B. The results of the investigation were reported directly to Borden by Sir Joseph Flavelle, April 2, 1918.

⁵² The Jitney was a motor car which operated somewhat as a taxi, but with little regulation. Jitneys charged five cents per person and took twelve to fourteen people at a time. They were very popular with workers and competed directly with the Winnipeg Electric Street Railway Co. forcing it to lose money and to petition the city council to ban Jitneys. Minutes of the City Council of the City of Winnipeg, 1918, pp.239-40. Interview with Mr. A. Scoble. The Voice, May3, 1918.

⁵³ See sample budget, food prices, and cost of living and wage indices in Appendix V.

thesis examined in depth the relationship of workers' wages to prices. He wrote:

The importance of the standard of living cannot be underestimated. Each man has his own standard of living arranged according to his wants ... and his unsatisfied wants prompt the struggle for higher wages. The worker anticipates that each successive year will be better than the previous, or at the very least, no worse. Many if not most workers, by 1918 had experienced 3 successive years of decline of real income.⁵⁴

He concludes that the high cost of living and inadequate wages were the chief spurs to worker discontent.

It would have been too much to expect employers to agree that wages were inadequate. One major employer, Mr. Mark Workman, was well aware of the increased cost of living but was convinced wages had kept pace:

The most important economic change that has taken place in the life of the country since 1914 is the abnormal increase in the cost of living. Wages have naturally increased correspondingly, and it is therefore quite apparent that the costs of production have been seriously inflated. Nevertheless, it is not reasonable to anticipate that wages will fall to a lower level so long as the cost of living remains at the present standard.⁵⁵

His main concern, it should be noted, was with the increased costs of production caused by the higher wages made necessary

⁵⁴ Joseph Harry Sutcliffe, "The Economic Background of the Winnipeg General Strike, Wages and Working Conditions"; M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972.

⁵⁵ Borden Papers, Vol.92, file O'C 457, p.48284.

by the increased cost of living. Employers as a group were very reluctant to pay any more than they absolutely had to.

There was considerable agreement between government and labor about the negative effects of the rising cost of living on labor relations. The Department of Labor in a special report on labor conditions in Canada during the war, dated May 16, 1918, recognized the cost of living as a labor irritant:

The intense industrial activity which has prevailed during the whole of 1917 and up to the present period of the year 1918, with the increasing labor shortage and accompanying rise in the cost of living, have increased the number of industrial disputes during the last year or two.⁵⁶

And labor organizations certainly were concerned. The Montreal Trades and Labor Council wrote to Sir Joseph Flavelle, April 25, 1918, to explain that one of their members:

"have been forced to strike in order to secure a living wage commensurate with the increased cost of living."⁵⁷

Having surveyed the labor situation as far as the Dominion is concerned, it is now necessary to examine the local Winnipeg scene.

⁵⁶ P.A.C. Department of Labour Records, Vol.125, file 601.3. This special report was in response to a request for information directly from the Prime Minister.

⁵⁷ Flavelle Papers, Vol.23, Borden file.

CHAPTER IV

It was against this background of conflicting priorities that the civic employees conducted their wage negotiations for 1918 with the City of Winnipeg. The early negotiations up to April can be found in Gideon Robertson's report to the Minister of Labor:

The waterworks employees, city electricians, city teamsters and fire department men had on various dates, from November 1917, submitted propositions to the City asking for increases in rates of pay and improvements in their working conditions. The employees reported that no acknowledgements of their communications had been received, though City Council claimed replies were sent, and in March their requests were repeated. Not until they pressed their case late in April was any notice taken of their communications. Notice had been given to the City that unless negotiations were entered into immediately, that the city employees would withdraw from service.¹

Additional details of the April negotiations were well documented in the daily newspapers. The Winnipeg Telegram reports the action of the Board of Control in relation to the wage requests of the civic employees, delivered for the second time in March:

Meanwhile, the board had changed its mind again and referred the salary question to the heads of departments asking them to effect an equalization

¹ Borden Papers, Vol.394, Memoirs notes, p.2246. Letter from Senator Gideon Robertson to the Hon. T.W. Crothers, May 25, 1918.

with a view to the granting of a war-bonus. The heads of departments reported back to the board with a new scale of increases, on top of which they recommended another increase of twelve percent.

After considering this for a while, the board practically threw it into the waste paper basket, and tentatively adopted a number of suggestions made by Controller Wallace, that no increase should be given to men coming under the provincial government's fair-wage scale, that office boys and messengers should receive very slight increases, and that a war bonus of \$2. per week or \$104. per annum should be granted to all employees earning less than \$1800. per annum.²

The most outstanding characteristic of this Board of Control was its tendency towards vacillation and indecision. The war bonus idea had been publicized early in April, 1918, and employee reaction was negative.³ The newly formed Federation of Civic Employees, city clerical workers and office staff, pressed the controllers to seriously consider the wage schedules they had submitted much earlier, they had already decided they did not want the war bonus.⁴ This should have been a signal to the Board of Control that the idea of a bonus being added to relatively low wages was antagonistic to union principles. Nevertheless:

"After the civic employees had decamped, the board of control changed its mind again, and instructed the secretary to let them know in dollars, how much more the city would have to pay, on a basis of the \$104.

² Telegram, April 27, 1918, p.3. Note that it was Controller Wallace who was responsible for the original idea of the war bonus.

³ Ibid., April 20, 1918, p.3.

⁴ Ibid., April 27, 1918, p.3.

bonus for all employees earning less than \$1800. per annum; how much, if it were put on the basis of \$1500. per annum; how much on a basis of \$1600. per annum; how much if the recommendations of heads of departments were put into effect, and how much if the demands of organized labor and of the employees' federation were put into effect. Meanwhile, pending the receipt of the figures, which entail a week of labor ... the board decided to do nothing.⁵

Again the Board of Control displayed indecision, even though they knew that practically all the wage demands of the civic employees including the electrical workers required action by May 1.

Mr. J.L. McBride*, business agent for the Electrical Workers' union was probably the most impatient of the union officials involved. He saw Controller Wallace the morning of April 27 and insisted that the demands of the civic electrical workers be dealt with promptly:

"We sent in our schedule long ago and we haven't heard anything officially since. ... The matter has been delayed for a long time already, and so far as we are concerned there is no room for conciliation. We have nothing to arbitrate. I haven't the slightest doubt that our men will be out on May 1."⁶

Although Mr. McBride made it very clear that his organization would go on strike if its original demands were not met, this did not influence the Board of Control. They simply did not take the deadline seriously. The opposition of important groups of the City's employees should have

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

warned the Board that the war bonus idea suggested by Controller Wallace would not be acceptable.

At this point the Board of Control could have chosen to adopt either the recommendations of the City's department heads which provided for an adjustment of salaries plus 12% increase overall or Controller Wallace's war bonus scheme. The department heads' reports to the Board of Control were supposed to have been prepared on the basis of merit, efficiency and need and carried with them the advantage of a large measure of employee support. On the other hand, Controller Wallace's idea, while professing to distribute the money available, so that those who needed the most assistance would receive it, had the undeniable advantage of saving the city \$3000. over the department heads' recommendations.⁷ With employee approval or saving tax money in the balance, it is not particularly surprising that the Board of Control chose to include the war bonus system in the report which they presented to the City council for approval and authorization on April 29.

On April 29, 1918, one of the most important single steps toward the Winnipeg strike situation in May, 1918, was taken by the Winnipeg City council when it approved a war bonus system for the remuneration of the majority of the civic employees during the new fiscal year, May 1, 1918, to April 30, 1919. The war bonus system was

⁷ Ibid.

intended to take the place of new wage schedules already under consideration by the Board of Control, and in some respects improved the originally proposed wage rates. Unfortunately for the City council and all concerned, rather than pleasing its' employees, the bonus had the effect of antagonizing them, and provoking them to strike.

The controversial war bonus system was first considered at the regular meeting of the Winnipeg Council, Monday, April 29, 1918. Since the fiscal year of the City of Winnipeg ended on April 30, 1918, it was essential to make an immediate decision about the wage rates and schedules. Civic unions and city department heads usually tendered their requests, demands, and recommendations well before April 30 so that their wishes could be considered by the Board of Control. These requests were collated and incorporated into a report that the Board of Control recommended to the City Council, because it was necessary for council to accept the report of the Board of Control before any changes could be made in wage rates for May first.

The Board of Control in 1918 had as usual received requests from civic unions and recommendations from City department heads for new wage rates. For some unknown reason, the controllers had neglected to reply to any of the union requests. But, because the requests were reasonable, and because there had been no response, civic employees from past experience could only assume that

there was no disagreement with the new wage schedules. They assumed also that the schedules probably would be approved, because the Board of Control had in the past negotiated any changes. In particular, the electrical workers had good cause to assume this, because J.G. Glassco*, manager of the Department of Light and Power, had already negotiated with them and had come to a tentative agreement that a reasonable and fair increase would be 12% across the board. Mr. Glassco himself would not have expected any changes in his recommendations for good reasons; he was highly regarded by Alderman F.O. Fowler*, who was chairman of the important Fire, Water, Light and Power standing Committee of City Council; and, Mr. C.F. Gray*, one of the four controllers, had been a consulting electrical engineer for the department, and therefore knew its needs well. He would no doubt have expected both the Board of Control and the Council itself to approve his negotiations.

City Council however was not bound to accept either Mr. Glassco's recommendations or the report of the Board of Control. Reports to Council by the various standing committees were often examined clause by clause before they were accepted, rejected, or amended by City Council. The report of the Board of Control was no exception. The first two clauses of the April 1918 report were accepted,

the third, comprising Controller Wallace's version of the war bonus aroused a great deal of discussion. Labor Alderman John Queen and A.A.Heaps, moved that clause 3, the war bonus clause, be returned to the Board of Control "for further consideration!"⁸ This motion was defeated even though eight out of fourteen aldermen voted for the motion, the four controllers, taking advantage of their full voting privileges on the City Council, voted en bloc against the motion. Controller Puttee*, owner of The Voice, the labor paper, might have been expected to vote with the labor aldermen but he did not. It is possible that the Board of Control as a group were concerned about the April 30 fiscal year deadline or the May 1 strike threat. They therefore would have wanted their report to come to a vote at that meeting. The defeat of the motion to return the report to the Board of Control "for further consideration" meant that the report had still to be dealt with at that particular meeting.

Eventually the two labor aldermen, John Queen and A.A. Heaps, proposed an amendment to clause three which would increase Controller Wallace's war bonus for married employees earning less than \$100. per month by an additional one dollar per week. Clause three as amended reads as

⁸ Minutes of the City Council, April 29, 1918, p.214.

follows:

"That except in the cases of above mentioned employees and those whose wages are fixed by by-law or by the Provincial Fair Wage Schedule of annual increment, a war bonus on the present salary at the rate of \$3. per week be paid for the fiscal year 1918-1919 to all married employees receiving a less wage than \$1200. in the aggregate per year, and in the case of unmarried employees receiving less than \$1200. per year a war bonus of \$2. per week; and that a war bonus on present salary at the rate of \$2. per week be paid to all employees receiving \$1200. and less than \$1600. in the aggregate per year; in no such case, however, shall the salary with the addition of said war bonus exceed \$1600. per year, but only a proportionate amount of said war bonus to be paid to bring the aggregate remuneration to the said rate of \$1600. per year."⁹

Representatives of the Civic Employees' Federation present at the Council meeting declared:

that they stood absolutely and irrevocably by their proposed schedule, and that the war-bonus idea was entirely unacceptable.¹⁰

Ironically the amendment added \$27,000. to the total salary package,¹¹ \$24,000. higher than would have been the case had the Board of Control adopted the recommendations of the department heads for an adjustment of salaries plus a 12% all round increase. The employees would have accepted the 12% with no complaint. The City therefore got labor

⁹ Ibid., pp.214, 215, 241. Moved by Ald. J. Queen, seconded by Ald. A.A. Heaps, carried.

¹⁰ Telegram, April 30, 1918, p.3. ¹¹ Ibid.

discord and strikes for \$24,000. more than the amount which would have guaranteed labor peace. The question inevitably arises why Council should support such an obviously unpopular and then more costly measure. First, they probably did not realize just how much the amendment would add to the total salary package. Second, they had the deadline of April 30 to meet, but they could have retrenched immediately and used the department head proposals. Third, it is possible that the war bonus amendment received such ready support because it was believed that the war bonus would eventually help to keep labor costs down, which, in turn would help to keep realty taxes down, always a major concern of a civic government. They could have reasoned that the war bonus could not only be easily reduced if the cost of living went down, but also when the war ended the Council would have the excuse to eliminate it completely. Alternatively, a percentage increase would lead to a permanent increase in wage rates and realty taxes. Fourth, a bonus system would permit larger increases to be granted to those employees who had the lowest wages and therefore the greatest economic need.

This last reason could be interpreted as a commendable social objective worthy of labor support, and was probably the main reason Controller Puttee supported the war bonus.

He is reported to have stated his opposition to the department heads' proposal by declaring that he had no use for,

"this here merit and efficiency idea - it means higher pay for the big salaried men and none for the low salaried man."¹²

Controller Puttee's support of the war bonus is thus explained, and it is possible that it was this facet of the war bonus which gained the support of the labor aldermen on the Council.

Whatever the motivations of Council and its labor members, it is certain they had not consulted the labor community before voting for the war bonus. Labor support should not have been expected. Civic workers believed they should have been consulted before such a radical departure from past practice was put into effect. The war bonus as passed by Council, did not recognize the long service and valuable experience of those in the higher wage brackets, who, although earning more than a subsistence wage, believed they too deserved an increase. Moreover the bonus system had inherent future disadvantages for the city employees. They also reasoned that the long term intent of Council could be to save money, and therefore a bonus which could be withdrawn at the employer's whim was not as

¹² Ibid., p.11.

good as an increase in basic wage rates. Finally the Queen-Heaps amendment itself was an irritant. By giving a married man one dollar more a week than a single man for the same work, the criticism was raised that either the single men were being underpaid and exploited or the married men were receiving charity.¹³

Steadily employed independent workmen wanted neither to be exploited nor to receive unwarranted charity. Many employees of the city felt that a rightfully earned fair living wage was being withheld from them. On May 1, 1918, a Wednesday evening, civic employee organizations meeting separately at the Labor Temple heatedly discussed the war bonus idea. The Electrical Workers, led by J.L. McBride, were in no way hesitant in their condemnation of the war bonus. They rejected it absolutely and decided to strike immediately the following day. It was not long before the news of the Electrical Workers' decision spread throughout the Labor Temple. Shortly thereafter the Water Works Department employees, and the Civic Teamsters decided at their own meetings that they too would soon go on strike if the bonus were not withdrawn.¹⁴ The bonus however was not then rescinded. Thus it can be concluded that the institution of the war bonus by City Council was the final irritant which led directly to the first strikes in the civic sector in May 1918.

¹³ Manitoba Free Press, May 2, 1918, p.7.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp.1, 7.

CHAPTER V

The first phase of the Winnipeg Strike in May 1918 began when the civic Electrical Workers went out on strike against the City Light and Power Department because they were offered a war bonus instead of an expected new salary schedule by the City Council. Official notification of the strike deadline was communicated in the following letter to Mr. J.G. Glassco, manager of the utility:

Dear Sir,

Yours of April 30 received this date containing proposition put by City Council, and I am instructed to inform you that the employees of the department are not satisfied nor will they accept anything in the shape of a bonus, and further that if the agreement presented is not accepted by the city before 8 a.m. on Thursday, May 2, the members of this organization will decline to work till the matter is adjusted.

Yours truly,
J.L. McBride
Business Agent.¹

May 1, 1918

Although the letter was far from conciliatory, at this point there was little to suggest that a strike against the City by one union would have the potential to expand to the point where it could disrupt the whole city and threaten the war effort.

¹ Manitoba Free Press, May 2, 1918, p.1. Letter to J.G. Glassco from Electrical Workers Union, signed by business agent, J.L. McBride.

Public opinion as expressed by the newspapers did not at all condone any form of strike action. An editorial, in the Telegram the week before the strike, advocated determined opposition to any group having the temerity to strike in war time:

There is a lot too much significance attached to the right to strike. It is altogether too one-sided. ... In a democratic country, if the right to strike is a right, it is a universal right, ... the nation, through its Government has also the right to strike back - and it should strike as hard as it knows how. ... Whatever any individual may have the "right" to do in times of peace, no individual or class has the right to jeopardize the nation's security in time of war.²

This particular editorial may have encouraged the City Council to believe it had enough public support to take a "get tough" attitude with its employees. The day before the strike began the first indications appeared that if the civic workers went on strike their grievances would include more than the rejection of wage schedules. A heading in the Telegram announced that the "City will retaliate on employees" and "reduce staff if strike declared". It added that the city would "recommend dismissal of the men behind the movement".³ A report in the Tribune indicated that the Council felt more than confident that they were in a position of strength:

² Winnipeg Telegram, April 23, 1918, p.4.

³ Ibid., May 1, 1918, p.3.

Members of the council claim the unions are not sufficiently strong to call out all the staffs, that not more than 50% would comply with the order, that public opinion would be on the side of the city; that Fire Chief J.E. Buchanan could handle the fire department with men at his disposal and the city's bookkeeping system could remain idle until the strike was broken.⁴

The last phrase above and the comments published in the Telegram illustrate a singularly offensive and non-conciliatory position to take against workers who had not yet gone on strike.

This aggressive attitude displayed by the City may have successfully prevented the Civic Employees' Federation from striking. Earlier the city clerical and office workers had recorded a unanimous decision to refuse the war bonus, but although they had passed a motion with ninety percent in favor of striking, they made no move to go on strike.⁵ May 2, they withdrew their previous strike threat and announced that they were prepared to ask for arbitration as provided under the Industrial Disputes Act.⁶ The clerical workers may have been very concerned for their jobs, or they may have had second thoughts about the war bonus:

⁴ Winnipeg Tribune, May 1, 1918, p.1.

⁵ Telegram, April 30, 1918, p.3.

⁶ Free Press, May 3, 1918, p.1. The Industrial Disputes Act was also known as the Lemieux Act of 1907.

W.J. Beer of the Federation of Civic Employees admitted that many employees belonging to that union will receive more wages under the council's salary arrangement than they would if the union schedule were adopted.⁷

The clerical workers were, however, more easily influenced than the Electrical Workers. City officials should have realized that J.L. McBride would not back away from a confrontation. The Electrical Workers had not hesitated to strike in 1917 to enforce their wage demands on the city, and because they had been successful then, there was no reason for them not to expect success again. Their initial objective was simply to secure an increase of twelve percent in their wage rates; a demand, which under the prevailing conditions was considered reasonable, and which had been endorsed by J.G. Glassco himself. When the Electrical Workers began their strike at eight o'clock in the morning of May 2, 1918, they did so with every expectation of success.

Immediate reactions to the news that the Electrical Workers had gone on strike can only be classified as extreme. The same day as the strike began, May 2, the Telegram carried a full page width headline, "Police may arrest civic strikers", along with the news that ninety employees of the City Light and Power Company plant had

⁷ Tribune, May 1, 1918, p.1.

failed to report that morning. The article continued:

Early this afternoon it was declared that the police are likely to take immediate steps to end strikes by arresting men implicated, under authority of the new "Idleness Act".⁸

The overt threat that the new Anti-loafing order-in-council, just then beginning to be enforced in Winnipeg, should be considered as an anti-strike weapon was only one of many attempts to intimidate the strikers.

The report the same day of an interview with Mr. Glassco declared:

We will run the plant or bust. A number of the men who have remained loyal, numbering from 10 to 15, will do their best to keep things running. ... Between 90 and 100 men are affected by the strike. I shall recommend to the board of control that if these men do not come back to work in 24 hours or so, permanent men be taken on in their places. We cannot work those who are remaining at duty for 20 hours a day for an indefinite period, and we cannot allow the public to suffer by the crippling of the plant.⁹

Mr. Glassco's plan to recommend that "permanent" men be hired to replace the striking workers had important implications for the electrical workers. First, they faced permanent loss of their jobs, and if they were no longer on strike, they could be classified as "Loafers". Even more important, their replacement by non-union staff

⁸ Telegram, May 2, 1918, p.3.

⁹ Free Press, May 2, 1918, p.2.

was a threat to basic union principles, the right to strike, and the right to organize.¹⁰

At this point the newspapers contained very little to encourage the strikers to remain on strike except perhaps for two small items, both related to the City's firemen. The first reported a change in the firemen's general attitude to a strike: "The firemen promised a year ago never to go on strike. They now say conditions warrant a change in the pledge."¹¹ The second indicated they were prepared to consider striking under specific circumstances:

Firemen who intimated that they will strike in sympathy with the Employee's Federation hoped that the contentious problem will be eliminated before action is necessary. ... We will be the last department that will go out on strike.¹²

The firemen's willingness even to consider striking would have worried City officials, because the safety of the property of all citizens depended upon the uninterrupted operation of the City's Fire Department.

On the first day of the strike the electrical workers had been threatened with arrest and with the loss of their

¹⁰ Like his electrical workers and their union Mr. Glassco played a central role in the confrontation. His sympathies apparently lay with neither his employees nor the Board of Control but rather with "his" utility. He appears to have been primarily interested in keeping the City Light and Power Company functioning at peak efficiency.

¹¹ Tribune, May 1, 1918, p.3.

¹² Ibid., May 2, 1918, p.12.

jobs. On the second day, May 3, the intensity of the confrontation increased. Despite adverse publicity the waterworks employees, over eighty in number, had gone out on strike, even though the war bonus would have given them on average, an increase of five and one half cents an hour, half a cent an hour more than they had asked for.¹³ Again it was not the amount of money involved, but the desire for an increase in their basic wage. It became known also that the fire alarm operators had gone out with the electrical workers. This was serious because "if a fire alarm sounded no one could tell whether it would be rung into the right station or not", and, a fire could get out of control before help arrived.¹⁴

The reaction of the Council to the expansion of the strike was uncompromising: the Telegram reported:

The striking civic employees, numbering about 200 men must return to work by 8 o'clock tomorrow morning or they are dismissed from the city's service and permanent men will be engaged at once to take their places.

This was the decision carried by an overwhelming vote, at an informal meeting of the city council during the noon hour today. ... Mayor Davidson stated the position ... The employees of the civic lighting system had refused to arbitrate and were out on strike ... The fire alarm operators, four in number, had also gone out with the union.¹⁵

As stated by Council, the decision for the workers was

¹³ Telegram, May 3, 1918, p.3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

simple, either return to work immediately, or find another job. In essence the Council had endorsed a position of the Board of Control.

The Free Press in an almost sensational manner reported the position of the Board of Control:

The board of control announced last night that it would defy unions and as fast as one set of civic employees quit their positions they will be filled and kept filled. No striker will be reemployed, and if they do not seek other employment they will be arrested. That is the ultimatum of the authorities. The strikers say they do not fear arrest as they can secure other employment.¹⁶

They may have decided this ultimatum was necessary when they received the news about the waterworks men going on strike. It is also likely that the Board of Control had been influenced by J.G. Glassco, who had the day before announced his intention to recommend extreme measures against the strikers.

Newspaper reporting about the strike was on the whole notable for inflammatory statements. McBride is reported to have responded to the ultimatum as follows:

"We've nothing to do with it. They can make asses of themselves if they want to", declared J.L. McBride, business agent of the Electrical Worker's Union, when asked as to his views on the ultimatum issued by the city council. ... This means that the fight is on in real earnest between the city and its employees, as the city's threat to discharge all strikers after 8 a.m. tomorrow will be carried out.¹⁷

¹⁶ Free Press, May 3, 1918, Department of Labour Records, Vol.309, file 18-159.

¹⁷ Telegram, May 3, 1918, p.3.

When questioned about the possibility of applying for arbitration as had the Civic Employees' Federation, McBride is reported to have said:

The matter has never been considered and no arbitration suggestion has been made to us. There is no development whatever in the situation. The ninety men are all out, and not a single union man is working.¹⁸

Because the application of the Civic Employees' Federation for arbitration had made the strike action of his union seem precipitate, Mc Bride carefully pointed out that no one had suggested arbitration. What he probably meant was that he had not received any official notification from the City about arbitration.

Failure to accept arbitration was only one of many charges that McBride's Electrical Workers had to face May 3. As on the previous day, the most severe attack on the strikers was made by their own department head manager of the utility. J.G Glassco inserted a full page advertisement over his signature in the newspapers to explain the City's position in relation to its employees. In effect, the advertisement was a many pronged attack on the strikers' case which made previous polemics seem mild in comparison. Everthing included was carefully written to place the employees in the worst

18 Free Press, May 3, 1918, p.1.

possible light.

In order to gain wide public support for management Glassco appealed to the citizens directly: "You own the City Light and Power plant - about 90 of your employees are on strike ... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?"¹⁹ A brief summary of the previous years' negotiations made the men appear to be insatiable in their demands, with no regard for the people they served:

Last May the men demanded increases which were not justifiable. They were offered increases averaging 12½%, which they refused to accept and went on strike ignoring offers of arbitration. After ten days they were given 24 hours to return to work, or their positions would be permanently filled by others. After 10 days lost - 10 days of needless inconvenience and delay - the men accepted practically the original offer. ...

YOU DID NOT SUFFER ANY INCONVENIENCE.²⁰

Another item made the strikers seem quite impractical; their current wage rates were listed beside the rates "demanded" and the increase offered by the city. Since the ordinary citizen could observe that in some cases the city was offering three dollars more per month than the amount demanded, he could only conclude that the Electrical workers were quite unreasonable. But the increase offered was not a rate at all; it was the controversial war bonus.²¹

The insinuation that they were greedy and unreasonable was bad enough, but worse was to come. An attempt was made

¹⁹ Free Press, May 3, 1918, p.11, Telegram, May 3, 1918, p.7, Tribune, May 3, 1918, p.7. All three major newspapers carried the same advertisement-public notice. ²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

to discredit the Electrical Workers' Union: ,

ARBITRATION SUGGESTED BUT IGNORED BY MEN.
 In the letter advising the men of the City's decision regarding bonuses, the following suggestion was made: "If these terms are not satisfactory to the Electrical Workers ... I would strongly urge your appealing for arbitration before any attempt is made on the part of the men to force the shutting down of the hydro-electric system of this City!" In spite of this the men stopped work. ... 22

When it is borne in mind that McBride had stated no one had made any arbitration suggestions to the Electrical Workers, the revelation that arbitration had in fact been suggested, would raise the question in the minds of the public of whom to believe.

The readers were reminded next about the effect of the strike on the war effort:

IN ABNORMAL TIMES, in times of stress of war with the Huns pressing in countless hordes against our too thin line of defense, public and press are one in their demand that no one shall hinder the wheels of manufacture and commerce, no one must be permitted to clog the machinery of our production. ...23

The intention is clearly to make the strikers appear disloyal and unpatriotic. There is even an attempt to shame them by mentioning the sacrifices of the soldiers at the front: "What will our brave boys think, who willingly stake their very lives for liberty and \$1.10 a day?"²⁴ All of this was strong material to use against strikers on the second day

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

of a strike. Reconciliation, after such extreme statements were made in order to discredit reluctant workers with the general public, would have been very difficult. It is, however, an important indication of the attitude toward labor disputes in wartime.²⁵

There was one bright spot in the news May 3, for the strikers. Donald Macpherson, Chief of Winnipeg police, found it necessary to clarify the application of the Anti-Loafing law. He claimed he had been misunderstood when interviewed by the Free Press the night before, and that contrary to previous impressions, the Anti-Loafing law could not be applied to strikers or for failure to agree with employers. He pointed out, that according to the Anti-Loafing law, "these regulations are not intended to affect any right of members of organized labor associations to discontinue their work ..." owing to differences with their employer. This was encouraging news although it was still not exactly clear how the law would apply if a worker were discharged and replaced in his job by another worker.²⁶

At this point one might expect that the city had the upper hand: it had publicly discredited its workmen,

²⁵ D.C. Masters, in The Winnipeg General Strike, surprisingly does not really consider the impact of the war in relation to labor disputes.

²⁶ Free Press, May 3, 1918, p.7.

promised to continue service to the public, and most important, planned on hiring replacement staff on a permanent basis. This last would, in effect, create a non-union plant and break the strike. It is possible that the City officials had considered that an overt threat would frighten other unions away from strike action. But labor was not to be that easily cowed; the threat brought into focus a principle far more important than the war bonus. Union men recognized the principle at stake in Glassco's ultimatum to the electrical workers as a threat which struck at the very existence of all organized labor. If the city, a major employer, could bring about a defeat of union activity, then all unions were in danger.

May 4, the City Council did carry out its threat in spite of labor's agitation:

The city's ultimatum to the striking employees expired at 8 o'clock this morning without a single striker reporting for duty. All are now dismissed from the service of the city and new men are being engaged to fill their places permanently.

Volunteer citizens are coming forward at the city hall in great numbers, offering themselves as temporary help in the event of there being any difficulty in getting permanent workers, but none of the volunteers have yet been called upon.²⁷

The city was determined to get its utilities back into full operation. The availability of volunteers to supplement the hiring of non-union men made it easier for the City to defy the unions. Glassco announced "that he would have a

²⁷ Telegram, May 4, 1918, p.3.

complete new staff by Wednesday!"²⁸

"Everybody I meet says he is with the city," said controller J.J. Wallace.²⁹ But he had not been travelling in labor circles. Union men believed that the fate of trade unionism hung in the balance, and were preparing for a struggle involving all Winnipeg. The Tribune reported the statement of Mr. Ernest Robinson, Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council:

Unionism will stand or fall by the civic employees ... Sympathetic strikes will be called, if necessary, and all things done to bring about a successful termination of the strike, the Trades and Labor Council has voted the civic employees its fullest support and will stand by their decision.³⁰

It was rapidly becoming apparent that the ultimatum rather than getting the men back to work had caused more trouble.

During the various union meetings the evening before several unions had already declared their full support for the civic workers. The International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers was one of the first to offer assistance: "In the event of the city carrying out its threat to man their plant with strike breakers, ... every man in our union will quit work!"³¹ A strike by this group of engineers would have affected not only the City's buildings, but many other

²⁸ Tribune, May 4, 1918, p.1.

²⁹ Ibid., p.3.

³⁰ Ibid., p.1.

³¹ Free Press, May 4, 1918, p.1.

large buildings in Winnipeg, including hospitals, railway shops, schools, provincial government buildings, and large business buildings. Another group, Lodge 457 of the Machinists Specialists and Helpers unanimously decided to go to the limit to help out the city employees in their fight for conditions and the recognition of their union!³² Here again the involvement was spreading from civic employees to industry and to a group of employees some of whom were manufacturing munitions. The Canadian National Railway Carmen's Union passed a resolution of sympathy and full moral support for the civic strikers.³³ The involvement of railway personnel and services vital to the war effort was sure to become the concern of the Federal government. And since the principle involved, the right to organize, was one already accepted by the government, there was no question which side of the dispute would eventually receive Federal support.

In the meantime, Council did have editorial support. Public opinion as expressed by a Free Press editorial was an attempt to bring sane consideration to the issues. It said that whether the demands of the employees were just or not, was not the question. But, that the issue was whether a resort to a strike was justifiable when the people or its representatives were the employers. In this

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

way the right to strike of public servants was questioned. the editorial justification was that public bodies should be "model" employers, that grievances need only be revealed to the public and they would be righted, and, that this being the case public servants should be "model" employees. This was not to mean employee subservience, but it did necessitate rational treatment of disputes by means of arbitration. Therefore permanent machinery for settlement of disputes in public service should be set up. It went on to say that:

Public employment must carry with it the acceptance of the condition that disputes as to the conditions of employment, must be left to some defined and agreed upon machinery of adjustment. This principle should be asserted and enforced until it is accepted by all as the proper procedure.³⁴

In these words it was clearly suggested that a worker must undertake to give up the right to strike as a condition of employment with the city, an attractive idea for the city officials. The editorial on the surface was a persuasive appeal for reason to prevail on both sides, but it would not have been endorsed by labor men. Once the right to strike was questioned, labor men could not retreat.

Monday, May 6, 1918, new information appeared in the paper: the city Council had carried out its threat; it had dismissed the striking employees and was hiring new ones.

³⁴ Ibid., p.13.

Council reiterated its contention that they had offered to go to arbitration and expressed the opinion that when men "will not listen to arbitration they have a mighty poor case!"³⁵ The public were reassured that the city was losing nothing financially; in fact, since the city was not paying wages, they were really saving money. Most of the news was indeed favorable for the civic employer, but, one item proved ominous. "Will Firemen Strike?"³⁶ The firemen would give no indication at all of their intention, but they did express extreme dissatisfaction with the war bonus. There was concern with what would happen to the war bonus when the war ended, especially when it seemed that prices were up to stay. Another key group of employees remained undecided.

Monday evening there was great animation in labor circles. Many locals and trade unions held regular and special meetings. Unions only remotely connected with or indeed entirely separated from civic operations were watching the dispute with great interest. Like the contract machinists and the stationary engineers, some threatened action. For example, at the Printing Pressmen's local 87 special meeting, eighty percent of the membership endorsed the stand of the various civic labor groups and guaranteed full financial and moral support to the extent of a strike. To

³⁵ Ibid., May 6, 1918, p.7.

³⁶ Ibid., p.1.

give force to this promise the vote was unanimous.³⁷

At a well attended regular meeting at the Labor Temple of the Electrical Workers' Union, other branches of the union, the telephone electrical workers and the railroad shop electrical workers, reiterated their approval of the action taken so far, and promised them "absolute" support in the struggle.³⁸ Already assured of the backing of the stationary engineers and pressmen, men from the Electrical Workers canvassed other meetings in progress to find out how well they were supported.

They reported back with assurance of the fullest support from the Waterworks men and the Teamsters, who were going on strike the next day. It was at that same meeting that plans were announced for calling a joint meeting of the unions of the Trades and Labor Council, the purpose of which was no less than to consider the steps to be taken for a general strike of organized labor in the city.

Tuesday, May 7, the Telegram publicized the announcement of the joint meeting of the Trades and Labor Council, and elaborated on its purpose:

Preparations are well underway for the calling of a general strike of organized labor throughout the city, by the gradual process of turning the thumb-screws and calling out one union at a time until all the civic employees' demands are met and all of the strikers taken back into the city's employ.³⁹

37. Ibid., May 7, 1918, p.1. 38 Ibid.

39 Telegram, May 7, 1918, p.2.

This was the first public enunciation of a concrete plan of action in relation to a general strike. It was proposed that each union in the Trades and Labor Council take a vote to see if they were willing to go out on strike to support the civic unions. Then, as the necessity arose each would be called upon in turn to join the strike. In this way there would be a gradual increase in labor pressure on the city, in effect, a policy of "gradualism!"

Other news items indicated that City Hall was already under pressure. The firemen were one group which the city did not want to go on strike, and they were in the process of taking a strike vote shift by shift. No one knew what they were going to do. The Council was also under pressure from within; Alderman A.A. Heaps was actively trying to arrange a settlement. He tried to get Mayor F.H. Davidson* to call a special meeting of the Council to discuss settlement, but was refused unless he had five signatures. His views were reported as follows:

Mr. Heaps considers that there is little or no difference in expense to the city between the bonus as proposed and the demands of the strikers, and working independently with a view to putting the bonus in the form of a schedule, which, he thinks would be satisfactory to the men. ...

"Do you represent the men on strike?" asked the mayor.

"I do not in any way," replied the alderman, "but I believe the whole trouble can be settled. There is not really as much in it all as appears on the surface."⁴⁰

40 Ibid.

Because all the opposition had been generated originally by the war bonus, he was probably quite right in thinking that the problem would disappear if the war bonus were eliminated.

Tuesday, the Civic Teamsters joined the waterworks men and the electrical workers on strike and announced they would remain out until all groups were ready to go back. Roads would not be repaired and more important, garbage would not be collected, thereby creating a potential health and fire hazard. The Civic Employees' Federation, which had backed away from strike action, received word from Ottawa that their arbitration board had been granted, thereby appearing far more reasonable than those who had gone on strike. And Controller Puttee was strongly criticized publicly by striker friends for supporting the war bonus scheme.⁴¹

Other unions meeting Tuesday night displayed solidarity and support for the strikers. The Plumbers' Union forbade its members to turn water off or on in any building whatsoever. The membership was reminded that this was the duty of the Waterworks Department employees, and, that plumbers had previously been fined by the city for doing what was now permitted in the name of expediency. Manitoba Government Telephone electrical workers "decided to go the limit with the city employees' strike if necessary!"

⁴¹ Ibid.

On the other hand, the firemen held meetings but still would not commit themselves until they had had full expression of opinion from their membership.⁴²

Late Tuesday Mr. J.G. Glassco claimed that evidence had been discovered of "malicious interference with the street lighting system!" There was no hesitation in blaming the strikers; Glassco went on to say:

I am sorry to see them starting these tactics. They are not going to gain anything by it, and are only alienating public sympathy by such acts. Of course the claim would be made that they know nothing about it, but I will go so far as to assert ... that the person who did it was not only an electrician but also was thoroughly familiar with our street lighting system ... If they are going to start such things we must prepare for trouble ahead.⁴³

Whether this statement is absolutely true cannot be determined, nor is the statement important only in itself. It was the first hint of wider troubles. And the fact that it was made in conjunction with optimistic announcements that vacancies were being filled and that everything was going well indicates that city officials might not have been quite as confident as before.

Wednesday a new element was added to the seriousness of the labor situation. The Street Railwaymen's Union announced that they would be holding a special meeting of

⁴² Free Press, May 8, 1918, p.4.

⁴³ Ibid., p.1.

their own members Wednesday evening to decide what action should be taken in regard to the civic strike.

High officials of the union are inclined to the view that a general tie up as quickly as it can be brought about is the best method of bringing the civic situation to a conclusion satisfactory to the labor men.⁴⁴

This union was an important addition to the labor forces. Disruption of the city's mass transportation system would affect all businesses because their workers would find it difficult to get to work, and retail businesses because they would lose many customers.

By Wednesday Alderman Heaps had the five signatures necessary to call a special meeting of City Council. Labor councillors, Aldermen J. Queen, A.A. Heaps, J.L. Wiginton, A. Hume, and Controller A.W. Puttee requested the meeting for Thursday evening.⁴⁵ The reaction to the labor councillors' request was reported as follows:

It seems to be the general impression at the City Hall that the labor aldermen imagine that they can force the city to agree to the demands of the strikers and point to the fact that the special meeting is not being called for at once, but was requested for tomorrow night in order that the Labor party at the mass meeting tonight take such a stand as might tend to scare the city council.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Telegram, May 8, 1918, p.3.

⁴⁵ City of Winnipeg, correspondence file 11507. Letter from Mayor F.H. Davidson to City Clerk, Mr. C.J. Brown May 8, 1918, authorizing special council meeting May 9.

⁴⁶ Telegram, May 8, 1918, p.3.

It is interesting to note that the person interviewed at City Hall automatically assumed that the labor councillors were trying to force the City Council to give in to the strikers. Actually, Alderman Heap's more reasonable approach to labor relations was in the best interests of the city. The spokesman was probably correct, however, in the assumption that the special meeting of Council was timed to consider the results of the special mass meeting of labor men which was to take place Wednesday evening.

Wednesday evening over five hundred men, representing various unions, filled the largest hall of the Labor Temple to overflowing. They exhibited a marked spirit of optimism, determination, and a solidarity of purpose with the three striking civic employee unions. Labor members of Council who were present, Aldermen Heaps and Queen and Controller Puttee were pressed for an explanation of Council's action, but had little to offer. In view of their original support of the war bonus amendment this was not surprising. They did offer their continued support. Aldermen Queen and Heaps promised to do everything in their power to help the men win the strike. Alderman Heaps warned that if the Council would not change its position with regard to the strikes at the Thursday special meeting, the strike would really become serious. The oratory of Alderman Queen added to the excitement among the workers:

"I think the working class should dictate the whole matter of labor; should dictate the hours they will work ... The fight you have taken up has got to go on until you have got what you are after and Winnipeg is made safe for democracy. I know that you will make the Winnipeg city council realize that you are going to have something to say as to your conditions of life!"⁴⁷

This was hardly a conciliatory speech, and from an alderman, it would have had special impact.

It is not at all surprising, given the mood prevailing at that meeting, that Controller Puttee, editor of the Voice, received no support for his quite reasonable suggestions:

"How are we going to handle the situation? The council is prepared to recognize the union. The war bonus - I wouldn't have christened it a war bonus - this can be got over. These figures can be overcome. The Civic Federation has been granted a board of conciliation. I believe that this was given as an idea for the settlement of your trouble. ... [i.e.] leave it to the conciliation board which has been appointed for the Civic Federation ... At this time a strike is not in the interests of the labor movement."⁴⁸

It was evident from the remarks which echoed on all sides that the controller's suggestion found little favor with the strikers, especially since he had supported the flat rate increase or war bonus. Moderation was not popular; labor meant to win.

⁴⁷ Free Press, May 9, 1918, p.2.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

J.L. McBride of the Electrical Workers outlined labor's overall plan of action against the City:

"We hope to add the firemen to the three before the end of the week, and after that we hope to have in all those who work directly for the city, then all those who work indirectly for the city, and after that any organization that works in or around the city of Winnipeg. We intend to control that camouflage chamber at city hall!"

F.G. Tipping, president of the Trades and Labor Council, urged the men to keep together until they secure that for which they decided to leave work.⁴⁹

By gradually adding to the number of strikers and unions involved, it was hoped that a situation progressively more difficult would develop, which would eventually force the city to capitulate. The ultimate result of this policy if the city chose not to give in, would have been a general strike, and at least, a strike more extensive than had ever before taken place in Winnipeg.

Support for the civic strikers increased rapidly. The important Street Railwaymen's Union, meeting to consider the civic strike situation, announced that they had decided to give their utmost financial and moral support to the striking unions, and, "If necessary, to call a meeting to consider the taking of a strike vote"⁵⁰ They had only recently signed a new contract with the Winnipeg Electric Railway Company and supposedly had no

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.4.

grievances. The Telephone Operators' Union, a division of the Electrical Workers, resolved to support their union brethren "to the full limit and take the extreme course if ... necessary". The key Firemens' Union was still holding sessions, and were expected to announce their decisions the following day.

In the meantime the mass meeting produced a unanimous resolution of support for the three striking unions which clearly stated the grievances the unions had against the city:

This meeting of workers ... pledge its fullest support to the unions involved. We demand that the City Council give the unions complete recognition: We condemn the War Bonus as savoring of charity and because of its uncertain and temporary character, and because it undermines the whole system of collective bargaining.

We call upon the Labor representatives in the City Council to give their undivided support to the demands of the strikers, such demands being based upon the fundamental principles of organized labor.⁵¹

This strong labor resolution was communicated in a letter to the City the following day in time for the special meeting of the Council called by its labor members for Thursday, May 9.

During the day, Thursday May 9, the firemen finally

⁵¹ City of Winnipeg, file 11507. Letter E. Robinson to the City Clerk, May 9, 1918. Incidentally, the mass meeting was chaired by H.G. Veitch*, Vice President of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council.

decided what they were going to do. The executive of the Firemen's union presented an ultimatum to Chief J.E. Buchanan which was duly forwarded to Mayor Davidson:

The Winnipeg Firemen's Association Local No. 14

J.E. Buchanan Esq.
Chief of the Fire Department
City.

May 9, 1918.

Dear Sir:-

We are instructed by the above local to notify you that the war bonus proposed by the City Council is not satisfactory to the members, and cannot be accepted, and furthermore that if all matters in dispute between the City and its employees are not settled by Saturday May 11th at 7:30 A.M. the members of this organization will decline to work until the matter is adjusted.

Signed on behalf of the organization,
Robert Ringland*.

[et. al.]

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What the City officials most feared and what the striking civic unions most needed for success had happened. All were aware that the firemen's role of protector of life and property made their decision to go on strike especially serious and the settlement of their dispute especially urgent. The news that the bread and milk wagon drivers were ready to strike in sympathy on six hours notice was, in comparison, almost anticlimactic.⁵³

⁵² Ibid., Letter R. Ringland et. al., to J.E. Buchanan, no date, stamped received in Chief's office May 9, 1918.

⁵³ Telegram, May 10, 1918, p.3.

The special City Council meeting which took place Thursday evening was a lengthy affair, lasting from 8:05 p.m. to 12:20 a.m. There had been no overt negotiations between the disputants but Council must have known about the tone of the labor meeting on Wednesday from the newspapers, and from Robinson's letter setting forth the unanimous resolution of the meeting. They knew also about the firemen's ultimatum, and about the possibility that the Street Railwaymen and others might strike in sympathy with the civic workers. The labor dispute was getting worse, and the pressure was now on the City Council. Further pressure was applied at the meeting by pro labor deputations. The Reverend Dr. S.G. Bland said "he hoped the Council did not question the right of the laboring classes to organize" But, "He had no sympathy with any party which refused to arbitrate" Mr. H.G. Veitch vice-president of the Trades and Labor Council, said:

They could not arbitrate on a principle, and it was mostly due to a principle that the strike arose. The reports in the press as to the seriousness of the situation and the possibility of a general strike were not one bit overstating the facts and the strikers were by no means carrying on any bluff.⁵⁴

The City Council had every reason to believe that the strike

⁵⁴ Free Press, May 10, 1918, p.1.

situation had become very serious indeed.

A deputation from the Board of Trade supported the previous Council decision of May 3, to dismiss the striking workers.

Mr. A.K. Godfrey, president of the Board of Trade said, he had been instructed to state that the Board upheld the city council in the plan to appoint permanent men to carry on the work when strikers walked out and left the city's plants in serious danger. ... He doubted very much if the present strike received any sympathy from a large majority of citizens considering the fair offer the council had made.⁵⁵

Since the Board of Trade was largely composed of business and professional men this viewpoint was not unexpected.

Nevertheless in spite of the support expressed by Mr. Godfrey, the Council had met already convinced of the gravity of the strike situation and the necessity of taking some form of positive action. Although Mayor Davidson had said before the meeting that he did not think the difficulties were insurmountable, Alderman Queen now believed the situation to be so critical that the men would never make the first move. Alderman Heaps therefore proposed a motion that a special committee be appointed to approach the men and to negotiate a settlement.⁵⁶ But, if this motion were passed it would have meant that the Council would have had

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Minutes of the City Council, 1918, p.248. Moved by Alderman A. Heaps and seconded by Alderman J.L. Wiginton.

to reverse its previous stand completely. To avoid appearing to capitulate abjectly, Alderman Fisher* moved an amendment which placed the onus on the men to make the first move.

"That this council reaffirm the position they took up last Friday, but we place on record our willingness to meet the men on strike whenever they ask us to do so, with a view to a settlement of the strike by arbitration or otherwise.⁵⁷

This was, in effect, a compromise which permitted Council to "save face" yet which made a conciliatory move towards the strikers. Although the five labor councillors voted against it, the motion did modify Council's previous obdurate stand enough that the workers had the chance to reopen negotiations.

The members of the special negotiating committee were appointed by another motion:

"That when the condition of the report of the Committee of the whole is complied with, a Committee consisting of His Worship the Mayor, Contr. Puttee, Ald. Sparling, Heaps, Hamlin and the mover, meet the men with a view to settlement of the strike!"⁵⁸

The committee included labor members in approximately the same ratio as there was in the whole Council. The situation

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.249. Moved by Alderman G. Fisher and seconded by Alderman J.K. Sparling*

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.250. Moved by Ald. G. Fisher and seconded by Ald. A.H. Pulford.

was still grave but there was now room for cautious optimism. With the committee in readiness, the next move was up to the men to recognize the compromise and to request a meeting.

The special negotiating committee of Council made sure that the men would take advantage of their opportunity. Under instructions of the Special Committee, communication was initiated by the City Clerk, Mr. C.J. Brown. Letters containing the resolutions adopted by Council the previous evening were sent out as "information" to the six councillors on the special committee, to the heads of the departments whose men were on strike, to the striking unions, to Robert Ringland, secretary of the Winnipeg Fire Fighters Association, and to Mr. E. Robinson, secretary of the Trades and Labor Council. The letters were of two kinds: Management received letters containing a simple recitation of the two motions passed at Council. Labor men received notification of the same motions, but their letters had a paragraph added, similar to the one below sent to the firemen:

In compliance with the above resolution the Special Committee met this morning and instructed me [City Clerk, C.J. Brown] to notify you that the Committee is prepared to meet the Firemen at any time this afternoon to discuss all matters in dispute and settle [sic], either by an amicable settlement or by arbitration, and the Committee would strongly urge that the men stay at their posts pending a full discussion of the matters in dispute. For your information I may say that the

Committee will meet this afternoon at 3 o'clock.⁵⁹

This paragraph was a significant addition because it was, in effect, an invitation to meet with the Special Committee.

An examination of the whole correspondence revealed that the Special Committee had followed a rather ingenious procedure. Council would not, publicly, make the first move, but they appointed a committee to be ready to meet the strikers. Council's special committee recognized the seriousness of the possible firemen's strike, met to discuss it, and decided to use the device of letters sent "for information!" They required the City Clerk to inform the strikers that the Committee would be ready and waiting at a certain time, Thus, in effect, Council made the first move as labor members had insisted; all the unions had to do was agree to meet with the committee. This was an expedient way to do things; it let everyone save face. One newspaper even seemed to cooperate in this mild deception. It was discreetly reported, "Conference called by new committee to discuss strike"; the additional concession was not emphasized.⁶⁰

During the morning and afternoon of Friday May 10, an exchange of several exploratory letters took place between

⁵⁹ City of Winnipeg, file 11507. Letter City Clerk to Winnipeg Firemen's Association, local 14, May 10, 1918. The information contained in the paragraph indicates that the Special Committee met in the morning of May 10.

⁶⁰ Telegram, May 10, 1918, p.3.

City Hall and the Labor Temple. The men did agree to meet; the replies were brief. Robinson for the striking unions, recognized the further concession and replied simply: "In reply I have to say our representatives are prepared to keep any appointment you may make."⁶¹ Ringland for the firemen, answered separately and requested a different time. In this way the first steps reestablishing communication were taken. A third round of letters simply assumed the meeting was to take place and arranged a time suitable to the firemen, 3.30 p.m., Friday, May 10.⁶²

The meeting arranged in this way took place on schedule, and lasted until 3.30 a.m. Saturday May 11. Although Mr. T.J. Murray* the union counsel, commented that press reports "correct as they might be" had not improved the situation, it was decided to allow newspaper reporters to remain. Mr. E. Robinson took the initiative and said that the men had confidence in the reporters and had nothing to hide. Management could not appear less open, and the press remained until the very end.⁶³ In this way it has been possible to get a complete account of a 12 hour meeting marked by hard bargaining and differences of opinion.

⁶¹ City of Winnipeg, file 11507. Letter E. Robinson to City Clerk, May 10. 1918.

⁶² Ibid., Letter R. Ringland to City Clerk, May 10, 1918. Ringland requested the change on behalf of the "Committee of organizations now on strike!"

Newspaper reports of the lengthy meeting tended to emphasize the fact that the firemen, to everyone's immense relief would not be going on strike. The Free Press headline was "Firemen's Strike is averted after lengthy session."⁶⁴ The first item in the report of the meeting in the Telegram was: "There is no strike of civic firemen today."⁶⁵ Both papers carried a full and similar report of the meeting. Apparently, the negotiations had advanced very slowly throughout most of the long and difficult meeting.

Neither labor nor city officials seemed to have been particularly willing to compromise, although there appears to have been little difficulty in getting the city officials to admit they recognized the civic unions. It seems that, because the city knew the unions existed, tolerated them, and communicated with them when necessary, as far as the city was concerned, according to Mayor Davidson, they had always recognized the unions.⁶⁶ The main concern in the case of the firemen was not their organization but whether they had the right to go on strike. The Mayor reminded the firemen of their promise the previous year not to strike before going to arbitration. To which the reply was that

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.1.

⁶⁵ Telegram, May 11, 1918, p.3.

⁶⁶ Free Press, May 11, 1918, p.3.

the agreement not to strike was on certain conditions, which had not been fulfilled.⁶⁷ This was a continuing issue between Council and its employees.

Discussions ranged from the war bonus to reinstatement of workers who had been "fired" and about the new "permanent" staff that had been hired during the strike. Eventually most issues were conditionally settled except wage increases and on those neither side would give in. Early Saturday morning the discussions reached a seemingly impossible deadlock. Mayor Davidson and Controller Puttee went home and it seemed that a firemen's strike was inevitable.

At this point only the intervention of Controller C.F. Gray made further progress possible. The Telegram gave him full credit for preventing the firemen's strike:

The fact that there is today no strike of civic firemen is due to the action of Controller Gray. He appeared at the city hall at 1.30 a.m. after a tour of the fire halls, and just as all negotiations had reached an absolute deadlock. The committee had offered the firemen increases ... The firemen had rejected the offer. The committee had put itself on record regretting that negotiations had failed and formally offering to arbitrate ... Negotiations with electrical workers had also deadlocked.⁶⁸

Evidently, Controller Gray had asked permission to address the meeting and had been refused. Alderman Fisher

67 Ibid.

68 Telegram, May 11, 1918, p.3.

evidently did not have a very high opinion of Gray because he grabbed his hat and declared, "I don't want to listen to Gray for two minutes - nor one minute!" After some more unpleasantness Gray asserted his position as controller in charge of the fire department. Chief Buchanan was there and:

Controller Gray asked him how many men he could depend upon in the event of a strike, and the Chief replied ... "I can't depend upon a single man ... They'll all go out!"⁶⁹

This bald statement of fact brought everyone to their senses. Very shortly a new offer was made to the firemen, and within another hour there was a practical basis of agreement with all the other unions.

The wage increases offered, while not as large as asked for, were on the whole considered acceptable by the men's representatives. Firemen agreed to take twelve percent instead of fifteen. Waterworks men were to get the five cent per hour raise they had asked for, and part of their holiday requests. Teamsters were to get an increase of up to \$2.50 per week, and a promise to examine their working conditions. The one group hardest to negotiate with were the Electrical Workers. The special committee offered them ten percent which they refused, flatly insisting upon not less than twelve percent. The interchange is reported as follows:

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.17.

Mr. McBride insisted that Alderman Sparling take the same attitude to the electrical workers he had taken toward the teamsters, but Alderman Sparling again insisted that he could not undo what the whole committee had decided upon. Alderman Fisher promised that he would advise his colleagues to strain a point to reach a settlement this afternoon ... Mr. McBride then declared that in order to avoid further trouble he would trust to the good will of the committee at its meeting this afternoon, but that the men would remain on strike until all the differences have been adjusted.⁷⁰

Although the firemen had agreed to recommend acceptance of their wage offer, they were still under what they considered to be a moral obligation to stand by the other men who were still on strike. Only McBride's assurance that "he would trust to the good-will of the committee" decided them not to go on strike in the morning.

At this point the labor disputes involving the civic unions were virtually settled. All that remained was to arrange the final details of the agreement with the four civic unions, three on strike, and one promising not to strike if everything was settled. The terms of reference for the afternoon meeting were, on the suggestion of Mayor Davidson, expanded to include the Civic Employee's Federation. Because they had remained at work and had applied for arbitration, the Mayor believed that they should at least be given equal treatment with those who had gone on

⁷⁰ Ibid.

strike.⁷¹ Their presence also meant that the arbitration proceedings could be easily expanded to include the other civic unions. Out of this second meeting came a two page report signed by A.W. Puttee, detailing the salary and working conditions that had been agreed upon. The civic unions had made one major concession for the future. They had agreed to present their new schedules sixty days before the old ones expired, to give fifteen days notice before they went on strike, and to accept conciliation procedures at any time during the sixty day period.⁷²

About ten o'clock Saturday evening when the final settlement had been reached, speeches were made by Mayor Davidson, Controller Gray, Alderman Heaps and T.J. Murray, solicitor for the union. Mayor Davidson who was responsible for getting the conciliation clause inserted, explained its purpose:

"My object ... is to avoid such a thing as we see here tonight. The council only wants harmony in the city's interests. We have agreed to it, and I think the men should be satisfied. I hope there will be no hard feeling engendered!"⁷³

All the addresses emphasized the need for good feeling

71 Ibid.

72 See Appendix II for report of the Special Committee with full details of settlement May 11, 1918.

73 Free Press, May 13, 1918, p.2.

between the citizens and their employees and the hope was expressed that all further difficulties would be amicably settled without recourse to a strike.

The strike of the firemen had been averted, the unions had been given virtually what they had asked for, and all were expected to go back to work without further delay. Except for the fact that the Special Committee during the course of the negotiations had completely reversed the policy laid down May 3 by the City Council, everything seemed settled. Phase one of the civic strike of May 1918 was virtually complete. All that remained was for the City Council to ratify the report of the Special Committee at the next regular Council meeting Monday, May 13.

CHAPTER VI

Monday May 13, the citizens of Winnipeg were exposed to contradictory news reports. The Free Press announced the expected news that the "Strikers [were back] at work today" and that "Agreement [had been] reached with Electricians, Teamsters, Firemen, and Waterworks Employees," and reported:

Following the negotiations which were in progress all Saturday afternoon and evening, the civic strike situation was definitely cleared up to the expressed satisfaction of both the members of the City Council and the employees. Yesterday morning the electricians were back at work at the power stations and assurance is given that everything will be normal this morning.¹

According to this, the Electrical Workers had gone to work on Sunday after the agreement had been signed on Saturday.

The Telegram on the other hand announced in large print headings that "Glassco refuses to let the Strikers work," and "Men still out as result of order of City Council," It continued:

The city striking employees are still on strike. Contrary to all expectations, following the reaching of an agreement last Saturday night, the men today refused to return to work, and so far as Manager Glassco is concerned, he refused to take back his men.

¹ Manitoba Free Press, May 13, 1918, p.1.

He takes the ground that as council as a body instructed him to discharge all the strikers and to hire permanent men to fill their places, he cannot permit the strikers to return to work until council rescinds its previous order, and officially notifies him. Having employed some new men, and some of the union men having refused to strike, Mr. Glassco takes the position that he is not going to break faith with these men unless he is ordered and compelled by council to do so.²

The returning workers for their part wanted to get back exactly the same jobs they had before and demanded that the strike breakers be fired. Glassco and his electrical workers were again at the core of controversy.

The spirit of optimism and goodwill, expressed by Mayor Davidson and the others involved in the negotiations on Saturday, began to seem somewhat premature. Even though the Electrical Workers had been granted the twelve percent which they had demanded, and which Glassco had recommended, there was still trouble. The men had only reluctantly agreed to give fifteen days notice before striking, and Glassco was now insisting that they undertake not to strike at all. This was the position he had taken during the negotiations but it had not been publicized. It was clear that there were still important differences to be settled in the operation of the City Light and Power Company.

The report of the Special Committee of Council which had negotiated with the men was the instrument by which

² Winnipeg Telegram, May 13, 1918, p.3.

the differences could be settled. Before labor peace could be achieved and ensured the City Council had to ratify the report of the Special Committee. Then, Glassco, as an employee of the city himself, would have had to comply with the agreement. Glassco, however, still hoped to influence the City Council. As the Telegram said, "the entire situation will come up in council tonight!"³

It was at the regular Winnipeg City Council meeting the evening of Monday, May 13, 1918, that the second phase of the strike really began, the second phase which would prove to be far more disruptive to the City of Winnipeg than the previous labor disputes. And, it began with an amendment to the report of the Special Committee of Council when it was presented to Council for ratification.

Immediately after the report was read to Council, Controller Puttee moved that it be adopted. Before the vote was taken, it was usual for amendments to be made, and Alderman Pulford moved the report be taken up clause by clause, a reasonable procedure, but it was defeated. Another minor amendment changed the order of items within the report. Then Alderman F.O. Fowler moved an amendment which was seconded by Alderman A.H. Pulford:

That after the word "dispute" in the fifth line of the first paragraph be struck out and the following substituted therefor:-

³ Ibid.

"And that in the opinion of this Council it is essential in the interests of the public that all persons employed by the City should express their willingness to execute an agreement, undertaking that they will not either collectively or individually at any time go on strike but will resort to arbitration as a means of settlement of all grievances and differences which may not be capable of amicable adjustment, and that all matters in dispute between the employees now on strike, and the adjustment if any, of the salaries and wages of all other employees, be referred to a Board of Conciliation, this Board to consider hours of labor, holidays, along with adjustment of salaries, and that this Board of Conciliation be appointed at once."

Carried.⁴

By accepting the Fowler amendment to the report, the City Council, in effect, had rejected the whole report of its own Special Committee.

Council's rejection of the report was truly unexpected and surprising to those concerned, because in so doing it had rejected the best efforts of its own members to settle the difficult labor situation. The civic workers in particular, after the difficult bargaining of the previous Friday and Saturday, must have regarded the rejection of the settlement as an expression of extremely bad faith. The question arises, how this reversal of the official Council policy of May 9 could happen.

Unlike the Minutes of Council which basically recorded the main motions and their disposition, the newspapers gave

⁴ Minutes of the Council 1918, May 13, 1918, pp.258-9. The amendment was carried 9 to 8. The voting pattern is discussed more fully below.

much more complete accounts of what actually went on at that Council meeting. Council did not reject the report of its Special Committee immediately but only after a two hour debate.⁵ Immediately after he made his amendment to the report, Alderman Fowler opened the debate with a powerful speech to the meeting:

" I am very sorry ... that I was not in the city during this time of trouble. I am surprised to find almost the unanimous opinion of council tonight a reversal of the opinion expressed at the last meeting previous to my absence from the city. I find the council being held up by four classes of workers, three on strike, I believe, and the fourth threatening to strike. In the first place I would like to point out that it is not now a question of salary increase but a question of the principle involved, which is the vital matter - the principle of whether or not the workers on a public utility have the right to go on strike, especially without submitting the matter in dispute to arbitration. I took occasion last year to point out the danger of a union being formed amongst the firemen ... It is absolutely absurd for this council to permit the unions to go out on strike and dictate to it what wages they shall be paid ... Our yielding in this matter is not a move that will work for the future welfare of the city ... I am going to vote against the report of the Committee, because I do not think we have any right to treat with these men until they agree not to go on strike in the future, but to settle differences by arbitration.⁶

Fowler made his views absolutely clear to everyone. He did not want the civic workers to strike at all; he

⁵ According to the Minutes of Council, regular business lasted until 10 p.m., then a 20 minute in camera session, and then the Special Committee report and debate until adjournment 12.35 a.m. Tuesday.

⁶ Free Press, May 14, 1918, p.2, Winnipeg Tribune, May 14, 1918, p.12.

believed the report was made under the pressure of a threatened strike of firemen; and on a matter of principle he would go against the report.

As Fowler indicated in his speech, the initial position of the Council was almost unanimously in favor of the report, and therefore there was considerable opposition to Fowler's Amendment. Alderman Sparling, speaking in defence of the Special Committee report emphasized the tense situation, the long negotiating sessions, and the danger to life and property that would have resulted from a strike of the firemen. Fowler turned this defence to the support of his amendment: "I think Alderman Sparling's address, whether he intended it or not, has given me just the support I needed for the principle that the city should not be held up by strikers!"⁷ Some labor men, Controller Puttee and Alderman Wiginton were lukewarm in their defence of the report; they would vote for it of course, but they were critical of the strike occurring before arbitration.⁸ Others, Alderman Queen, Heaps and Hamlin remained steadfastly critical of the Board of Control and the Council. According to Alderman Hamlin, the Board of Control had bungled the matter and were really to blame for the strike.⁹ Alderman Queen contended

⁷ Free Press, May 14, 1918, p.2.

⁸ Telegram, May 14, 1918, p.11.

⁹ Free Press, May 14, 1918, p.2.

that the "Board of Control did not recognize the unions," and, "The unions were forced into a position where they were forced to strike!"¹⁰

Controller C.F. Gray revealed his reaction to Fowler's oratory in saying:

"Alderman Fowler's speech tonight is the strongest speech I have heard in this council, bar none, ... I told the mayor on Saturday morning that I was not prepared to face the citizens and say that every stone had been turned to try to meet the firemen. We then had another discussion with the men. Never at any time have I been so convinced of the necessity of adhering to our conscience, ... I have always thought that the firemen should not strike, nor the police - they should not have the power to strike. The firemen I thought, would not strike. They have not struck. The police and the firemen have got to be clear of any strike. I cannot be clear in conscience to the people of Winnipeg and not support Alderman Fowler's motion!"¹¹

Gray does reveal his attitude to strikes in the fire and police departments, but basically this was a long and confusing attempt to explain why he on the basis of conscience, was going to change his mind and vote for Fowler's amendment.

Mayor Davidson had the last word before the vote was taken. Speaking as a member of the Special Committee he said:

I am quite convinced that the present time, when we face such a situation as we do, the council would be very unwise if the report of the committee as presented be defeated!"¹²

10

Ibid.

11

Ibid.

12

Ibid.

Unfortunately, enough of the councillors chose to be unwise: the amendment which rejected the work of the Special Committee was carried by a vote of nine to eight. When Council adjourned at 12,35 a.m. it had managed to negate all previous efforts to achieve labor peace, to reintroduce the battle of principles, and to set the stage for a truly serious strike.

The question now arises why it was possible for the Council to have been turned from an almost unanimous support for the Special Committee report to a vote against it. It is interesting to speculate that the whole turn of events might have taken place because at that particular meeting one man was present, Alderman F.O. Fowler, another was absent, Alderman G. Fisher, and a third vacillated, Controller C.F. Gray, the future Mayor of Winnipeg in 1919.¹³ The immediate and overt reason was the presence of Alderman F.O. Fowler and the absence of Alderman G. Fisher. Alderman Fowler was the acknowledged leader, and effective speaker, and had a determined attachment to any principle that he conceived right. Alderman Fisher was another acknowledged leader. He was highly regarded by those who knew him for his willingness to listen to people's troubles and help with good advice, and was noted for his fair mindedness.¹⁴ George

¹³ See Appendix VII for biographical information about these councillors.

¹⁴ Interview with Mr. Fred Tipping, February 12, 1969. Mr. Tipping spoke very favorably about Mr. G. Fisher.

Fisher was not a labor member who would automatically accept any labor demand, but a member of the managerial class who had been persuaded during the course of the meetings of the Special Committee to accept labor claims. Each man was highly respected.

But the presence or absence of particular men would not have changed Council's decisions so drastically had the rest of Council been stronger. Alderman Heaps revealed his rather scornful opinion of the rest of Council publicly at the mass meeting on Wednesday, May 8:

"I feel ashamed sometimes to be a member of that council. If you saw the incapacity of some of those people you would begin to wonder." You remember the picture "Father says turn, we all turn." Well that is it exactly."¹⁵

What he is saying in so many words is that there were some quite easily led men on the Council. The labor members had relatively strong leaders, Heaps, Queen and Puttee. But they, along with Alderman Wiginton and Hamlin*, inevitably voted in favor of labor, right or wrong.

If one examines the voting pattern of the councillors, many seem to be rather easily led. It was more or less usual for Alderman I. Cockburn, H. Gray¹⁶, J. Vopni, Alex

¹⁵ Free Press, May 9, 1918, p.1.

¹⁶ Alderman H. Gray while having the same last name as Controller C.F.Gray was no relation. H. Gray was one of two elected aldermen from Ward 3 on the Winnipeg City Council in both 1918 and 1919.

McLennan and A.L. McLean to vote with Alderman Fisher and Alderman Fowler. On May 9, in the absence of Alderman Fowler, they had voted with Fisher for the authorization of the Special Committee.¹⁷ On May 13, these same individuals voted with Fowler for his amendment in the absence of Alderman Fisher.¹⁸ It was not surprising that Controller J.J. Wallace, one of those who had originally supported the war bonus and who had been absent from the special meeting of May 9, refused to reverse himself. Members of the Special Committee, as one would expect voted for their own report, and automatically received the support of Controller Puttee and other labor men. Alderman Fowler of course voted for his own amendment. Alderman Pulford seconded the amendment and voted for it. It was somewhat surprising that Alderman Pulford should have seconded this amendment because it was he who had seconded Fisher's motion for the Special Committee on May 9. It is evident that Pulford was also more influenced by Fowler present than Fisher absent. The controllers tended to vote according to what they considered was good for their areas of responsibility.

What was surprising was that Controller C.F. Gray, future mayor in 1919, should have voted for Fowler's amendment, because Gray had played such an active part in achieving the

¹⁷ Minutes of Council, May 9, 1918, p.249.

¹⁸ Ibid.

compromise between the Special Committee and the unions. Therefore the report should have received his automatic approval, and his support should have been a foregone conclusion. Obviously he was swayed by Fowler's strong oratory. In any event, this shift of support, this vacillation of C.F. Gray was crucial. With Alderman Fisher absent, and the Mayor, who favored the Special Committee report, unable to vote except in case of a tie, the vote was 9 to 8 for Alderman Fowler's Amendment, and against the Special Committee report. Council had, in effect, reaffirmed its original rigid position.¹⁹

Personalities of councillors were very important in Council's decision, but, other factors and personalities also had influence. One particular editorial in the Manitoba Free Press of May 10, may just have been the initial stimulus which led to the Fowler amendment. The editorial argued as follows:

There is no disposition or intention on the part of the people of this city to deny their employees the right to unite for the purpose of safeguarding their common interests ... But acceptance of the right of these employees to unite cannot, and does not, recognize their right to strike against the employing public.

For reasons which have already been set forth, the resort to strike by public employees, and especially by the employees of publicly-owned utilities, is indefensible. Such strikes cannot be justified and ought to be rendered impossible. Settlement of disputes arising between employees of the public

19 Ibid.

and the managers of public services must be reached by arbitration or by some permanent machinery of adjustment.

It follows that this recognition of the right of public employees to unite must be conditional upon their recognition of the necessity for the avoidance of strikes ...

In the existing trouble the proper course for the city council to take is to apply this principle ... Before negotiations looking toward the reinstatement of the strikers are undertaken the organizations concerned should be asked to assent to the principle stated. Failing that assent, negotiations would clearly be useless ...

The city should persist, whatever measures may be entailed in declining to employ persons who by themselves or in combination refuse to arbitrate disputes as to the terms and conditions of employment.²⁰

The ideas expressed in this editorial are markedly similar to those of the Fowler amendment, and were very likely the opinion of many members of the Winnipeg Board of Trade.²¹

While Fowler could have read the above editorial himself, it seems more likely that he was influenced indirectly by the editorial which appeared while the Special Committee was negotiating and while he was probably out of town. Reports of the Friday meeting indicated that J.G. Glassco was at first basically in agreement with the

²⁰ Free Press, May 10, 1918, p.11.

²¹ P.A.M. Minutes of the Winnipeg Board of Trade, 1918. Board of Trade minutes indicate F.O. Fowler was an active member and that J.W. Dafoe was an active member until the autumn of 1918. While it is not possible to definitely say that J.W. Dafoe wrote this editorial, as editor, he certainly would have approved of its content.

results. Yet, a long five page letter dated May 11, 1918, signed by himself²² was in the hands of the Special Committee before their afternoon meeting. This indicates he had written it Saturday morning, and quite possibly after reading the Manitoba Free Press. In the letter Glassco mentioned his attempts Friday night to get a no strike clause included in the agreement between electricians and the city. This was not accepted. The letter reiterated his stand:

"Any adjustment with the union dealing with the matter of wages or reinstatement is of small moment compared to the necessity of the men expressing their willingness to execute a legal instrument which will be an undertaking on their part that collectively or individually at any time in the future no employee of a Civic Utility will go on strike but will be compelled to resort to arbitration for all grievances not amicably settled with their employer."²³

It is quite likely he did manage to influence the Special Committee because it was at the afternoon meeting that Mayor Davidson insisted upon the conciliation clause being inserted before they moved further on the wage issue.

Glassco's chief concern of course was the efficiency of his department and the avoidance of any disruption including that of labor: "as long as the men are permitted to think that it pays to strike, we will have a repetition

²² City of Winnipeg, file 11507, Letter J.G. Glassco to City Council, May 11, 1918.

²³ Ibid.

of this hazardous experience every year." He was however not unconcerned about the men's wages, in fact he indicated that the twelve percent he had originally recommended for the electrical workers was justified, and should be given to all employees of his department. Probably because his department had been making money for the city, he considered "the matter of wages of small moment." And he definitely did "not approve of the Bonus System."²⁴ Nevertheless, except for the wage issue, Glassco was unequivocally in favor of managerial power. He quoted Chapter 56 and 59 of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act to point out that first, it was illegal for employees of a public utility to strike before conciliation, and second, that if they had gone on strike before conciliation they were subject to a fine of \$10. to \$50. a day. This meant that the city could prosecute the strikers. He compared the strikers' attempts "to obtain their demands by force alone irrespective of the merits of these demands" with the "principle that the Allied Armies are fighting for."

Finally he wrote:

This undertaking on the part of the men "not to strike" must come first, and I would plead with your Committee to insist on discontinuing any further negotiations until they give an unequivocal assent to this principle.²⁶

24

Ibid.

25

Ibid.

26

Ibid.

Glassco was an exceptionally able man with very strong opinions, as the above letter indicates.

Comparison of Glassco's letter with the Free Press editorial reveals a similarity of ideas. Comparison with the Fowler Amendment shows a similarity of ideas and wording. The Fowler Amendment is simply a paraphrase of sections of the letter in more concise and diplomatic language. Fowler used other ideas and examples from the letter in his "masterly" speech. It is clear then that there existed close links among men of similar views: Dafoe was a member of the Board of Trade and a respected editor; Fowler likewise a Board of Trade member, was manager of the prestigious Grain Exchange Clearing Association; Glassco was a brilliant professional engineer who was highly respected for bringing order out of a chaotic situation in the Light and Power Department, Glassco in addition, was a persuasive writer, and since he had been associated with Fowler in the management of the Department, his views would have been considered carefully. There is no doubt that Fowler, a man of strong principles was influenced by Glassco's letter and seized upon it as a reiteration and vindication of Fowler's own earlier no surrender stand, and, with persuasive oratory, convinced Council to support his amendment to the Special Committee

report which in effect rejected and nullified it.

Labor men who had attended the Council meeting were keenly disappointed. It would not be too speculative to say that they felt betrayed; after all they had bargained in good faith with the Special Committee. They could not have possibly anticipated that a report by the Mayor and five Councillors would be rejected. Alderman H. Gray who had expressed doubt Monday night as to whether the firemen would go on strike, had his doubts settled very quickly.²⁷ Union men held a meeting in the Labor Temple early Tuesday morning after the Council meeting. In a very short time the announcement was made that:

"The city firemen will go out on strike at 7.30 this morning. The other unions are standing firm, as they always have been. There is nothing more to be said in regard to the matter at present."

The above statement was made by J.L. McBride, business agent of the Electrical Workers' Union to a representative of the Free Press at the conclusion of a meeting of the executive committee of the Civic Firemen's union, and the Waterworks' and Teamsters' unions.²⁸

The men had gone directly from the Council meeting to the Labor Temple where they made their decision. It is interesting that it was not a representative of the firemen, but J.L. McBride of the Electrical workers who made the announcement that the firemen were going on strike.

²⁷ Telegram, May 14, 1918, p.3.

²⁸ Free Press, May 14, 1918, p.1.

The labor men were very serious. The issue was clear cut; it was obvious that their right to strike was being threatened. Wages were important but the strike principle as a basis for future demands was even more important. H.G. Veitch, Vice President and former President of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, took a pessimistic view of the situation: "I shall be very much surprised if the whole industry of this city is not tied up within the next few days."²⁹ This statement indicates not only the importance that labor attached to the right to strike, but also that labor had done some quiet planning for future action.

Following the Council meeting, a meeting of the Board of Control was held. The Board instructed the city solicitor to telegraph the Department of Labor at once, notifying the Minister of Labor, the Hon. T.W. Crothers, of the situation and asking for immediate appointment of a board of conciliation. The city solicitor, T.A. Hunt*, sent an urgent telegram making the request to Ottawa at 1.30 a.m. Tuesday, and added "Situation critical, so please expedite appointment."³⁰ This indicated that Council was preparing for worse trouble. This precautionary step was completely in order because there was definitely danger to property and to life with the lack of professional fire protection.

29 Ibid.

30 City of Winnipeg, Board of Control Minute Book, Telegram city solicitor T.A. Hunt to Minister of Labor, May 14, 1918.

The old Clifton school in the West End burned unattended Wednesday, and the Canada Fire Underwriters issued a public warning of fire danger.³¹ Furthermore, labor men were determined and confident and were working together as never before.

Bolstering their own position, Council received several letters offering support and expressing confidence in their May 13 decision. The Rotary Club of Winnipeg pledged itself "to assist the City Council in whatever steps they may find necessary to prevent for all time a repetition of the very serious conditions existing in our city today." Similarly, the Winnipeg Real Estate Exchange sent their resolution which expressed "unanimous determination to uphold the action of the City Council in connection with the strike of employees ... and we hereby offer our individual and collective services to operate ... utilities. And further, that we strongly endorse the principle that the employees of public utilities and protective service should not resort to strikes." The Board of Trade expressed the utmost support and cooperation for the City Council and offered assistance to man the firehalls.³² Such letters of support from powerful organizations along with others from private individuals

³¹ Free Press, May 15, 1918, p.2.

³² City of Winnipeg, file 11507. All excerpts above are from letters in file 11507.

indicate a budding determination to resist union demands in Winnipeg far out of proportion to the immediate threat. This determination would flower in 1919.

The above letters were not reported in the newspapers but they revealed to Council that a large measure of important public support was available and served to back up the Council's view that they were in the right. And in public they were confident of victory. City officials announced that they could "carry on." New permanent men would be hired to replace the strikers. Volunteers from the general public would be used during the transition from union to non-union operation. Fire Chief Buchanan expressed the utmost optimism: "Everything is just fine."³³ It seems business men had taken some of their own regular employees to the firehalls and placed them at the disposal of the Chief. The city officials appeared to be in a commanding position, and might remain there if they managed to get the support of the general public.

Council began its bid for that support immediately. Tuesday's paper carried Controller J.J. Wallace's prediction that the tax rate would rise one third, before any raise was given to its employees. Mayor Davidson placed a full page advertisement in the three newspapers May 15: "Citizens! We can run our city, but we need your assistance," it began.

³³ Free Press, May 15, 1918, p.2.

"Citizens" were informed of the necessity for them to protect "the sick and the feeble, the little children and the aged. They must have water and light and protection from the horrors of fire and destruction." It was reiterated that pay was not the issue, but that City Council "does insist and must continue to demand that no civic employee shall go on strike and that all differences should be submitted to arbitration." It ended patriotically with "God Save The King."³⁴ There was no hint whatever in the above statements that the city would give in. By looking for volunteers and denigrating the strikers, the city was preparing for a long siege. Mayor Davidson was relying on civic pride and patriotism to get the necessary support and volunteers. If labor leaders had not been aware before of the difficulties facing them, they were now squarely challenged. Everything seemed in favor of the city.

But there was a distinct probability of the strike spreading. Many labor meetings were held Tuesday night. City yard men, which included machinists, blacksmiths, carpenters, painters, stationary engineers and others, threatened to quit Thursday. Other unions not in civic employment such as the Garment Workers Union and the Machinists Lodge 189 indicated that they were prepared to stand by the strikers "to the extent of a strike until their demands were met and all "scallies" removed from the job." Telephone

³⁴ Ibid., p.7, Telegram, May 15, 1918, p.3, Tribune, May 15, 1918, p.7.

operators, members of the Electrical Workers union, also threatened to quit Thursday.³⁵ Street Railwaymen, who had no grievances at that time, arranged to call a meeting to take a sympathy strike vote. The manager of the street railway, Mr. A.W. McLimont said of his men:

"If they should go on strike it would be purely to aid outside unions ... There is no possible connection between civic employees and street railway employees.³⁶

No overt coordination was yet apparent in these union expressions of support but there clearly was a movement toward a unified stand for the important labor principle of the right to withdraw services, that is, workers wanted to be able to strike if they considered it would be in their best interests. The general labor attitude was well expressed by the Machinists Lodge 189, who, at a special meeting called to discuss the civic strike situation, considered it was "just as well to strike now to force recognition of the principles of organized labor," because "the whole force of capital is behind this attempt to smash organized labor in the City of Winnipeg."³⁷ By this they meant the support given to City Council by the Winnipeg Board of Trade, The Winnipeg Real Estate Exchange, and others.

³⁵ Free Press, May 15, 1918, p.4.

³⁶ Ibid., p.2.

³⁷ Ibid., p.4.

The Winnipeg Board of Trade tended to exemplify employer and management attitudes.³⁸ Being on the whole property owners as well as employers they were quite concerned with the Firemen's withdrawal of services. And it was serious; four firms in the Richardson and Bishop Building fire May 14, sustained a total loss estimated at \$147,000., while only \$99,000. was recoverable by insurance. The Telegram's page wide headline announced: "Firemen strike with big blaze in progress" and in small print the news that the firemen at the firehall had remained on the job until the fire was out.³⁹ Management was convinced that protection of property and life should not be menaced by strikes. By coincidence, the Board of Trade's annual meeting had been set for Tuesday and it is not surprising that the civic strike was discussed thoroughly.

Labor had already been gradually organizing: now management had an opportunity to organize itself for effective resistance. A Board of Trade resolution, passed unanimously, offered fullest support and cooperation to

³⁸ A list of the members of the Winnipeg Board of Trade reads like a survey of the Winnipeg business community, and included many names well known today: T.W. Drewry, W.R. Bawlf, J. Stovel, J.H. Ashdown and others. The so called "iron potentates" T.R. Deacon, E. Barrett, and N.W. Warren were elected members of the Board of Trade Council, as was F.O. Fowler.

³⁹ Telegram, May 14, 1918, p.3.

the city. A committee was appointed which was to interview every member of the Board of Trade, and employers not connected with the board, for the purpose of raising a volunteer fire brigade. Everyone was urged to take immediate steps to minimize danger of fire, and to appoint extra watchmen during the emergency.⁴⁰ Alderman Fowler warned that the situation was serious, but that it was the principle of civic employees going on strike which was at stake, and that as the matter had to be settled, it might just as well be settled now, once and for all time.⁴¹ There was, in these words a remarkable similarity to the words of the Machinists' Lodge 189. Both management and labor seemed almost eager for confrontation.

Although relatively well organized, the members of the Board of Trade felt lacking in the area of organization, especially when confronted by organized labor. A guest speaker from New York had been brought in for the annual meeting. Using the civic strike as an example, the guest speaker pointed out that an organized body "has the whip hand everytime," and that "Canada has been somewhat deficient in the organization of her business interests." He spoke of the advantages of the amalgamation the Board of Trade was currently considering with the Industrial Bureau. Finally, he reassured the faint hearted: "No labor unit

⁴⁰ Free Press, May 15, 1918, p.1.

⁴¹ Ibid.

is strong enough successfully to combat organized business interests."⁴² With words of inspiration like these it is not surprising that the Board of Trade members took a leading part in opposing labor.

With opposition like this, labor men had good reason to be concerned. Attacks had been made on their patriotism and humanity. They had lost jobs and pay and they had been threatened with police action and fines. Nevertheless, labor began to show what it was going to do against the economic power of the "masters". The Machinists pointed the direction at their Wednesday night meeting. They advocated a general strike that every trade union in the city should call upon its members "to drop their tools and strike in support of the principle ...of the right to strike!" They pledged themselves to strike in sympathy "any time the Trades and Labor Council calls on us to do so."⁴⁴ Thursday, the gradual increase in labor pressure on the city began. Four hundred telephone operators and about one hundred other employees of the telephone system went on strike.⁴⁵ The telephone strike had the immediate effect of making it difficult to get volunteers for essential services. It is worth noting that the first group outside of the civic

⁴² Ibid., p.8. The speaker was a Mr. C.T. Poykin of the Toronto Development Company of New York.

⁴³ Ibid., p.1.

⁴⁴ Ibid., May 16, 1918, p.1.

⁴⁵ Telegram, May 16, 1918, p.3.

employees to go on strike was a group which belonged to the Electrical Worker's union and had the same business agent, J.L. McBride.

The importance and glamour of the fire department soon attracted many citizens to be volunteers. These, along with paid employees of members of the Board of Trade, reestablished essential fire protection. The situation was advertised to be so well in hand that the Fire Underwriters announced the good news that they would not have to raise their rates.⁴⁶ But everything was not as "lovely" as the fire chief suggested; the volunteers had been plagued by an unusually large number of false alarms.

So many in fact, that the Mayor appealed to all citizens to watch the fire alarm boxes and the Board of Control offered a \$100. reward for detection of persons sending false alarms. Since many anonymous letters had threatened incendiary fires, no alarm could be ignored. "False alarm fiends" were running the volunteer firemen ragged and the situation was rapidly becoming unmanageable. Fire insurance men proposed to ask Ottawa for soldiers to guard alarm boxes, and to arrest anyone turning in a false alarm.⁴⁷ The Telegram in a front page editorial entitled "We must defend democracy" announced that the strikers were doing "the work of the enemy"

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

and called them "traitors to their country."⁴⁸ It was clear that some action had to be taken.

On Thursday May 16, Alderman Frank Fowler made arrangements with the police commission to appoint special constables to watch the fire alarm boxes.⁴⁹ Within an hour of the appeal for volunteers 500 citizens responded, and 200 were chosen to patrol the alarm boxes during the nights. The response had been so overwhelming that it was apparent that the police department was even more attractive for volunteers than the fire department.

Many of those volunteering were business men of high standing in the community. All volunteers were willing to work without any pay. They were instructed in their duties by Deputy Chief Newman and Sargeant Donald, and were given authority to arrest anyone interfering with the alarm boxes and to call the patrol wagon.⁵⁰ With the special force on the job the false alarms fell off to one. For the first time since the strike began the volunteer firemen and those few firemen who had stayed on the job got a night's sleep.⁵¹

48 Ibid., p.1.

49 Ibid., May 17, 1918, p.4.

50 Free Press, May 17, 1918, p.1, Telegram, May 17, 1918, p.4.

51 The citizens and businessmen of Winnipeg thus demonstrated an enthusiasm and determination to maintain peace and order which could have carried through into the 1919 situation. It seems reasonable that the police experience gained by the citizens during this period gave them confidence to recruit and to organize the special citizen constables of 1919, and therefore was an important precedent.

Some attempts at reconciliation were examined Thursday. The Board of Control finally received an answer to its request for a conciliation board. Ottawa, it seemed, would arrange for the board only if the unions also applied. The Board had no alternative but to invite the unions to apply, which they refused to do. Meanwhile, Alderman Fisher in Ottawa, was urging the board of conciliation on the request of City Council alone. But Ottawa tended to move very slowly unless the war effort were threatened. The provincial government made no effort to end the disputes at this point. Their only concern was the telephone strike which, it seemed, was to their advantage. Alderman Sparling revealed that he had suggested a settlement to the strikers in which only the firemen would have to agree not to strike. However the unions did not reply to this at all.⁵² Since the Council would have to reverse itself again to approve Alderman Sparling's proposal there seemed to be little hope for reconciliation from either side. The Winnipeg Board of Trade wired Sir Robert Borden:

asking him to determine that the government has power to apply the Industrial Disputes Act to municipal labor disputes, and, if necessary, to pass an order-in-council under the War Measures Act to fully guarantee the point. The Board also asks Sir Robert Borden to pass an order-in-council under the War Measures Act, expressly prohibiting sympathetic strikes for the period of the war.⁵³

52 Free Press, May 17, 1918, p.1.

53 Winnipeg Telegram, May, 16, 1918, p.3.

The business men of Winnipeg were not only turning to the federal government for assistance in conciliation, but also attempting to get legislation which could solve the problem.

There was move and countermove. Thursday became a day of organization and decision for both sides. Two mass meetings were planned; one by each of the opposing factions, the property owning managerial class and the laboring working class. Labor's meeting at the Trades and Labor Temple was ostensibly the regular meeting of the Trades and Labor Council, but it became really a mass meeting to examine the strike situation. Labor sources revealed plans to pay strikers out of international funds which would enable them to hold out until the strike was settled. Management's meeting at the Royal Alexandra Hotel was reported to be the, "Greatest assembly of those prominent in business and industrial life in the history of Winnipeg!" The main topic of discussion was to be the strike, how to deal with it effectively. Martial law had already been suggested but was "opposed by influential men as useless in [the] present emergency."⁵⁴ Each side seemed determined to win.

Unions of every craft and trade attended labor's mass meeting and displayed exceptional interest in the proceedings. There was a great deal of excited talk: McBride blamed

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Glassco for getting "our friend [ironically] Alderman Fowler ... to defeat the report of the Committee," and mentioned Alderman Sparling's attempt at compromise, only to discard it completely. Referring to the firemen, McBride said, "I'm sure that if the boys never get a job again they will not sacrifice their right to strike." President Ringland of the Firemen's union backed him up completely. He was not as fiery but very determined: "The boys are not going to give that right to strike away. We're into the fight to the finish, and if we cannot win, then we will go down with the old ship."⁵⁵ McBride lashed out at the Council for being run by Alderman Fowler, and at the press for not giving the people the real truth. Here he was referring not to the news reporting per se but to the editorial comments in the Free Press and to the editorializing of the news, in particular, by the Telegram. McBride threatened the expansion of the telephone strike to all of Manitoba if the provincial government attempted to get the Winnipeg service back to normal operation. The suggestion that the Local Council of Women would operate the telephones brought only derisive laughter.⁵⁶

Ernest Robinson secretary of the Trades and Labor Council was no more moderate; he urged the men to "throw down your tools and stand together in the battle for

⁵⁵ Free Press, May 17, 1918, p.2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.17.

organized labor." He continued:

"We want fighters, men who are class conscious. The real estate sharks, the grain exchange gamblers, and the other vested interests are all banded together to beat the strikers."⁵⁷

The whole tone of the meeting was one of unanimous willingness to fight to the finish, although there was a slight note of moderation in President Tipping's remarks. Just as Alderman Fowler and Controller Gray had emphasized the principle of no strike in public utilities, President Tipping reemphasized and reiterated the importance of the right to strike:

"The striking unions," he said, "have yielded as far as they could without yielding their principles. With Alderman Fisher here and the casting vote by the mayor the story would have been different Monday night. What is the use of any trades union relinquishing the right to strike? ... The press has been united solidly on the side of capital ... Only certain phases of the situation are given. What else can the workers do but strike?"⁵⁸

In this speech, perhaps for the newspaper reporters present, Tipping seems to have been trying to make it appear that the strikers had made every effort toward conciliation, and had truly been forced to strike.

Others were not at all moderate or concerned for public opinion. R.J. Johns* easily made the most far reaching and most publicized remark of the evening during his exhortation:

57 Ibid., p.2.

58 Ibid.

"The Free Press mentioned the fact that the workers are going to suffer along with the other citizens. Did these capitalist classes show such alarm when 20,000 workers walked down Broadway in pre-war days asking for work? No, they were not interested. Why? Because it did not pinch them. I am a Socialist and proud of it. You can call me a Bolsheviki if you want to. You must have nothing that flavors of compromise in this proposition. I say strike today, this has resolved itself into a question of right. You have the right to demand anything you have the power to enforce. Come on fellow workers of Winnipeg we have the power to win."⁵⁹

The sentence "You have the right to demand anything you have the power to enforce" was repeated over and over again in newspapers in Winnipeg and across Canada, where it was often linked with both the Bolsheviki and the Prussians. Taken out of context it had the potential to arouse strong feeling against labor.⁶⁰ But if nothing else it did make clear that labor men felt they had to stand up to the economic power of the "masters".

Several unions had already offered their cooperation in a general strike to enforce settlement. Twenty more unions from Machinists' locals to musicians pledged moral, financial, and strike support. Many speakers advocated expansion of the strike. It was learned that contrary to "informed" opinion,

59 Ibid.

60 Telegram, May 17, 1918, p.4. An editorial headed "In the Prussian Vein" commented: "This exhortation reads like an extract from one of Kaiser Wilhelm's most high-flown deliverances to his troops; but it is not, ... its truly Prussian flavor shows the spirit of Germany that lies behind it."

the street railway men were going to take a strike vote. It appeared that the most popular way to make the power of labor felt was through a general strike. H.G. Veitch, vice-president of the Trades and Labor Council suggested the way the strike should be organized and conducted:

H.G. Veitch ... thought it advisable for the Trades and Labor Congress to appoint a committee to act in conjunction with the strike committee, and to aid in systematically "putting on the screws," and calling out the organizations that would be most effective. The teamsters he thought are of the most vital importance to the city. It could be determined which should be called out first, the bread drivers or the milk drivers. It might also be a good idea to get the web pressmen out. "We have had so many damned lies in the press that it is time we choked it. This applies to The Voice also. I did at one time think we had a labor paper in the city. Now I know we have not. The Labor party executive has considered taking over The Voice. ...⁶¹

Veitch presented ideas here which would be revived in 1919, but for 1918, the most significant idea presented was the idea of "systematically putting on the screws" or gradualism.⁶²

After explaining the method of conducting the strike, he moved:

that a committee comprised of Delegates Coburn of the Stationary Engineers, Delegate Russell of the Machinists, and Delegate Winning of the Building Trades Federation, along with the President and Vice President of the council, be appointed to work in conjunction with the strike committee.⁶³

⁶¹ Free Press, May 17, 1918, p.2.

⁶² Gradualism had a similar value to labor in 1918 as rotating strikes have now, that is, of extending the ability of the workers to sustain a strike.

⁶³ Free Press, May 17, 1918, p.2.

The original strike committee consisted of officers of the four striking civic unions with McBride as their spokesman. The motion passed unanimously. The labor assembly now had an executive representing all of the Trades and Labor Council which could call members out whenever they believed it would have the most effect.

Once it was determined that there was enthusiastic support for a general walk out, organization could begin. Alderman Queen suggested that the committee go to the meetings of all the locals and "advocate the down tool movement."⁶⁴ Veitch claimed that the action of business men, who wired Ottawa asking that the strike be made illegal, made the issue a national one:

"We also can make this a national question ... We have got to show Ottawa we will not knuckle down. We could also get in touch with the Railwaymen's Congress, and get them to take a hand, and, if necessary tie up the whole of the railways of the country to see this trouble through."⁶⁵

The secretary, E. Robinson, was instructed to wire officials of the Trades and Labor Congress at Ottawa to give them information of the strike situation and to ask them to watch out for the interests of Winnipeg workers at the capital. Finally, all the locals were instructed to call emergency meetings to hold strike votes, and to report to the new strike committee before the following Tuesday, May 21, 1918.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

Labor preparations were well under way for a general strike in Winnipeg. But the suggestions for national "down tools", and a Canada wide tie up of the railway system would certainly have concerned Ottawa. And with the labor policy of gradually turning the screws, Ottawa, in spite of its massive inertia, had time to prevent the strike from reaching its maximum potential.

Meanwhile, business and professional men met at the prestigious Royal Alexandra Hotel. Representatives of seventeen business organizations, over four hundred people, filled the meeting room to overflowing.⁶⁶ The regular annual meeting of the Canadian Credit Men's Association had been converted into a general mass meeting to discuss the civic strike. The alarming development of the telephone workers sympathetic strike had made action seem imperative. Although not so tumultuous, the discussion and speeches were no less inflexible than labor.

The head table included Premier Norris, Mayor Davidson, Alderman Fowler, and J.F. Wildman* president of the Board of Trade. One of the more moderate speakers was Mayor Davidson who explained the position of City Council. He informed the meeting that he had been offered one hundred American strike breakers but he had declined to use them. According to the

⁶⁶ The Board of Trade was usually mentioned first. Others include: The Grain Exchange, The Builder' Exchange, and The Real Estate Exchange.

mayor the real question was whether the unions were willing to arbitrate or not. He felt that if the citizens were ready to put up with some inconvenience "we are in pretty good condition to go ahead", and thought "the great danger lies in the sympathetic strike."⁶⁷ Premier Norris was remarkable in his attitude. First he stated that he knew little of the strike: "Not being an authority on the strike situation"; then that he was only interested in the telephone situation; and finally made dark suggestions that some "dangerous element" made his telephone people quit.⁶⁸ All in all the premier gave the meeting very little satisfaction. Many resolutions were placed before the meeting; some were thought too drastic, and others were considered not strong enough under the circumstances. It was therefore decided to have a special committee draw up a composite resolution which would include most of the ideas expressed in the other suggestions. When this special committee returned its final resolutions they were soon enthusiastically endorsed by the meeting.⁶⁹ As expected the action and policy of the City Council was approved. But, some of the other resolutions were practically designed to provoke a general strike:

⁶⁷ Tribune, May 17, 1918, p.9, Telegram, May 17, 1918, p.4.

⁶⁸ Telegram, May 17, 1918, p.9.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.3. The members of the ad hoc committee responsible for drafting these resolutions were, E. Parnell, Isaac Pitblado, A.E. Boyle, G.N. Jackson, A.L. Crossin, J.E. Wildman, and J.B. Coyne*.

"This meeting of citizens strongly endorses the following principles:

1. If any doubt exists on the point, the provisions of the Lemieux Act should be made applicable to municipal corporations in their operation of public utilities.
2. During the period of the war, at least, strikes or lock outs in all employments should be made illegal, and all labor disputes in connection with such employment be settled by arbitration.
3. It should be a criminal offense for the members of the police force of any city, town, or village to go on strike.
4. During the period of the war, all sympathetic strikes should be made illegal, and this meeting urges the Dominion government to immediately take any measures to carry into effect these principles.⁷⁰

While these principles were primarily formulated for Winnipeg, it was hoped that the federal government would pass legislation to prevent similar labor problems in other parts of Canada.

A fifth resolution recommended that a nominating committee choose a Committee of One Hundred "to cooperate with the municipal and provincial authorities during the period of the strike and to promote in every way the resolutions passed at this meeting."⁷¹ The nominating committee, two members from each of the organizations which had representatives at the mass meeting, met the following morning, May 17, and appointed prominent citizens to serve with them on the Committee of One Hundred. The Citizens'

⁷⁰ Free Press, May 17, 1918, p.1.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Committee of One Hundred held its first meeting at 4:30 p.m. May 17, 1918, in the Board Room of the Grain Exchange Building.⁷²

Determined to maintain the operation of the public utilities, the one hundred citizens organized themselves to assist the city. A.L. Crossin* was appointed chairman, G.N. Jackson*, vice-chairman, and C.H. Webster*, secretary. Chairmen of several sub-committees were appointed and formed the rest of the executive. This executive met that same evening in the Industrial Bureau and decided on the membership of the various sub-committees. One of the most important of these in relation to the civic strikes was a conciliation sub-committee.⁷³ Its purpose was to attempt to suggest a solution for the labor difficulty which would be acceptable to both parties in the dispute. By Sunday, May 19, the conciliation sub-committee had already held three meetings to study the question from all angles. It was this conciliation unit of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred

⁷² Telegram, May 17, 1918, p.3. The names of the hundred men and women and the organizations they represented were published the same day.

⁷³ Ibid. Other committees named were: Telephones, Water, Light and Power, Fire Department, Police, Health, Cartage, Legislation and Transportation. The number of citizens on each committee ranged from five to twelve.

whose efforts finally produced an alternative which was potentially acceptable to both sides.⁷⁴

But before the situation could get better it was destined to become much worse. Even the news that an arbitration board had been appointed to deal with the dispute between the Civic Employees' Federation and the city was not really very encouraging, because the Minister of Labor had announced that the board would "not deal with those employees on strike."⁷⁵ Nor did it appear that the provincial government was going to be of any assistance. A Manitoba Government Telephone Commission public notice announced that: "Neither the Commission nor the Provincial Government has any authority with regard to differences between the city and its employees."⁷⁶ It appeared that both the Federal and the provincial governments did not want to get involved in the civic strikes.

Editorial opinion, while more supportive of the city's position than the senior governments, painted a gloomy picture. An editorial in the Telegram was both prophetic

⁷⁴ Ibid., May 20, 1918, p.3. The conciliation sub-committee had seven members, ex-judge Robson, Captain Robson, Rev. Horace Eastwood, E.A. Mott, G.N. Jackson, A.L. Crossin, and the Rev. Dr. C.G. Paterson* as chairman.

⁷⁵ Ibid., May 17, 1918, p.3.

⁷⁶ Free Press, May 17, 1918, p.9.

and inflammatory:

It is the easiest thing in the world to permit a fire to fan itself into a general conflagration. It is almost as easy to permit labor troubles to spread until they reach the point where such drastic measures have to be employed that tragedy ensues.

It is nothing short of moral crime to permit agitators of the most irresponsible type - most of them revolutionists, many of them pro-German and some of them out and out German agents - to agitate the less experienced labor unionists.⁷⁷

This was an extreme view which labor men would resent deeply but unfortunately for which they bore some responsibility McBride could be considered irresponsible, and R.J. Johns' "Prussian" statement, taken out of context as it usually was, appeared very dangerous.

The situation appeared dangerous to observers outside Winnipeg. The Telegram reprinted a Globe editorial which stated:

"Winnipeg's civic labor troubles have taken a dangerous form. The action of the strikers is a blow at the foundations of public authority. The city of Winnipeg cannot afford to surrender to their outrageous attack nor can the nation afford to see the city beaten ... Winnipeg's strike is no local issue. A national danger would be represented by the complete tie-up of a Canadian city in war time."⁷⁸

The greatest national danger was really the involvement of the railway system in the civic strike.

77 Telegram, May 18, 1918, p.1.

78 Ibid.

Saturday morning, May 18, three hundred railway freight handlers went out on strike, without giving any previous warning to the railway companies. Thousands of tons of freight in the freight sheds and cars were almost completely tied up when the men refused to work, declaring themselves in sympathy with the civic teamsters and other strikers. The office staff in the freight yard office, responsible for checking freight cars, also went out on strike. This meant a serious delay in general freight movement because half a million tons of freight passed through Winnipeg every day, and usually every car was checked.⁷⁹

The situation looked very bad and would have appeared hopeless except that from that Saturday, news of the expansion of the strike was usually accompanied by news of attempts at mediation, conciliation, or settlement. One of the first of these peace moves came from the labor men themselves. Evidently after their exciting organizational meeting, cooler heads had prevailed at the Trades and Labor Council. Their new Strike Committee, having given serious consideration to possible solutions, immediately made another attempt to approach the City Council:

Sirs:- The strike committee hereby begs to submit two alternative proposals with a view to the settlement of the present strike situation:

79 Ibid., p.3.

(1) The strikers are willing to go back to work immediately on the terms of the report agreed upon on Saturday last by the committee of the strikers, and the city council. At some time in the future, say within two months, representatives of the city council and the unions affected could engage in a joint conference with a view to arriving at some arrangement satisfactory to all, by which a recurrence of the present difficulties may be prevented.

(2) The strikers are willing to go back to work immediately upon the terms of the report agreed upon on Saturday last as above. If at some time in the future, say when the referendum on the board of control is submitted to the electors of the city or at an early date, if desired by the city council, the agreement of the committee, as above, be submitted to the electors by means of a referendum. Both the council and the unions to agree to abide by the decision of this vote.

(Signed) Ernest Robinson⁸⁰

The letter was a confident but conciliatory attempt to present two positive suggestions, and should have received careful attention. It did receive editorial comment which essentially misinterpreted the peace move: "It is plain that the men will return to work only upon the basis of their full demands as recommended by the Special Committee of the City Council."⁸¹ The Council itself made no immediate effort to reply.

⁸⁰ City of Winnipeg, file 11507. Letter to the Mayor and City Council from the secretary of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, dated May 17, 1918. Letter was stamped received in the Mayor's office, 9:25 a.m., May 18, 1918.

⁸¹ Telegram, May 18, 1918, p.3.

It is possible, however, that Council was waiting for a senior government to make a move. Although the provincial government had so far disclaimed any responsibility, several telegrams from Winnipeg had served to alert Ottawa to the situation.^{81A} The first initiative from the federal government came after Sir Robert Borden had conferred with members of Parliament for Winnipeg. In a telegram to the strikers, sent through Ernest Robinson, Borden made a direct appeal for labor peace:

"My colleagues and I have learned with deep regret of the unfortunate differences between the city of Winnipeg and certain of its employees. May I venture to express to you ... the very earnest hope that they will consent to an equitable arrangement under which their grievances will be investigated and that pending such arrangement they will return to their accustomed duties. In these days of stress and danger, when it is necessary that the utmost effort of the nation should be put forth, there is a supreme need for unity of purpose and cooperation among all our citizens ... I appeal to you and to your coworkers as men truly loyal to the nation's purpose, to do your utmost to bring to an end the present unfortunate conditions."

R.L. Borden⁸²

Whether Borden's appeal had influenced them or not labor men did not say, but they did maintain that they had made a good offer to the Council and were still waiting for a reply.

^{81A} See Appendix I for example telegram.

⁸² Borden Papers, pp.54244-5. Night "lettergram" to E. Robinson from R.L. Borden, May 17, 1918. Both the above telegram and letter from E. Robinson were prepared the evening of May 17. It is not possible to determine whether Borden's telegram was delivered before or after the labor proposals were prepared.

Unknown at this point to those on the local scene, there were two federal government initiatives under way. The Minister of Labor, the Hon. T.W. Crothers, had requested David Campbell* to try and settle the disputes. It seems that David Campbell, a Winnipeg lawyer in Regina on other business, arrived in Winnipeg on the evening of Saturday, May 18. That evening he met the workers' Strike Committee and in his report said that on the following day:

I met individual Members of the City Council including the Mayor and certain Controllers. On Monday morning I met the Board of Control with the Mayor, and on Monday afternoon and on each successive day until Friday night met alternately, from time to time, the full Council and Strikers' Committee: also on two or three occasions the Conciliation Committee of One Hundred.

Senator Robertson arrived on Wednesday night and, from that time until the matter was settled, cooperated with me and gave very material assistance in bringing about a settlement. I doubt very much if I could have succeeded in his absence.⁸³

The presence of Senator Robertson was the other federal government initiative.

Senator Gideon Robertson was a highly regarded member of Borden's Cabinet, a minister without portfolio, and considered to be the representative of organized labor in the government. He was, in May, actively working with the Canada Registration Board when Borden received a letter from Sir Joseph Flavelle requesting that Robertson go to

⁸³ Department of Labour Records, Vol. 309, file 18-159.

Victoria, British Columbia, to settle a strike of machinists and coppersmiths in the shipyards.⁸⁴ This led to a letter from Borden to Robertson asking him to look at the situation at both Winnipeg and Vancouver:

... you should go both to Winnipeg and Vancouver with the least possible delay.

This afternoon we had considerable discussion in Council ... The situation in Winnipeg seems to be growing worse instead of better.

In case you could arrange this absence, one of the other Ministers will be prepared to take up your work in connection with the Canada Registration Board.⁸⁵

The work of the Canada Registration Board was considered essential to the solution of the problem of the shortage of labor. In removing Robertson from this work it would seem that strikes in Vancouver and Winnipeg were taken very seriously indeed.

Four more local unions took strike votes on Saturday, and in each case the vote was greatly in favor of joining those men already out. The unions voting to get into the fight were the Street Railwaymen, the Typographical union, C.N.R. Machinists, and the Stationary Engineers. Each of these was an important addition to the strikers' army, and had joined the movement because of the "right to strike"

⁸⁴ Borden Papers, pp. 133296-7. Letter from Flavelle to Borden, May 16, 1918.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.133298. Letter from Borden to Robertson, May 19, 1918.

"As to the scabs who took the places of our working men while they are on strike, we will see that they are all fired out cold before we will go back to work ... We are going to run this city and we will not consent to having any scab working beside us."⁹⁰

This was in sharp contrast to the words of the preacher at the Baptist church who, when speaking of the strike said:

We need calmness of mind, freedom from prejudice, kindness of feeling, the same readiness to understand the viewpoint of the other party as we wish him to exhibit in regard to ours.⁹¹

Perhaps this was the attitude that the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred hoped would prevail when they chose a minister, the Reverend Dr. C.G. Paterson, to be chairman of the conciliation sub-committee.

Sunday, May 19, Premier Norris for the first time offered assistance. He sent identical letters to F.G. Tipping of the Trades and Labor Council and to Mayor Davidson, inviting five representatives from each side to meet at eleven o'clock Monday in his office to discuss "what steps if any might be taken at this moment to relieve the present strike situation." He then went on to say that he would not be there but to direct replies to the Acting Premier. The meeting took place as suggested but because the Mayor said he had not consulted with the City Council, the conference was unable to proceed. The attorney general offered to

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.3.

⁹¹ Telegram, May 20, 1918, p.12.

arrange another meeting but neither side accepted.⁹² Whether the meeting would have been more productive with the Premier present is questionable. More likely the Mayor may have decided to put his faith in the mediation efforts of David Campbell whom he had met with earlier on Monday morning with the Board of Control.

With no apparent progress toward settlement on Monday, there appeared to be no reason for labor not to resume "turning the screw." Tuesday, May 21, witnessed the greatest single expansion of the numbers on strike that had yet taken place. It was reported:

Railway transportation facilities of Western Canada were placed in jeopardy today when 4000 employees from Winnipeg and Transcona yards laid down their tools and walked out.

Other bodies will quit this afternoon and tomorrow morning. It is declared 1800 railway car men will walk out at 9 o'clock. By noon tomorrow, labor leaders affirm 7000 railway workers will be on strike.

...
A. Scoble former labor alderman declared today that the whole brotherhood of Railway trainmen had pledged its support to the strikers.⁹³

It is probable that labor men wanted to give the impression that they could and would tie up the whole railway system. As it was, with the Transcona, Weston, and Fort Rouge yards on strike, the impression was quite convincing.

⁹² City of Winnipeg, file 11507. Copy of letter from Premier to F.G. Tipping, May 19, 1918, and letter from Acting Premier to City Clerk, May 20, 1918.

⁹³ Telegram, May 21, 1918, p.3.

At a special informal meeting of the City Council Tuesday morning called at his request, David Campbell finally persuaded the Council to move from their original rigid stand for no strike in all civic unions. He had urged the city to agree to conciliation-before-strike in the case of every union "so hard that aldermen accused him of working for the labor party." Campbell had declared that a no strike agreement was "no good and unworkable even if the men were to sign it." Nevertheless, with respect to the firemen the Council was adamant, they would authorize Campbell to present a conciliation-before-strike proposal to the strikers for all unions, except the firemen. The result was predictable; the Strike Committee refused to accept the compromise Campbell had worked so hard to achieve; they insisted that the firemen should have the right to strike. Campbell's efforts appeared to have failed.⁹⁴ For the time being, until Gideon Robertson arrived, this avenue of settlement was blocked.

With efforts at settlement apparently at a standstill, the Strike Committee decided to "turn the screw" a little more. A letter forwarded to the manager of the Winnipeg Electric Railway Company read as follows:

Dear Sir:- I am directed by the Street Railwaymen's Union, local 39, to notify you that at the hour of 2 o'clock a.m. tomorrow, the 22nd inst., all our members will cease work, and will continue to refrain

⁹⁴ Telegram, May 21, May 21, 1918, p.3.

from working until the dispute existing between the city of Winnipeg and the civic employees now on strike is satisfied.

Yours truly,
 (signed) A. Gammack
 President⁹⁵

This letter added another one thousand workers to the total on strike and gave emphasis to Ernest Robinson's statement that:

"There are 36 unions which have placed themselves entirely at the disposal of the central strike committee. Plans are being laid to call them out when, in the opinion of the central committee, the time is most opportune."⁹⁶

One fact was certain, the time had come for about fifty thousand citizens to find other means of local transportation Wednesday morning.

Wednesday, with the pressure of the "screws" becoming increasingly more burdensome, David Campbell continued to pursue his difficult attempts at mediation by meeting in turn, the Strike Committee, the Conciliation Committee, and the City Council. While there was still no change in opinions with regard to the firemen's right to strike, he managed to bring before Council what was considered to be an important concession from the unions' Strike Committee:

95 Telegram, May 21, 1918, p.3.

96 Free Press, May 21, 1918, p.1.

... that the strikers would agree to arbitration - before-strike in all civic departments except the firemen; and for the firemen, arbitration first, and if arbitration fails, the deadlock to be submitted to a special committee of the city council, to be considered and reported upon to council, before any strike is called...

The strikers insist on retaining to the firemen the right to strike as an ultimate resort if, as in the present case, a report of a special committee is rejected by council as a whole.⁹⁷

Although it could be seen that the strikers were trying to protect themselves against some future "Fowler amendment." the Council remained unmoved. The situation had again reached an impasse. Fortunately, Senator Robertson was to arrive in Winnipeg that evening.

Senator Robertson arrived in Winnipeg on the Imperial Limited of the C.P.R. at 10:25 p.m. Wednesday. He announced that he was in Winnipeg to restore peace and would make no comment until he had "heard both sides of the questions at issue." That same evening, at a midnight conference, Robertson listened to the views of a large delegation of labor men, led by Ernest Robinson, until about 1:15 in the morning. From this point on, even though Robertson had acted from the position of special negotiator for the Prime Minister, because he had listened to the strikers' position first, he was accused of being in full sympathy with the labor cause.

⁹⁷ Telegram, May 22, 1918, p.3.

Thursday morning, about the time that 1200 railroad carmen walked off the job in further support of the labor position, Senator Gideon Robertson addressed the City Council:

"I came he said "because the federal government feels that it should be settled as soon as possible in view of the fact that our war effort depends upon industrial peace at this time, and I think that even sacrifice should be made, that this thing, that this request that the firemen relinquish the right to strike - should be forgotten and smoothed over and dropped. ...

Keep in mind that upon your action here will probably depend the industrial peace of Canada for some time. Five other cities are looking to Winnipeg as an example of what is going to occur there. If the situation develops you are going to tie up transportation and retard Canada's war effort to a great degree - and for what? Because some of you thought - and perhaps justly - that the firemen should not strike. ...

There are 200,000 union men in Canada today and none of them ever did sign away their birthright, for that's what you are asking them to do.

...
This is a tempest in a tea pot ...Put the committee's recommendations into effect and let it rest at that without the amendment regarding the right to strike. The men will never agree unless this is done ... You will create the same differences in other cities and it is not worth the candle."⁹⁸

In plain words Robertson told the Council that for the sake of the war effort they should give in and forget about taking away the right to strike from any of their employees.

Predictably, it was Alderman Fowler who reacted the most strongly to Robertson's address to the Council. He expressed his disappointment in Robertson and declared:

⁹⁸ Ibid., May 23, 1918, p.8.

"I'm surprised at your viewpoint that this situation is a tempest in a teapot at this time. I don't consider the safety of people's lives and property in the City of Winnipeg a tempest in a teapot ... Nobody is denying the right of unions to strike except in the case of the firemen.⁹⁹

Alderman Fowler seemed to have forgotten the intent of his own amendment that had brought the issue of the right to strike into question. Nevertheless it was evident that he was not prepared to give up the principle he had advocated throughout the labor disputes, and even less prepared to forget.

On the request of A.L. Crossin, chairman of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred, the Council decided to adjourn until the following morning in order to receive a report from the Conciliation sub-committee. This group had been negotiating with the Strike Committee independently of the federal government team of Robertson and Campbell. It seems that day, Thursday, the Strike Committee had submitted a statement to the Conciliation sub-committee that indicated clearly how far the strikers were prepared to go to get a settlement. Before the new initiative from the Strike Committee could be presented to the Council, the Conciliation sub-committee had to report the details to the parent body Thursday evening for their approval.¹⁰⁰

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

At 10 o'clock Friday morning the Council met in yet another session to try to end the strike. At noon they were still considering the report of the Conciliation sub-committee. That report, a modified version of the Special Committee report that had been rejected by Council May 13, proposed that wages and working conditions would be as arranged May 11. For future negotiations there was an important change in the last clause which provided for detailed conciliation and arbitration procedures.¹⁰¹ The actual strike settlement depended upon the acceptance by both sides of three additional compromise recommendations.

These were, that the city should withdraw its resolution respecting the denial of the firemen's right to strike, that the firemen should give an understanding that they would refrain from going on strike except under the most serious provocation, and that officers of the fire brigade including lieutenants and captains should not be members of the Firemen's union. Each of these required a major concession on the part of one or both of the disputants. The first forced the complete withdrawal of the Council from its support of the Fowler Amendment, and thereby removed the issue which had caused the civic strike to expand. The second forced the Council to accept the

¹⁰¹ City of Winnipeg, file 11507. For the report of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred see Appendix III.

the remote possibility that a strike by firemen could take place. The third would permit the efficient use of volunteers in the fire department if after all safeguards had failed a strike by firemen took place. Because this third recommendation was present, the Council, after hours of discussion and the urging of both the Citizens' Committee and the federal government mediators, finally, and reluctantly, agreed to accept the report of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred.¹⁰²

The third recommendation was easily the most controversial as far as the labor men were concerned. They had not wanted to make the "strike only under severe provocation" commitment, and the idea of removing the officers from the union was at first completely rejected. Campbell and Robertson, aware of the content of the Citizens' Committee report the night before, had been completely unsuccessful in their efforts to get the firemen to accept this recommendation. However, because the Council had given in, although unwillingly, on so many points, the federal mediators tried again with the men. Robertson in his report to Crothers says:

Mr. Campbell and I again met the Strike Committee and Council in separate sessions during the afternoon of the 24th and finally obtained an agreement from the Strike Committee that they would consent

¹⁰² Borden Papers, Vol.394, p.2248. Letter-report of Gideon Robertson to Minister of Labor, May 24, 1918. Letter also in Department of Labour Records, Vol.309, file 18-159.

to the adoption of the Citizens' Committee's report regarding officers of the fire brigade being members of the union, it being the last point in dispute, and enabled us to have a memorandum of agreement drawn and signed by members of the City Council, approved by the Mayor and by the solicitor for the men on strike. This document was then submitted to the Strike Committee at seven o'clock May 24th and by a motion passed in the presence of Mr. Campbell and the undersigned was unconditionally adopted by the Committee.¹⁰³

The signing of this document by a majority of the Council and by the solicitor for the Trades and Labor Council marked the end of the negotiations.¹⁰⁴

As far as Campbell and Robertson were concerned, their work was over and they could leave Winnipeg. They had exerted a great deal of influence to force the disputants to compromise on conflicting principles, and it was only with the combined efforts of all involved that an agreement had been possible. When Gideon Robertson boarded the train for Vancouver that evening, phase two of the Winnipeg strikes of May, 1918 was virtually over.

103 Ibid.

104 City of Winnipeg, file 11507. Agreement signed by councillors and labor solicitors, May 24, 1918. See Appendix IV.

CHAPTER VII

Even though the agreement to end the strike had been signed, there were still details that had to be taken care of before the strike was officially called off. The most important requirement as far as the strikers were concerned was that they should be reinstated without prejudice in the positions they had occupied before striking. The agreement signed May 24 provided that by Wednesday, May 29, the civic employees would be "restored to the same rank or position as they occupied previous to striking."¹ Because the Strike Committee had to care for the needs of the large number of other workers on strike, they decided not to call the strike off until they had assurance from the provincial government, the railways, and all other employers, that their employees would also be reinstated without prejudice. These commitments were obtained by Saturday, May 25, and then the Strike was officially called off.²

The official announcement of the Strike Committee that the strike was over was issued at 12:30 Saturday afternoon:

¹ City of Winnipeg, file 11507. Agreement May 24, 1918.

² Department of Labour Records, Vol.309, file 18-159. Letter-report of David Campbell to Minister of Labor, May 29, 1918.

We, the strike committee, duly constituted and authorized to act for and by the organizations out on strike, hereby declare the strike at an end and the dispute settled.³

Immediately, the workers began to return to their jobs; the civic firemen and the street railway men were the first to return to their duties. Cars began to leave the barns half an hour after the announcement that the strike was at an end. The civic electrical workers returned to their jobs as their work required, and telephone operators were back for the Sunday evening shift. A few teamsters and freight handlers remained out until later in the week because of a dispute over back pay, but most other workers returned to work on Monday, May 27.⁴

Wednesday, the strike threatened to flare up again, Glassco and his electrical workers had a new dispute over working hours. Glassco announced that meter readers and repair men who went to customers' houses would work from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. McBride pointed out that the new agreement which had just been signed provided that the working hours for all men would be from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Glassco responded quite reasonably that the utility's customers did not want

³ Telegram, May 25, 1918, p.3.

⁴ Free Press, May 25, 1918, p.4. The freight handlers of C.P.R., about 200 men, had originally struck in sympathy with the civic workers, but remained out in sympathy with 87 teamsters until their dispute was settled with Manitoba Cartage.

to be visited that early. After a new round of threats the Board of Control managed to arrange a compromise by having the service men start at 7:30 a.m. and the meter readers at 8 a.m. Although the dispute was settled by the end of the week, the brief threat to labor peace must have reawakened in both sides a measure of wariness and hostility.⁵

The details of the formal settlement and agreement between the city and its employees were completed slowly. Although it had been expected that at its regular Monday meeting, May 27, the Council would simply rescind the Fowler amendment to bring the Special Committee Report of May 13 into effect, it could not legally be done that soon. Controller Puttee gave notice that at the next regular meeting of Council he would move:

"That the report of the Special Committee on settlement of the strike ... dated May 11th, 1918, as amended and adopted by Council on May 13th, 1918, be ... hereby rescinded."⁶

It was in this way that the Fowler amendment, the threat to the right to strike, was removed. At the same meeting Council appointed representatives to go before the Board of Conciliation, set up for the Civic Employees' Federation,

⁵ Ibid., May 30, p.3.

⁶ Minutes of the Council, May 27, 1918, p.276.

which had opted for arbitration instead of a strike.⁷

At the next meeting, June 10, Council rescinded the Fowler amendment, approved a new schedule for the Electrical Workers, and dealt with a resolution of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred which recommended that the "loyal" employees of the utilities who had not gone on strike be officially thanked and rewarded.⁸ Predictably it was Alderman Fowler who moved "that employees who had remained faithful" should be paid a bonus in addition to their regular wages for May, and despite labor opposition, the motion passed.⁹ While the motion was consistent with the public declarations of the Council during the strike, it was an unnecessarily provocative move to make before the settlement was complete.

It took until July 22, before Council was finally finished with the last details of the settlement of the labor disputes of May 1918. The report of the Board of Conciliation was received by the city solicitor July 3. The Board, in order to ensure that the employees who had

⁷ City of Winnipeg file 11564. The members of the Board of Conciliation and Investigation appointed May 21 by the Minister of Labor were Mr. R.F. McWilliams for the Federation, Mr. James Auld for the City of Winnipeg, and Mr. F.M. Black Chairman. The Board held eighteen meetings between May 21 and June 21. All sessions were held in private.

⁸ City of Winnipeg, file 11507. Letter and resolutions from the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred to Mayor Davidson, May 31.

⁹ Minutes of the Council, June 10, 1918, p.297.

not gone on strike would be fairly treated, had used the average of the increases negotiated with the strikers, 13.33 percent, in their recommendations.¹⁰ The report of the Board of Conciliation of the Department of Labour was accepted on July 8, and a supplementary report was approved at the next meeting July 22. Finally, at that same meeting the motion which had been the original cause of the strikes, the War Bonus motion passed April 29, was rescinded without publicity under its official designation, "Subsection (3) of Clause 4 of the Board of Control supplementary report."¹¹ Everything was officially settled, and while it might have been assumed that there would be no more trouble, strong feelings of suspicion and irritation remained.

For a very short time at the end of the strike there had been a new atmosphere of cordiality between worker and employer. The Citizens' Committee of One Hundred had announced that during their many discussions with the Strike Committee they had been exceptionally pleased with the courteous treatment they had received.¹² After signing of the agreement on Friday, May 24, McBride had even shaken the Mayor's hand and congratulated him on the final

¹⁰ City of Winnipeg, file 11564.

¹¹ Minutes of the Council, July 22, 1918, pp.368-9.

¹² Free Press, May 24, 1918, p.3.

satisfactory arrangements.¹³ That this conciliatory attitude would continue was too much to hope for. By Monday, both sides were claiming and proclaiming their victory.

While city hall officials regarded the result as a great victory for arbitration and confidently predicted "that a recurrence of the trouble will not likely take place again for many years," Ernest Robinson was announcing that the strikers "knowing their cause to be a just one were confident of the power in their hands to bring victory." Neither did he emphasize the settlement as a means of promoting labor peace but rather the past fight would "prove to be one of the best levers in still further organization on the part of the workers."¹⁴ The whole tone of his statement was uncompromising and in view of the events of the following year, prophetic.

Other expressions of opinion were no less extreme and ranged from editorial attacks on Gideon Robertson to socialist speeches in the Columbia Theatre. Senator Robertson was accused of being partisan in favor of the unions, of treating both the Mayor and the City Council in an insulting and intimidating manner, and of being wrong in his absolute support of the right to strike.¹⁵ An editorial signed by R.J.J. on the front page of the machinists'

¹³ Ibid., May 25, 1918, p.4.

¹⁴ Ibid., May 27, 1918, p.9.

¹⁵ Ibid., May 24, 1918, p.9.

Bulletin had, as its dominant theme, the class struggle:

When Alderman Fowler moved the amendment to take the right to strike away from the civic employees, he was only expressing the wishes and aspirations of the capitalist class.

And when the workers replied to this act with a general strike they were either consciously or unconsciously demonstrating to the majority of the city council that what was beneficial to them was detrimental to the working class.¹⁶

On the side of the "capitalist class," the Financial Post commented that:

"In Winnipeg force is being used to defy the interests and the convenience of the people, ... a state of affairs which can only be compared with the brute tactics of the Russian Bolsheviki."¹⁷

Sam Blumenberg in his Columbia Theatre speech did little to dispel this extreme opinion. He explained that his earlier remark "We are going to run the city" was not exactly what he had intended: "I meant to go further than this ... I was going to say, "We are going to run the Dominion of Canada." He continued:

"It is our aim to change the trades union into a Socialist industrial union.

If the capitalist class were not afraid that the strike in Winnipeg would spread throughout the country and grow into a social revolution they would not have settled the strike as easily as they did. They knew that the workers were determined.

¹⁶ Bulletin, June, 1918, p.1.

¹⁷ The Financial Post of Canada, May 25, 1918, n.p.

This was the reason they gave in so easily and thus avoided the overthrow of the capitalist class."¹⁸

Blumenberg raised several interesting points: first, in his comment about the industrial union, it is possible to speculate that he was aware of plans to organize the One Big Union; second, he came very close to Robertson's concern about the strike spreading to other cities, but for different reasons;¹⁹ and third, his threat of the overthrow of the capitalist class could easily be interpreted by investigators as evidence of intent to overthrow the government.

Blumenberg's speech was a prime example, in fact, of the type of inflammatory rhetoric which attracted the attention of several official investigative bodies, from which the government developed its perception of the situation in Western Canada. The government received reports from special agents of the Royal North West Mounted Police, from the Intelligence Branch of the Naval Service, from the Militia, and from the Dominion Police. Both Sam Blumenberg and R.J. Johns were highly visible advocates of socialist class action in both 1918 and 1919. Blumenberg seconded the third resolution regarding the withdrawal of troops from Russia at the Walker theatre meeting, December

¹⁸ Free Press, May 27, 1918, p13. "We are going to run the city," was part of another speech Blumenberg made at the Columbia theatre, May 19, 1918.

¹⁹ Telegram, May 23, 1918, p.3. Robertson said to Mayor

22, 1918. Both he and R.J. Johns were present at the Majestic theatre meeting of the Socialist party on January 19, 1919. Both of these meetings are considered part of the background of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.²⁰

It is possible in fact to make several other comparisons and connections between the two strikes. Although the Board of Control was abolished in September 1918, the membership of the City Council remained virtually the same in 1919. Controller C.F. Gray, who had his mind changed under the influence of F.O. Fowler, became the new mayor. Alderman Fowler, Fisher and Queen, and other involved councillors remained. One new addition to the labor ranks was Ernest Robinson, secretary of the Trades and Labor Council and articulate spokesman for the Strike Committee in 1918.²¹ The Council of 1919 was essentially the same group of men who had very unwillingly agreed to a compromise which had forced them to reverse publicly their official policy. They had only done so on the understanding that labor peace would be achieved for some time. When the strike issue in the civic services appeared again in 1919, it is not in the

Davidson, "I have already stopped ... a campaign to enlist the sympathies of workmen in other cities."

²⁰ D.C. Masters, the Winnipeg General Strike, Toronto, 1950, p.3. and p.29.

²¹ See Appendix VI for reproduction of pages of Minutes of the City Council which give the complete membership for 1918 and 1919.

least surprising that Alderman Fowler presented a new and stronger Fowler amendment which, in effect, forced an employee to sign an undertaking not to participate in a sympathetic strike, or he would be liable for instant dismissal. Alderman Fowler must have felt quite vindicated for his stand in 1918 when this new motion carried nine to five.²²

Attitudes of moderation were not really permitted to carry through from 1918 to 1919. Arthur Puttee, the controller in 1918 who had advocated moderation and conciliation to both the City Council and to labor men was no longer a member of the Council in 1919. As editor of The Voice, Puttee had been a steady supporter of labor, but, the position he took in 1918 of support for the war bonus and for conciliation, cost him the support of the Trades and Labor Council and led directly to the end of the publication of The Voice, in July, 1918. It was replaced by the Western Labor News, August 2, 1918. The necessity of having a newspaper that would speak exclusively for labor was explained editorially: "We felt our side of the case should have been defended as the newspapers certainly did not."²³ Puttee in expressing his views on arbitration had

²² Minutes of the Council, June 9, 1919, pp.415-6.

²³ Western Labor News, August 2, 1918, p.1.

not supported the Strike Committee and was no longer acceptable.²⁴ Puttee was really quite perceptive; had his moderate views been accepted by both Council and labor, it is unlikely that the strike in 1918 would have expanded to the point where organizational techniques were developed, and experience gained, which could be used again by both sides in 1919, with confidence.

The citizen and labor organizations created at the meetings at the Royal Alexandra Hotel and the Labor Temple May 16, 1918, were reactivated in 1919. The type of organization of the general strike committee that had been proposed by vice-president H. Veitch in 1918 became the Strike Committee in 1919, better organized, and experienced in gaining support of the trades unions. The Citizens' Committee of One Hundred which had sprung from a resolution of the mass meeting of business and professional men, did not officially disband with the settlement of the strike in 1918; the membership and their ideas of public service remained until the need was perceived again in 1919. When it appeared certain that the workers in 1919 were going on strike, the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred called a public meeting the evening of May 14, at which a new Citizens' Committee of One Thousand was formed. Already experienced in the running

²⁴ A. Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1977, p.146. Ross McCormack categorizes Puttee as a moderate and calls these circumstances "the humiliation of Arthur Puttee."

of essential services in 1918, they immediately formed several departments of volunteer public service including Fire Protection, City Water and Light, and Public Safety.²⁵

Even though the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand was prepared with its department of Fire Protection, and had experienced volunteers available, it was not expected that the firemen would go on strike in 1919, because they had just negotiated a favorable new contract. The firemen however were associated with the Trades and Labor Council and that connection in 1918 had been used as a real lever to negotiate a favorable settlement.

Since the policemen with their newly formed union were also members of the Trades and Labor Council, the situation was viewed with considerable concern. The policemen, in the fall of 1918, over the opposition of Alderman Fowler, had had their new organization recognized by the City Council.²⁶ Later when it was found that they planned to affiliate with the Trades and Labor Council there was real opposition. A letter from J.B. Coyne to the Board of Police Commissioners questioned the legality of the

²⁵ Department of Labour Records, Box 48, file 19 (184). This file contains a 40 page pamphlet published by the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand which completely explains its organization.

²⁶ Minutes of the Council, September 30, 1918, p.502.

connection.²⁷

Privately, to W.H. Carter*, president of the Greater Winnipeg Board of Trade, Coyne wrote:

It seems to me that the recognition of the Union means the inauguration of anarchy by turning over the instruments for the preservation of law and order to the Trades and Labor Council, which is now largely dominated by labor leaders who are acknowledged Bolsheviki and whose desire I believe is to substitute a workmen's council with the Russian motto as the governing force in the municipality instead of the representative bodies now constituted by law.²⁸

It can be seen in this letter why there was concern for the loyalty of the police force in 1919, and why the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand had a department of Public Safety. As with the firemen, they had the advantage of the experience they had gained in 1918, when a special volunteer police force had been trained and organized to patrol fire alarm boxes to prevent false alarms. These trained volunteers were still available. The combination of experience, organization, and availability of volunteers, coupled with uneasiness over the loyalty of the police force associated with the Trades and Labor Council, very likely helped the City Council make its decision to dismiss the police force in 1919.

²⁷ P.A.M. Winnipeg Board of Trade Council and Executive Minutes, Vol.4, 1918-1925. Letter J.B. Coyne to Board of Police Commissioners, October 31, 1918.

²⁸ Ibid., Letter J.B. Coyne to W.H. Carter, October 31, 1918.

Another comparison can be made between the strikes of 1918 and 1919, that of numbers. David Campbell reported to the Minister of Labour that there were on strike in Winnipeg in 1918, thirty five unions and 16,000 workers;²⁹ Gideon Robertson reported to the Minister, thirty six unions and 15,600 workers. These were very similar estimates, and since both men were right on the scene in Winnipeg, acting first independently and then together, they were likely aware of the true figures. Both of them also were experienced with labor rhetoric and would probably have recognized attempts by labor officials to inflate the actual number; Ernest Robinson did claim forty unions on strike. Both federal negotiators had independent access to employer groups and would have had opportunity to verify the numbers. Newspaper reports as stated earlier ranged from 14,000 to 17,000. It therefore seems that the official figures of the Department of Labour must be somewhat lower than they should be. In the first place, the Labor Gazette tended to accept the figures of their correspondent in Winnipeg, in this case A. Scoble, almost unreservedly. Scoble reported 30 unions on strike totalling 6,446 workers, but in another letter he reports that he had been ill during the strike and was delayed investigating. Evidently he visited each place

²⁹ Department of Labour Records, Vol. 309, file 18-159. All references in this paragraph, except newspapers, are in the same file.

and made inquiries. One wonders why the figures that were reported were not those of the official government mediators, and the possibility suggests itself that during wartime, to give the illusion of labor harmony to citizens, allies and the enemy, it would be expedient to minimize the figures.

In 1919 there would have been no particular reason to choose lower figures to report. The number the Department of Labour uses for 1919 is 22,860 employees on strike in Winnipeg. Scoble reported 22,140 but this was because of an error in addition!³⁰ The Department of Labour report continues:

... the Winnipeg strike resulted in a considerable time loss apart from its local boundaries ... It extended as a sympathetic strike to other cities in Western Canada. The number of employees ... in these other cities, as a result of the Winnipeg strike, were approximately 18,430 ... Thus the Winnipeg strike and its ramifications involved a total of 41,290 employees and a time loss approximating 1,154,692 working days.³¹

None of the figures for either 1918 or 1919 take into consideration non union employees put out of work because of the strike, so the numbers could have easily been larger in both years. It should also be noted that the Department of Labour's statistical measure of importance is the number of working days lost. The strike in 1919 easily surpasses

³⁰ Ibid., Box 48, file 19 (184).

³¹ Ibid., Acc. 70/157, Box 49, unorganized. There were eight other cities involved.

any other strike in this regard, and the loss of working days in 1918 was much less. This statistical measure of importance, however, should not be applied to 1918, because the strategy of the Strike Committee of the "turning of the screw" inevitably kept the number of working days lost to a minimum. What was important in 1918 was the strike's potential for expansion; it was stopped while the numbers on strike were still increasing.

The change in labor strategy from the "turning of the screw" in 1918, to the synchronized shock of the general strike in 1919, not only produced a greater statistical time loss for the Department of Labour but also raised the spectre of revolution. The government at Ottawa by May 1919 was absolutely convinced that a revolution was about to take place in Western Canada. The Socialist rhetoric that labor speakers such as Sam Blumenberg and R.J. Johns indulged in, in 1918, tended to cause the government intelligence gathering agencies to increase their watch on suspected subversives. By April 1919, the R.N.W.M.P. had gathered enough information to prepare and to distribute in government circles, a secret and confidential report, entitled "Revolutionary Tendencies in Western Canada."³²

³² Copies of this report "by a secret agent" were sent by the Comptroller of the R.N.W.M.P. to all Federal cabinet ministers, April 12, 1919. R.C.M.P. Records, Vol.137, pp.325-337.

The Intelligence Branch of the Naval Service collected the thirteen page document from the R.N.W.M.P. in a "secret" file entitled "Raids and plots - Data relevant to revolutionary tendencies in Western Canada."³³ It is not in the least surprising that when Senator Robertson arrived in Winnipeg again in 1919, he was no longer in sympathy with labor in Winnipeg.

In 1918, labor men appeared to be on strike because of a genuine concern for labor principles, and seemed amenable to the ideas of conciliation and arbitration. The gradual involvement of other unions, to build up a general strike, did not look like an attempt to take over the government, but rather, like a new kind of trade union activity. It was generally recognized that the rate of inflation made wage increases absolutely necessary, and that what the workers were demanding, was really quite reasonable. Except for the criticism that strike action had been taken precipitately, it was the Winnipeg City Council which appeared unreasonable and intransigent. Because of all these factors, the strikers gained the support of Gideon Robertson, who, knowing the overall labor situation and the sensitivity of the Winnipeg area to the war effort, forced a settlement favorable to the workers.

³³ P.A.C. Department of National Defence Records, Vol. 3985, file 1055-2-21 (1).

Taking all the elements of the situation into consideration, it was almost inevitable that the strikes of May 1918 would appear to the workers to have been quite successful. But, the organizational machinery for running the city of Winnipeg with volunteers, developed and tested in 1918, coupled with the bitterness aroused by Robertson's forced settlement, almost ensured that a future strike would be unsuccessful.

During July and August of 1918, the metal trades workers went on strike for increased wages and employer recognition of their newly formed Metal Trades Council. When employers would not give in to their demands, a general strike was threatened again, and again the workers gained a partial success. After May 1918, this experience would have reinforced labor's belief in the efficacy of the general strike, and unfortunately for labor, almost ensured that this ultimate weapon would be used again in the future.

In 1919, with the war over and war contracts cancelled, with plenty of men available and soldiers returning from Europe, and with the government convinced that a revolution was imminent, labor was no longer in a strategic position. Both sides in 1919 were confident of their ultimate victory because of their experience and organization in 1918. But, while almost every factor had favored the strikers in 1918, almost every factor, including ironically, the labor success in 1918, was against the strikers in 1919. They were simply

not in a position to win, especially with a general strike.

In the end, it was the discredited Voice of Arthur Puttee which seemed to have the clearest vision:

"The treatment received by the ruling and moneyed classes in the long, hard past, has been most provocative, it is true, and the temptation to demonstrate the great power of organized labor was, doubtless, great. But two wrongs never made a right.

The Voice can only hope that when labor wins this Winnipeg Strike, it will not at the same time lose something more precious still - that the shadow may not be snatched, while the solid substance which might soon have been grasped, is lost, at least indefinitely."³⁴

Even though written in May 1918, just as the labor dispute then was becoming more serious, this editorial aptly illustrates the close relationship of 1918, the "shadow" to 1919, the "solid substance."

³⁴ Telegram, May 18, 1918, p.3. The Telegram printed the editorial "from today's issue of The Voice, as an example of labor moderation.

APPENDIX I

Sir Robert Borden and his government received many telegrams from Winnipeg business interests, with dates from May 15 to May 24, 1918, during phase two of the Winnipeg civic strikes. One of the first, and a fair sample of the opinion expressed, was from the Winnipeg Board of Trade:

WINNIPEG BOARD OF TRADE—CONFIRMATION OF TELEGRAM

Sir Robert Borden,
Premier, Ottawa Ont.

May 15, 1918

Serious strike situation developing here as a result of intense agitation by Labor Union organizers. Employees of four important public utilities owned and operated by city have quit work, refusing large increase in wages. Efforts now being made to induce street railway men to come out in sympathy. Other services may be affected in same way if radical action not taken at once to offset activities of agitators. Has your Government power under War Measures Act or any other legislation to prevent strikes, especially sympathetic strikes? Are not employees of public utilities amenable to discipline of any kind in war time? Please explain power of your Government in reply wire. If you have not necessary powers now we intend to ask that you obtain them through immediate legislation, and bring to bear whole force of your Government's authority to relieve impossible situation caused by unpatriotic action of professional troublemakers.

A.E. BOYLE

Secretary, Winnipeg Board of Trade.

Charge Winnipeg Board of Trade.

Borden Papers, Vol. 100, file O'C 505 (1), p.54216.
Telegrams and responses occupy pp.54215 to 54279 in this large file.

APPENDIX II

Committee Room,
Winnipeg, May 11th 1918.

His Worship the Mayor and Council,

Your Committee appointed by Council at its special meeting on the 9th instant to meet the employees of the City with a view to settlement of the strike, begs leave to report that it has met with the representatives of the several organizations and has fully considered the various matters in dispute, and as a result of its negotiations begs to recommend the following settlement, namely:-

WATER WORKS OPERATORS

(1) An increase in wages of 5¢ per hour to date from May 1st 1918.

(2) Two weeks annual holidays with pay for employees who have been in the service of the Department 10 years or over. One week annual holidays with pay for employees who have been in the service of the Department 5 years and under 10 years.

(3) Four Statutory Holidays with pay, i.e., Christmas Day, New Years Day, Good Friday and Labor Day.

In granting the annual holidays it is on the understanding that the same will involve no extra cost to the Department, except for emergency work.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS

An increase in wages of 12% for schedule adjustments.

FIRE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

(1) The following schedule of monthly pay to date from May 1st 1918:-

First year men taken on after May 1st 1918	\$\$ 92.00
Men now receiving \$ 85.00 to be increased to	100.00
" " " 91.00 " " " "	106.00
" " " 97.00 " " " "	112.00
" " " 103.00 " " " "	114.00
" " " 110.00 " " " "	121.00

Lieutenants to be increased to \$1,600.00 per year.
Adjustment of salaries of Captains and Engineers to be taken up with the Fire, Water, Light and Power Committee.

(2) All prior scales of wages are hereby cancelled.

TEAMSTERS' CHAUFFEURS' STABLEMEN ETC.,

Health Department

(1) The following schedule of wages to date from May 1st 1918:

Teamsters (double)	\$23.00 per week
" (single)	22.00 " "
Assistant Stable Foreman	26.25 " "
Stablemen	23.00 " "
Night Soil Helper	22.00 " "

(2) Pay for two additional Statutory Holidays making a total of 8 Statutory Holidays during the year.

(3) Teams to stop work on Saturdays at 12 o'clock noon during the months of June, July and August, as an experiment.

Light and Power Department

(1) The following schedule of wages to date from May 1st 1918:

Chauffeurs, Auto Truck, 3 tons and over,	\$25.00	per week
" " " under 3 tons,	23.00	" "
Drivers, single horse	22.00	" "
Stableman	90.00	" month

Reinstatement of men

Your Committee favors the total re-instatement of all men.

NOTICE RE FUTURE REVISION OF SCHEDULE

It is understood and agreed that in future the City will receive notice of any application for revision of schedules with reasons therefor at least sixty days prior to termination of existing schedules and if not accepted, the City and the Union shall forthwith each appoint three representatives who shall proceed to inquire into the matters in dispute without any delay by either party, and reach a conclusion thereon before April 15th, failing which notice shall at once be given to the City Clerk and during such inquiry and up to the 1st day of May 1919, no strike shall take place.

(sgd) Arthur W. Puttee

Department of Labour Records, Vol.309, file 18-159.

May 23rd, 1918.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - CITIZENS COMMITTEE OF
ONE HUNDRED.

It is proposed that the City employees now on strike shall go back to work on the basis of the report presented by the Special Committee of the City Council at the meeting of the City Council held on the 13th day of May instant, excepting out of such report the last clause thereof, reading:-

"It is understood and agreed that in future the City will receive notice of any application for the revision of schedules with reasons therefor, at least sixty days prior to termination of existing schedules, and if not adopted, the City and the Union shall forthwith each appoint three representatives who shall proceed to enquire into the matters in dispute without delay by either party, and reach a conclusion thereon before April 15th, failing which, notice shall at once be given to the City Clerk, and during which inquiry, and up to the first day of May, 1919, no strike shall take place."

In place of the above it is proposed to insert the following clause:-

"The Unions shall submit their schedules to the City on or before the first day of March, 1919. The City and the Unions shall, immediately following such submission, proceed to jointly consider such schedules, and endeavor to arrive at an agreement thereon. Should an agreement not be reached by April first, 1919, the schedules shall immediately be referred for consideration, to a Board of Enquiry composed of five members, of whom two shall be named by the Union affected, and two by the City. The fifth member of the Board who shall be Chairman, shall, if possible, be agreed on by the other four members, but, failing such agreement, shall be the Chief Justice of the Court of Kings Bench of Manitoba, or one whom he shall appoint. The City and the Union shall each name their representatives on April first, and the fifth member of the Board, if not agreed on by

the other members by April third, shall be the Chief Justice of the Court of Kings Bench of Manitoba, or one whom he shall appoint. Such Board of Enquiry shall, immediately upon its formation, proceed to enquire into the matters in dispute, shall endeavor to adjust the same and shall complete the enquiry and make its report not later than the twenty-ninth day of April, 1919, and up to the first day of May, 1919, no strike shall take place."

This agreement suitably adapted shall be inserted in the schedule from year to year.

The same procedure as to enquiry and report shall be followed in case of every unadjusted dispute arising at any time in any matter between the City and any Union, and there shall be no strike pending the report upon any such enquiry. This shall be inserted in every schedule from year to year.

In addition to this, it has been agreed by both parties that the substance of Mr. Murray's letter to Dr. Paterson, Chairman of the Conciliation Committee shall be incorporated in the agreement, the letter being as follows:-

" I am fairly expressing the attitude of the Trade Unionists generally in Winnipeg, when I say that it is undesirable that Firemen should be called out on strike, and that it should be done only in cases of extreme provocation.

(Signed) Thos. J. Murray."

Your Committee also insists that to the foregoing shall be added the following clause as a basis of settlement:-

"That officers, including Lieutenants and Captains, of the Fire Department be not eligible for membership in the Union."

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman:

City of Winnipeg, file 11507.

APPENDIX IV

24th. May, 1918.

THE UNDERSIGNED Members of Council agree to the following settlement of the present strike as follows: -

The Report of the Executive Committee of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred, dated May 23rd. 1918, IS HEREBY ACCEPTED, with the following modifications: The last clause of said Report shall read: - "That officers, including Lieutenants and Captains of the Fire Department, shall not be members of a Union."

The Civic Employees now on strike shall be restored to the same rank or position as they occupied previous to striking, without prejudice to their former grade or rank. The provisions of this paragraph shall be carried out by Wednesday, the 29th. inst.

"Approved"	"J.W. Cockburn"	"J.L. Wiginton"
"Thos. J. Murray"	"John J. Vopni"	"Isaac Cockburn"
(For Men)	"Charles F. Gray"	"J. Queen"
	"Jno. K. Sparling"	"A.A. Heaps"
	"A.L. Maclean"	"Geo. Fisher"
	"Robt. H. Hamlin"	"Arthur Puttee"
	"H. Gray"	"J.J. Wallace"

City of Winnipeg, file 11507.

APPENDIX V

INDEX NUMBERS OF CHANGES IN WAGES AND IN
THE COST OF LIVING IN CANADA 1913-1920

	Wages (<u>Rates in 1913 - 100</u>)	Cost of Living Index (<u>Prices in 1913 - 100</u>)
1913....	100.0	100
1914....	101.3	103
1915....	102.2	107
1916....	109.5	124
1917....	125.6	143
1918....	147.2	162
1919....	173.4	176
1920....	207.7	190

Department of Labour - figures are for December each year.

Department of Labour Records Vol. 158 file 611.2.

CHANGES IN THE COST OF LIVING IN CANADA

FROM 1913 TO 1919

(Average prices in 1913 - 100)

	Food	Fuel and Light	Rent	Cloth- ing	Sund- ries	All items*
Dec. 1914...	108	98	97	103	100	103
Dec. 1915...	111	96	94	115	110	107
Dec. 1916...	138	109	95	136	122	124
Dec. 1917...	167	125	102	158	134	143
Dec. 1918...	186	146	111	185	151	162
Mar. 1919...	178	143	112	197	154	162
June 1919...	187	139	119	197	157	166
Sept. 1919...	195	146	121	210	161	173
Dec. 1919...	201	148	122	210	164	176

* The figures for "all items" were calculated by giving the following weights to each group: Food, 35%; Fuel, 8%; Rent, 18½%; Clothing, 18½%; Sundries, 20%.

Department of Labour Records, Vol. 158 file 611.2.

BUDGET OF YEARLY EXPENDITURE SHOWING THE COST IN 1913
and 1918 OF THE SAME GOODS AND SERVICES AS COULD BE
PURCHASED BY AN AVERAGE CIVIL SERVICE FAMILY IN 1908-09,
LIVING ON AN INCOME OF \$1,000.

	<u>1908-09</u>	<u>1913</u>	<u>1918</u>
<u>FOOD</u>			
Meats & Fish.....	85.52	109.00	190.30
Dairy Produce etc.....	170.47	178.19	278.25
Cereals.....	50.70	52.70	98.85
Vegetables.....	23.71	22.97	43.49
Sugar, etc.....	18.95	20.00	34.25
Tea, etc.....	16.56	15.84	22.01
Condiments, etc.....	1.89	2.49	7.08
	<u>378.55</u>	<u>423.54</u>	<u>722.33</u>
<u>CLOTHING</u>			
Man.....	50.34	53.22	94.61
Woman.....	53.50	57.73	103.18
Boy.....	26.77	29.59	52.88
Girl.....	28.39	31.16	56.13
Child.....	20.89	23.78	39.77
	<u>179.89</u>	<u>195.48</u>	<u>346.57</u>
Fuel & Light.....	93.08	97.76	161.72
*Rent.....	144.00	195.84	231.84
<u>MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURE</u>			
Furnishings.....	31.30	35.29	67.37
Household sundries...	11.59	13.10	24.26
Carfare, etc.....	25.00	25.00	30.00
Doctor, dentist, etc.	40.00	40.00	40.00
Charity, church, etc.	20.00	20.00	30.00
Newspapers, etc.....	10.00	10.00	20.00
Sundry.....	31.59	35.60	55.93
	<u>204.48</u>	<u>216.99</u>	<u>333.06</u>
Grand Total.....	1000.00	1131.61	1795.52

*Six-roomed workingmen's houses, with sanitary conveniences.

Department of Labour Records Vol. 158 file 611.2.

Average Retail Prices of Staple Foods
In Canada

	Unit	July 1914	Oct. 1916	May 1917
Beef, sirloin steak	lb.	24.7	20.2	30.0
Beef, rib roast	"	-	20.8	24.9
Mutton, hind quarter	"	20.9	24.2	26.2
Pork, leg roast	"	20.2	28.8	29.3
Bacon, not sliced	"	25.5	30.8	37.3
Lard	"	18.4	31.1	30.1
Eggs, fresh	doz.	20.8	43.6	45.6
Milk	qt.	8.8	9.1	10.0
Butter, creamery	lb.	30.0	42.4	47.7
Cheese, Canadian	"	19.4	26.1	31.7
Bread	"	4.2	5.6	7.4
Flour	"	3.3	4.6	7.7
Rolled oats	"	4.5	5.0	6.1
Beans, dry	"	5.9	10.4	14.5
Potatoes	75lb.	125.8	132.5	318.0
Prunes	lb.	12.4	15.2	14.8
Sugar	"	5.5	9.2	10.0
Tea	"	36.4	39.7	45.5
Coffee	"	37.7	39.5	40.5
Coal, anthracite	ton	\$8.51	\$9.27	\$10.57

Department of Labour Records Vol. 158 file 611.2.

Members of the City Council, 1918

MAYOR

F. H. Davidson

*BOARD OF CONTROL

J. W. Cockburn C. F. Gray J. J. Wallace A. W. Puttee

ALDERMEN

WARD No. 1

I. Cockburn
J. K. Sparling

WARD No. 2

F. O. Fowler
A. H. Pulford

WARD No. 3

H. Gray
George Fisher

WARD No. 4

J. J. Vopni
Allan L. Maclean

WARD No. 5

J. Queen
A. A. Heaps

WARD No. 6

A. Hume
R. H. Hamlin

WARD No. 7

Alex. McLennan J. L. Wiginton

*Board of Control abolished December 31st, 1918. By-law No. 9758 submitted to the ratepayers September 20th, 1918. Vote: for the abolition 3643; against the abolition 653; majority of total votes cast required to carry.

Minutes of the City Council of the City of Winnipeg
Manitoba for the year 1918.

MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL, 1919

MAYOR

C. F. Gray

ALDERMEN

WARD No. 1

I. Cockburn
J. K. Sparling

WARD No. 2

F. O. Fowler
A. H. Pulford

WARD No. 3

H. Gray
Geo. Fisher

WARD No. 4

A. L. Maclean
E. Robinson

WARD No. 5

J. Queen
A. A. Heaps

WARD No. 6

R. H. Hamlin
W. B. Simpson

WARD No. 7

Alex. McLennan

J. L. Wiginton

Minutes of the City Council of the City of Winnipeg
Manitoba for the year 1919.

APPENDIX VII

Biographical Information

- Blake, Herbert W. - employed with City Light and Power Company, City Hydro, for 45 years; knew Glassco well; knew J. McBride.
- Blumenberg, Sam. - President of the Socialist Labor Union of Canada; member of the Socialist Party; speaker at Socialist meetings in theatres in both 1918 and 1919; investigated by R.N.W.M.P.; advocate of industrial union in May 1918.
- Campbell, David. - Mediator appointed by Department of Labour in May 1918; known in labor circles as an outstanding lawyer; had reputation as a fair advocate and a skilful arbitrator; before becoming a lawyer he was in turn, farm laborer, telegraph messenger, telegraph operator and member of the Telegraphers' union; graduated from Toronto University with B.A.; began his practice in Regina; licensed to practise in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba; moved to Winnipeg in 1912; later mayor of St. Boniface.
- Carter, W.H. - President of the Greater Winnipeg Board of Trade in October 1918, and according to A. Scoble a partner in the contracting firm of Carter, Hall and Aldinger.
- Coyne, J.B., K.C. - Senior partner in law firm of Coyne, McVicar and Martin in Winnipeg, in 1918; member of the original resolutions committee May 16, 1918, which recommended the creation of the Committee of One Hundred; member of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand in 1919; later a prosecutor during the sedition trials in 1919.
- Crossin, Albert L. - Moved from Toronto to open branch office for Toronto General Trust Corporation, worked with mortgages; member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants; member of the Manitoba Club and a Mason; executive member of the Board of Trade; chairman of its Legislation committee and member of its Civic Affairs Committee; member of original ad hoc resolutions committee May 16, 1918, which recommended the creation of the Committee of One Hundred; chairman of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred; member of the Conciliation sub-committee whose efforts helped end the strike in 1918; active member of Citizens' Committee of One Thousand in 1919.

- Davidson, Frederick Harvey. - Mayor of Winnipeg in 1918; according to both F. Tipping and A. Scoble, not a particularly strong man; a building contractor.
- Fisher, Geo. - Alderman in 1918 and 1919; representative for the Scottish Co-Operative Wholesale Society, business grain exporters; executive member of the Winnipeg Board of Trade; highly regarded, fair and upright; past president of Winnipeg Grain Exchange; member of special negotiating committee of Council in 1918.
- Forsey, Eugene. - Now senator; was in 1969 Director of Research of Canadian Labor Congress, and was working on a Canadian labor history in Ottawa; considered author Logan "muddle headed"
- Fowler, F.O. - Alderman in 1918 and 1919; secretary of the North West Grain Dealers' Association; executive member of the Winnipeg Board of Trade; according to F. Tipping, the strong man on the City Council; "a tough nut, no doubt about that"; considered to be the financial expert of the City Council; mayor by acclamation 1922; very determined and attached to principle; a strong speaker; according to G. Wilson-Smith, very able, wealthy, and could influence C.F. Gray, "who would have admired Fowler's wealth"; one time manager of Winnipeg Grain and Produce Exchange Clearing Association member of the Manitoba Club; responsible for another anti-strike motion in Council in 1919.
- Glassco, John Girdlestone. - M.Sc. in Electrical Engineering 1906, McGill; manager of City Light and Power Co. for many years and in 1918; according to A. Scoble good with his men; in salary, second only to city solicitor in 1918; relatively young in 1918, 38 years old; according to H.W. Blake, played both sides, seemed withdrawn with a sense of dignity; was considered a kindly man; retired in 1944.
- Gray, Charles Frederick. - Member of Board of Control in 1918; Mayor in 1919; consulting electrical engineer in organization of City Light and Power Company, according to A. Scoble decent, but "not a strong man", a man who would change his mind, "If we had a good strong man in the Council at that time things would have been somewhat different"; vacillated in 1918 when swayed by F.O. Fowler; vacillated in 1919 over agreement with strikers to provide services; usually voted same way as F.O. Fowler; according to a personal friend of C.F. Gray known to this author, Geo. Wilson-Smith, Gray was always indecisive.

he did not know what to do in 1919 and took the advice of the commander of the local Military District, definitely not a leader.

Hamlin, R.H. - Alderman in 1918 and 1919; involved with Empire Sash and Door Company, builders' supplies; member of the Winnipeg Board of Trade.

Hunt, Theodore A. - Solicitor for the City of Winnipeg; highest paid employee; involved in all final negotiations in 1918.

Jackson, George N. - Member of the Canadian Credit Men's Trust Association; in 1918 managed Winnipeg branch of Walter Woods and Company, a wholesale firm; in 1919 established his own firm, George N. Jackson and Son; in 1916 represented the Board of Trade at a conference of Empire business leaders in London, England; in 1918 executive member of the Board of Trade; chairman of its Empire Trade Committee; member of the Rotary Club from 1915 and a freemason and a Shriner; member of the resolutions committee which recommended the forming of the Committee of One Hundred; vice chairman of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred in 1918; member of the Conciliation sub-committee.

Johns, R.J. - Machinist; contributor to Bulletin; highly visible socialist speaker in 1918; involved in 1919; according to Mary Jordan, public spirited.

Jordan, Mary. - Secretary for R.B. Russell for many years at Trades and Labor Council. Knew R.J. Johns, F. Tipping and others; wanted to reinstate F. Tipping at 50th anniversary of 1919 strike, but feelings against Tipping were still evident in 1969 and he was not reinstated.

McBride, John. - Lineman for power company; business agent for the Electrical Workers' Union; according to A. Scoble, a good business agent; strong minded and determined; treasurer of the Trades and Labor Council in 1918; according to H.W. Blake, a big fat fellow, a reasonable man, but strictly unionist and out for the worker; according to Mary Jordan, a reasonable man.

Murray, Thos. J. - Solicitor for the Trades and Labor Council in 1918; involved with founding of Winnipeg Metal Trades Council.

- Patterson, Rev. Dr. Charles Gordon. - Assistant pastor of St. Stephen's and colleague of Dr. C.W. Gordon; member of the Ministerial Association; member of Social Services Council; community oriented and member of the Board of Trade; known for his patience, persistence and unruffled temper; appointed chairman of the Conciliation sub-committee of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred; because of his personality he was considered to have been an important factor in the success of the negotiations in 1918; caught the flu early in 1919 and died in August 1919.
- Puttee, Arthur. - Member of Board of Control in 1918; part owner and editor of The Voice until July 1918; regarded as a reasonable man and a labor moderate; for more extensive biography see Ross McCormack's Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries.
- Ringland, Robert. - In May 1918, president of Winnipeg Firemen's Association Local 14; signed letter notifying Council that firemen were going on strike in May 1918.
- Robertson, Gideon Decker. - Senator; Minister without portfolio in Borden's cabinet in May 1918; November 1918, Minister of Labor; chairman of Canada Registration Board in May 1918; vice president of the Order of Railway Telegraphers before becoming Senator; considered to be labor's representative in the Cabinet; involved in the settlement of the Winnipeg strikes in both 1918 and 1919.
- Robinson, Ernest. - Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council in 1918; spokesman for Strike Committee in 1918; Alderman in 1919; not highly regarded by F. Tipping.
- Scoble, A. - Business agent of Street Railwaymen's union; official market basket buyer in Winnipeg, for Labor Gazette's cost of living statistics; also one of the official correspondents for Department of Labour to keep them independently informed about labor disputes; when interviewed remembered short strike of Street Railwaymen in 1918; moderate, more interested in profit sharing than socialism.
- Sparling, J.K. - Alderman in 1918; lawyer; considered to be fair by labor, but accused by Telegram of being in sympathy with Bolsheviki because he proposed a compromise with strikers May 1918. Telegram, May 16, 1918, p.4.

- Tipping, F.G. - President of Trades and Labor Council first part of 1918; asked to resign from floor in favor of vice president Veitch; played very minor part in 1918, although president, barely mentioned in press; perennially interviewed in relation to labor disturbances but really, according to Mary Jordan, discredited.
- Veitch, H. - President in 1915 and vice president of Trades and Labor Council in 1918, actively involved in 1918 and a strong speaker; proposed organizational structure of Strike Committee in 1918 which was carried through into 1919; involved in 1919 strike; author met Carolyn Veitch, great-granddaughter, according to her mother, H. Veitch never spoke about the strikes with his family, and destroyed his papers.
- Webster, C.H. - Commissioner of the Winnipeg Industrial Bureau; secretary of the Western branch of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association; secretary of the Patriotic Fund from January 1916; member of the Board of Trade; secretary of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred in 1918.
- Wildman, J.E. - Newly elected president of the Winnipeg Board of Trade at the May 14, 1918, annual meeting; an employer in the metal fabricating industry, Sheet Metal Company of Canada; member of the original resolutions committee May 16, 1918; which recommended the creation of the Committee of One Hundred; member of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred.
- Wilson-Smith, George. - Published Manitoba Miner and Western Mines and Oil Review; trained in geology; mining promoter; contemporary of many men active in 1918, personal friend of C.F. Gray.

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and Papers 1918-1925.

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Author with Senator E. Forsey, at Ottawa, July 3, 1969.

Author with Mary Jordan, former secretary of R.B. Russell
at the Trades and Labour Council, July 1971.

Author with F. Lindenschmidt, former employee of
Vulcan Iron Works, at Matlock Beach, August,
1975.

Author with A. Scoble, former business agent Street
Railwaymen. Taped interview at Winnipeg,
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Author with George Wilson-Smith, friend of C.F. Gray,
at Matlock Beach, during July, 1974.

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