

A TEST OF SOCIAL CONFLICT THEORY:  
THE CASE OF THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

by  
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# A TEST OF SOCIAL CONFLICT THEORY: THE CASE OF THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

## Chapter I - Introduction

The problem to be investigated in this study centres on discovering how urban conflict first emerges as a visible force. Those circumstances which led to the outbreak of open conflict in Winnipeg will be examined to test four competitive social conflict theories. Each theory establishes a series of assumptions about how conflict will emerge. The substantive implications of these assumptions will be compared with the available information on the actual conditions evident at the moment of the emergence of the strike. Through this comparison, this investigation will determine which theory or theories best describes how the incident of urban conflict actually emerged to produce the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.

This research has concentrated on urban conflict, rather than rural conflict, because the urban culture more accurately reflects the structural make-up of our society. In Canada, over 16 million people live in cities. That represents 76.1% of the total population of Canada, and this figure is rising by 2.9% per annum.<sup>1</sup> Thus, with an increasing majority of our population residing in urban centres, the problems of urban living and its resultant conflicts, have become an increasingly salient feature of the composition of Canadian society.

This investigation will be performed by centering specifically on urban unrest, rather than analyzing turmoil at a regional or national level. Canadian history has had few examples of wide-scale conflict. Most forms of insurgence within Canada have been limited to either a single industry or a single city. This may be because Canadian cities

1. Human Settlement In Canada under the authority of the Hon. B. Danson Dep't. Of Urban Affairs, Canada May, 1976 Pg. 10

are isolated from each other, and extend across the country in a series of pockets located along its southern border. This separation may have made it difficult, in the past, to transport issues to other communities. As telecommunications had greatly improved the linkages between urban centres by 1919, this may explain why some sympathy for the Winnipeg General Strike was expressed in other cities by means of minor sympathy strikes, although there was little long term unified protest outside the city itself. Therefore, limited by Canadian experience, this work will confine itself to the emergence of conflict within an urban centre.

This account of the strike has been limited strictly to the emergence of conflict, i.e. that specific juncture where conflict changes from its latent to its manifest form or where it is first noticed as a visible force. In limiting the discussion to this aspect of conflict, the consequent chronological development and the resolution of conflict are ignored. The total range of the conflict process is too vast to be covered adequately in this paper. Therefore, only the initial step was chosen where conflict first takes on an observable appearance, since one must become acquainted with the factors which precipitate the emergence of an open conflict before one can predict either its consequent chronological development or its resolution.

The analysis ignores other types of urban conflict such as ghetto riots, armed insurrections and specific industrial strikes. It was felt that all these aspects of urban conflict could not be effectively dealt with simultaneously. The general strike was chosen as the example of conflict which was most pervasive while remaining the least structurally complex.

The industrial strike was not chosen since it is limited to a

particular plant and thus also limited to a certain sector of the working population, those who are working in the plant. In examining a general strike, the whole community becomes involved since all the industries throughout the city are shut down through the combined efforts of all segments of the working population. Due to its pervasive nature, the general strike forces citizens to choose sides in the struggle, while a single industrial strike may not touch all members of the community. Therefore, the general strike was chosen over the industrial strike as a type of urban social conflict which urges alignment of the total urban population.

The ghetto riot and the armed insurrection were also avoided as examples of urban conflict since, as seen in the Chicago riots, they tend to be limited to a decayed urban core and often only involve those who are in the immediate vicinity of the protest. Both these forms of protest also add the element of violence, as an indicator of their emergence. Violence is a very complex phenomenon which often tends to be a divisive force as well as a unifying element within a protest. Groups which were previously united may disintegrate over its use. Although there are some examples of widespread civil insurrection in our history (the 1837 Rebellion and the Riel Rebellion of 1885), the literature on these topics is scant and difficult to analyze since both the events pre-date the systematic collection of historical statistics which later became standardized under the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Therefore, the Winnipeg General Strike was selected for study as a phenomenon which is somewhat less complex than a civil insurrection in that it did not entail many of the violent elements which characterized the outbreak of these other types of civil disturbance. It was also chosen as a pheno-

menon more pervasive than a ghetto riot, because it involved the total urban population of Winnipeg, however less pervasive than a regional or national conflict in that it was only limited to a single city. Thirdly, it was selected since it was sufficiently recent to allow for the collection of adequate statistical data on the conditions present at the time of the dispute.

The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was chosen as an example of urban conflict for three reasons: (1) it has been described in detail by numerous historians, (2) it was a fairly recent strike occurring after the establishment of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, thus much statistical data and historical documentation was available on it and (3) its many remarkable aspects which make it unique to both Canadian and world history.

This strike has been called "a watershed of some consequence in the evolution of Canada".<sup>2</sup> At no other time in the history of Canada did a whole city of unionized labour, walk off so completely or stay off for so long. It also included many people who would not necessarily be considered directly linked to the strike. Not only did non-unionized labour join with the approximately 12,000 union men to stage the general stoppage of work throughout the city but a majority of the returned soldiers also linked hands with the striking workers in sympathy,<sup>3</sup> and the Winnipeg Ministerial Association (WMA) volunteered its services as an intermediary between the strikers and their employers. This move

2. H.C. Pentland "Fifty Years After" in Canadian Dimension 6: 14-17 July 1969 Pg. 14

3. On May 31, 1919 the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA) defeated a motion put forth by their executive to remain officially neutral during the strike, and passed a motion to support the strikers in their cause.

W.H. Crook The General Strike; a study of labor's tragic weapon in theory and practice (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press) c 1931 Pg. 543



by the returned soldiers<sup>4</sup> and the clergy to support the strike left very few groups within Winnipeg who had not committed themselves to the issues put forth by the strikers.

Not only was the general strike exceptional because it had gained the almost complete support of the working population of Winnipeg,<sup>5</sup> but it also stimulated a series of sympathy strikes in various cities across Canada. As the strike wore on, numerous labour organizations from Vancouver to Toronto, reached a point of strike and declared their sympathy with the general strike in Winnipeg. However, most of these out-of-town strikes were shortlived with the exception of Vancouver, which although it continued after the strike in Winnipeg had ended, was not nearly as effective.<sup>6</sup>

As well as being historically significant, the Winnipeg General Strike also contained factors of political importance. Labour had decided on a drastic departure from traditional methods of confrontation used by unions in choosing the sympathy strike to express its grievances and the reactions that it received from the various levels of government reflected a fear of these new methods. The strike was suppressed by the federal government. Many talks with civic leaders and with local

4. This move led to a split within the ranks of the returned soldiers and the formation of the Returned Soldiers' Loyalist Association (RSLA), a small faction which supported the work of the Citizens' Committee and was opposed to the extremist agitators and the alien enemies which they felt were behind the strike

D.J. Bercuson *Confrontation At Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike* (Montreal, Que. and London, Ont.: McGill-Queens University Press) c 1974 Pg. 147

5. Although no statistics were available on the total labour force in 1919, out of a total population of 175,000 which would include women, children and senior citizens; 35,000 strikers can be assumed to represent almost the total work force of the city of Winnipeg.

6. D.J. Bercuson "ibid" Pg. 155-156

business leaders convinced the federal government to intervene by arresting the strike leaders and placing the city under military rule until the strike was declared over.

These methods used by the established governmental authorities to suppress the strike had political ramifications for the future of Canada's labour community. Before the general strike in Winnipeg, there was great hesitancy by organized labour to involve itself in direct political action. The strike changed this. It seemed to demonstrate, even to conservative labour, that the established political parties were predisposed to align with employers to the detriment of labour. Therefore, labour felt the necessity of further development of its own political representation, independent of established organizations and not rely on the whims of representatives who were not committed to the struggles of labour. This led to the increased promotion of the previously developed Independent Labour Party (ILP) which later joined with a faction of the National Progressive Party, known as the Ginger Group, to create the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) led by J.S. Woodsworth, one of the Winnipeg General Strike leaders.

Much has also been made about the role that ethnicity played in the outbreak of the strike. The Winnipeg papers had insinuated that the reason the returning soldiers had no jobs was due to the high influx of immigrants. These immigrants were accused of stealing jobs from the soldiers while they were fighting for their country. The aliens were blamed for all ills and were used as a scapegoat for inflation and unemployment by the business community.

"The Winnipeg business elite made use of another weapon against the working class - the so-called 'alien' issue. By chauvinistic propaganda they sought to turn Anglo-Saxon workers against the European immigrant, and by so doing attempt to keep wage levels down. All

kinds of racist theories were propounded against the 'Galician' which was the catch-all phrase used to describe most of the non Anglo-Saxons. They were called 'inferior immigrants' who 'on account of their ability to live cheaply' and 'raise large families', 'militate against the wages of the native.'<sup>7</sup>

However, the strikers saw through this facade to divert them from their cause. The strike united all workers, in spite of attempts to divide them. They maintained that their only issues were the right to collective bargaining and to a decent living wage. Thus, non-Anglo-Saxons were used as scapegoats by the business community to divert the general populace of Winnipeg from the issues of the strike. The strikers countered by stating "The bosses have no quarrel with the rich alien, no quarrel with the unorganized alien. The only alien they complain about are those who have had sense enough to join the ranks of organized labour and therefore cannot be used to scale down wages."<sup>8</sup> Thus this paper suspects that it will find that ethnic conflict was not a cause of the Winnipeg General Strike.

Examination of the Winnipeg General Strike, as a case study for the comparison of four theories of conflict, will determine which of the proposed hypotheses are supported by the data on the strike. This comparison of the theories is important since each of the opposing factions which were involved offered a series of reasons why the strike emerged in Winnipeg at that time. The business community, through their paper "The Winnipeg Citizen", proposed that a close examination of the causes would show that the confusion of the Great War, the Russian Revolution and other examples of foreign governmental breakdown had excited the population of Winnipeg to the point of revolution. The various levels

7. J. Peabody "The Winnipeg General Strike And The Immigrant Workers" in Window On A Cultural Heritage Pg. 87-91 Pg. 89
8. W. Penner(ed.) Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers' Own History Of The Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto: James, Lewis and Samuel)c1973 Pg. 78

of government agreed with the business community in their appraisal of the situation that it was lack of law and order within the community which had led to the outbreak of the general strike. This is a proposition which is quite similar in content to the "elitist" theory (which will be discussed in the next chapter). The strikers protested that studying the events which surrounded the strike would indicate that it was rapid inflation and the right to collective bargaining which were the only issues involved in the strike, a proposition very close in content to the "immiseration" view (also to be discussed in the next chapter). Historians examining the strike have been divided as to their view of what actually caused the strike. Some support the view of the government and the business community that the strike was a communist revolution which needed to be suppressed by the constituted authorities, while others side with the strikers that the only purpose of the strike was to demonstrate their right to collective bargaining and a decent living wage.

While historians have become involved in the controversy over what actually led to the strike, no sociologist has analyzed it either as a social movement or has used the strike as an arena for examining social conflict theory. This report shall do the latter. This chapter has discussed the parameters of the problem to be studied. In chapter II, the four alternative theories chosen for this research are compared. The theories are defined, with their similarities of form and their variations in content explained. Through a comparison table, the overlapping nature of the theories is revealed. It is explained how this overlap may effect analysis of the evidence provided by the strike. Chapter III lists the data sources used in establishing the case of the Winnipeg

General Strike. It explains the advantages and the drawbacks of each of the historical records and shows the need for caution in interpreting some sources. The analysis of the theories occurs in chapter IV. The particular postulates of each theory are compared to the actual historical data on the emergence of the strike. Chapter V delineates the summary and the conclusions of the research. It is recognized that this research is only an initial step in establishing the validity of the theories. Thus, chapter VI proposes a series of further tests to establish the limits of each theory and explore the extent of each's generalizability.

## Chapter II - The Theories

Views on the emergence of conflict have differed considerably from sociologist to sociologist. The four theoretical perspectives which this paper has chosen to compare represent the major theoretical perspectives on conflict. The purpose of this chapter is to compare these four theories and show both the gaps between and the overlaps amongst them.

The precedent for comparing these four perspectives was set by C. Tilly, in his article "Reflections On The Revolutions Of Paris". Tilly examined a city-wide outbreak of civil disobedience in Paris as described by several historians. He compared the various assumptions used by each of these historians in describing the cause(s) of the outbreak of rioting in the city of Paris. Tilly divided their assumptions about the nature of civil disobedience into four sociological categories, "elitist", "uprooting", "immiseration" and the "organizational". Tilly chose those categories because he felt that they represented the "three of four general ideas about how the relationship between popular participation in French revolutionary movements and major changes in French society."<sup>9</sup> He felt that these theories were appropriate for handling the emergence of conflict because "each does lead to somewhat different expectations concerning the character, role and origins of revolutionary crowds."<sup>10</sup> Tilly then contrasted the substantive implications of each of their assumptions with the actual historical information which he had acquired on the social and the economic events

9. C. Tilly "Reflections On The Revolutions Of Paris: An Essay On Recent Historical Writing" in Social Problems L2: 99-121 Pg. 101

10. C. Tilly "ibid" Pg. 103

which were occurring in Paris at the time of the revolutions. From this, Tilly determined which theory or combination of theories best described how the episodes of overt conflict actually emerged in Paris.

However, there are some problems in relying on Tilly. When Tilly developed his theoretical perspectives, he focused on the role of the masses as the only active force in the formation of the civil disturbance while ignoring the theoretical implications of the role played by the elite. He saw the elite as basically passive in the uprising. Two theories suffered greatly from this omission in his analysis. In eliminating the elite's active role, he omitted the major stimulus to mass action as defined by Pareto in his concept of circulating elites when transposing it into the "elitist" thesis. Also, in transposing Marx's theory of class conflict into the "organizational" theory, Tilly neglected a major portion of Marx's causal analysis. Marx states that the bourgeoisie have initiated the economic crisis by demanding more and more of the scarce resources. It is this active appropriation by the bourgeoisie which has stimulated the oppressed proletariat to action. Why Tilly has eliminated the active role of the elite (bourgeoisie) from his analysis of conflict is not explained in his paper. In doing so, he has destroyed the essential predictive factor in the emergence of conflict as described in both the "elitist" and the "organizational" theories. (see page 31)

In spite of the problems which Tilly encountered in the execution of his analysis, these four alternative theories of conflict, the "elitist", "uprooting", "immiseration" and "organizational" were chosen since they assert the major theoretical positions held in the conflict field. There are many similarities in form in their organization. All

the theories: (1) divide the society into interrelated groups, (2) imply that there was a previous relationship between these groups, (3) hypothesize that some alteration has occurred in this relationship, and (4) state that it is the nature of this change which has precipitated the outbreak of the conflict. In all cases, the independent variable refers to the nature of the change in this relationship and the dependent variable refers to the form of the conflict which results from this change. In each theory the dependent variable is the same, the emergence of conflict. The theoretical differences between theories are found in their perception of the cause of the conflict, the independent variable.

What distinguishes these four theories are their variations in content. They can be divided into two camps, one which views conflict as pervasive and one which views conflict as an unusual occurrence. The "uprooting" and the "immiseration" theories see conflict as unusual. Society is seen as operating by consensus which is occasionally marred by conflict. According to these two theories, conflict is the difficulty in reaching consensus due to the introduction of change.

The other camp, represented by the "elitist" and the "organizational" conceptions, view conflict as a pervasive feature in the social process, which changes only in form from latent to manifest, overt to covert, and back again. According to the "elitist" view, overt conflict occurs when a new potential elite perceives that the controlling elite is weakening and regards its chances of succession to power as greatest. According to the "organizational" view, the opposite is true. Conflict becomes manifest when the controlling forces are the most dominant and the frustration with social conditions is at its greatest. For both theories, the emergence of open conflict is merely a change in the ap-



parent form of the perpetual conflict.

### "Elitist" Theory

The first perspective to be examined, the "elitist" theory, was first developed by V. Pareto (1900) in his book, "The Rise And Fall Of The Elites". The 1968 translation by H. Zetterberg was used in this study. In this explanation of the emergence of conflict, social unrest is seen as occurring in times of weakness within the established elites who are the controllers of the society.

"When an elite declines, we can generally observe two signs which manifest themselves simultaneously: 1. The declining elite becomes softer, milder, more humane and less apt to defend its own power. 2. On the other hand, it does not lose its rapacity and greed for the goods of others, but rather tends as much as possible to increase its unlawful appropriations and to indulge in major usurpations of the national patrimony. Thus, on one hand it make the yoke heavier, on the other it has less strength to maintain it. These two conditions cause the catastrophe in which the elite perishes, whereas it could prosper if one of them were absent."<sup>11</sup>

Thus, it is domination without force which in Pareto's view leads to the downfall of the old elite. These conditions within the ruling elite, stimulate action within the rising elite. The emerging elite rally the support of the masses by assuming the cause of the oppressed and promising to initiate greater equality amongst men. But after victory, the new elite becomes more rigid, exclusive and forgets its promises to the masses which have helped it to victory.

"The new elite which seeks to supersede the old one, or merely to share its power and honors, does not admit to such an intention frankly and openly. Instead it assumes the leadership of all the oppressed, declares that it will pursue not for its own good but for the good of the many, and it goes to battle, not for the rights of a restricted class but for the rights of almost the entire citizenry. Of course, once victory is won, it subjugates the erstwhile allies, or, at best, offers them some formal concessions."<sup>12</sup>

11. V. Pareto The Rise And Fall Of The Elites: An Application Of Theoretical Sociology (Totowa, N.J.: The Bedminister Press) c1968 Pg. 59

12. V. Pareto "Ibid" Pg. 36

This theory is often cited by social control experts as a means of affirming the need for the use of a strong hand by the police and the military in controlling crowds. R.M. Momboise, on the Riot Advisory Committee of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement, stated:

"History teaches us that the failure of the police to perform their duty will not only invite disrespect for the law and encourage its violation but will be detrimental to police morale and the public's respect for law enforcement. Nor can they allow the law to be comprimised. Any attempt to do so will be interpreted as a sign of weakness and the signal to push further, with immunity."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the "elitist" approach has been used by social control experts studying regional conflicts, to affirm the need for a show of military strength on crowds in order to assert their ability to dominate.

The "elitist" theory suggests that conflict emerges with the breakdown of control by the elite over the masses. This statement implies several assumptions about the nature of the previous relationship between the elite and the masses in the society. First, it implies that previously there was order within the society and second, that this order was imposed on the society through control by the ruling elite. This assumption further implies that the masses are seen as incapable of controlling themselves and must be controlled by the elite.

From these assumptions on the nature of society, Pareto postulates the emergence of a new elite, which as the old elite weakens, serves as the organizing force in a revolt. The established elite is seen as initiating the conflict by loosening their control over the masses. The masses are not differentiated. They are viewed as a single unit which reacts blindly to this weakening of control by the ruling elite. Pareto looks at the masses as a flexible unit for which the

13. R.M. Momboise Riots, Revolts and Insurrections (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas) c 1967 Pg. 307

elite competes. Thus, he divides the elite into new and old factions, both of which are vying for the control of these masses. The role of the masses is minimized in this theory, while the role of the elite is carefully analyzed as both catalyst for, and organizer of, the conflict. Thus, the "elitist" theory hypothesizes that since the masses are incapable of controlling themselves, conflict will emerge led by a new elite who will organize the masses and lead the revolt against the weakening established elite.

established elite control masses (society in order)	change in relationship	→	established elite loosens control	society needs tight control
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new elite emerges to institute control	→	conflict emerges as masses (led by a new elite) rebel against the established elite
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Unstated Assumption 1: The society is controlled by the elite.

Unstated Assumption 2: The masses are incapable of controlling themselves.

Stated Assumption 1: If the present elite maintain a tight control over the masses, the society remains ordered.

Stated Assumption 2: As the control of the elite over the society weakens, disruption occurs.

Resulting Hypothesis: Since the masses are incapable of controlling themselves, conflict will emerge led by a new elite who organize the masses and lead the revolt against the weakening established elite.

### "Uprooting" Theory

The second theoretical perspective, the "uprooting" theory, was first described by E. Durkheim (1899) in his book, "The Division Of Labour In Society". The 1947 translation by G. Simpson was used in this study. This explanation is similar in structure to the "elitist" theory in that it postulates that social uprisings occur with the

breakdown of social controls. It differs from the "elitist approach, in that it locates the origin of the breakdown, not in the elite, but rather in the masses. It acknowledges that the masses are responsible for their own actions and that they are governed through a series of society-wide controls or norms. It suggests that portions of the masses become dislocated from the social norms of the society, through their inability to adapt to rapid social change. They have abandoned the traditional restraint patterns but have not yet incorporated new social norms into their interaction patterns.

Durkheim uses this theory to describe how the introduction of the division of labour in society may sometimes lead to conflict.

"As the market extends, great industry appears. But it results in changing the relations of employers and employees. The great strain upon the nervous system and the contagious influence of great agglomerations increase the needs of the latter. Machines replace men; manufacturing replaces hand-work. The worker is regimented, separated from his family through-out the day. He always lives apart from his employer, etc. These new conditions of industrial life naturally demand a new organization, but as these changes have been accomplished with extreme rapidity, the interests in conflict have not yet had the time to be equilibrated."<sup>14</sup>

Durkheim views this strain on social relations as an abnormal occurrence which only occurs when the interaction between the participants is not properly regulated. "If the division of labour does not produce solidarity in all these cases, it is because the relations of the organs are not regulated, because they are in a state of anomy."<sup>15</sup>

This theory of anomie is expanded upon further by Durkheim in his text, "Suicide in which he suggests that

"industrial or financial crises increase suicides, this is not because they cause poverty, since crises of prosperity have the same result; it

14. E. Durkheim *The Division Of Labour In Society* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press) c 1947 translated by G. Simpson Pg. 370

15. E. Durkheim "ibid" Pg. 368

is because they are crises, that is, disturbances of the collective order. Every disturbance of equilibrium, even though it achieves greater comfort and a heightening of general vitality, is an impulse to voluntary death. Whenever serious readjustments take place in the social order, whether due to a sudden growth or to an unexpected catastrophe, men are more inclined to self-destruction."<sup>16</sup>

He stressed that every disturbance in the collective order, whether positive or negative, led to a rise in self-destruction. This is because the masses have become dislocated from the societal order and respond by committing suicide.

W. Kornhauser (1959), also worked on the theory of dislocated masses as described by Durkheim. He expanded his theory to include other types of social disturbance which he felt resulted from dislocation. In his book, "The Politics Of Mass Society", he illustrated it through his analysis of transitional society. He felt that only specific groups within the transitional society were vulnerable to mass uprisings. These groups have abandoned their traditional modes of authority but have not yet been absorbed into the new organizational structure within the society. "The strongest response [to mass uprisings] come from people with the weakest attachment to class organizations or any other kind of social group."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the persons who participate in mass uprisings are those individuals suffering from anomie because they have not as yet been regulated by the new social norms of the culture.

This explanation of social conflict is called "social disorder" due to "massive social change (and not strictly economic change) which ordinarily tears large numbers of people away from the old norms and leaves them drifting, hopeless and unduly responsive to the political

16. E. Durkheim *Suicide* (New York: The Free Press) c 1951 translated by J.A. Spaulding and G. Simpson Pg. 246

17. W. Kornhauser *The Politics Of Mass Society* (New York: The Free Press) c 1959 Pg. 49

appeals of extremes."<sup>18</sup> This theory implies that society is generally stable and that change is an unusual occurrence which causes chaos. It further implies that the core of the society has remained organized while implementing these new social norms but that the rate of change is proceeding so rapidly that the more tightly associated units have not had sufficient time to organize the marginal elements within the society. Thus, those responsible for instigating the chaos which arises from change, are those not closely linked to the structure of the society and who therefore have difficulty following any changes which may occur. Consequently, these disorganized marginal masses rebel in confusion against their mounting anomie. This theory focuses on disorganization as the stimulus to mass action. Therefore, if the masses rebel during a time of rapid social change, the "uprooting" theory is supported. If the rebellion is instigated by those normless marginal groups, such as recent immigrant enclaves or those groups having only a minimal attachment to community organizations, the "uprooting" theory is further supported.

The "uprooting" theory contends that conflict emerges in a society with the breakdown of communication amongst its members, due to the confusion caused by rapid social change. This statement implies several assumptions about the nature of the previous relationships in that society. By suggesting that conflict develops as a consequence of the breakdown of communication within the society, it implies that previously communication had existed amongst the members. By suggesting that conflict develops as a consequence of rapid social change, it implies that previously, when society was stable, there was little social conflict.

18. C. Tilly op cit., Pg. 102

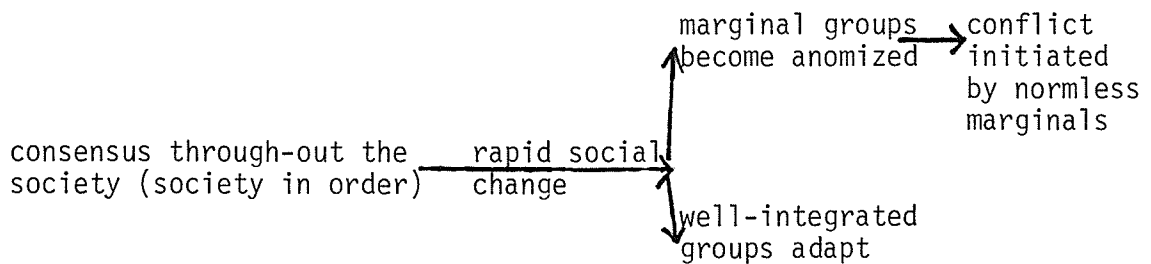
It further implies that change is an unusual event, which disrupts communication and confuses people. Thus, it sees any conflict as the product of normlessness caused by the introduction of an unusual element, rapid social change.

Durkheim and Kornhauser also develop several postulates about how conflict will emerge. Based on the premise that change leads to a breakdown of communication which in turn incites conflict, they divide the society into groups which are either more or less likely to experience anomie by the introduction of change. They assume that those who are well-integrated with the social structure will have less difficulty adapting to change due to their great number of communication links with the system. They conclude that groups on the periphery of the society will initiate the conflict since these groups would be most isolated from any change. Thus, these marginal groups would have a greater difficulty adapting to change and will rebel in normless confusion, against their rising anomie.

The society described in the "uprooting" theory is differentiated by the degrees of linkage which each group has to the social structure. Those groups which have the least amount of links to the society are seen as the most confused by change and therefore, the most likely to rebel. The role of those groups which are well-integrated with the social structure is minimized by this theory. These groups are assumed to be able to successfully adapt to change. The role of the marginal groups is emphasized by this theory, as they move from a position of consensus with to confusion about the social structure of the society.

Social change provides the catalyst for this shift. Thus, the "uprooting" theory hypothesizes that conflict emerges when marginal groups

who are least linked to the social structure and who are most confused by social change, rebel.



Unstated Assumption 1: The society consists of a variety of inter-related groups.

Unstated Assumption 2: Some groups are more closely linked to the social structure than others.

Unstated Assumption 3: If the society remains stable, the society will operate by consensus amongst all the groups.

Stated Assumption 1: Rapid social change is an unusual event which brings confusion to society.

Resulting Hypothesis: Conflict emerges, instigated by marginal groups who are most confused by social change and therefore, rebel.

### "Immiseration" Theory

The third perspective, the "immiseration" theory, which can also be called the theory of "relative deprivation", was described by T. Gurr (1970) in his book, "Why Men Rebel". It is based on his view of the economic situation rather than his conception of the prevailing social conditions. Gurr argues against those theorists who stress the need for rigid social control methods as the means of responding to mass action. "No pattern of social control can permanently deter enraged men from violence."<sup>19</sup> He emphasizes the importance of dealing with the cause of their stress rather than merely attempting to contain it.

19. T. Gurr Why Men Rebel (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press) c 1970 Pg. 358



The "immiseration" theory stresses the hypothesis that "those who suffer most from economic change are the most likely to rebel."<sup>20</sup> Thus, the condition which is necessary to stimulate mass action is some kind of economic crisis resulting in an income decline. This, in turn, would lead to a spontaneous disturbance by those groups which were most effected by this decline. In his text, Gurr illustrates, by a series of graphs, a number of ways in which economic changes would result in either a relative or absolute decrease in buying power. This he terms an economic crisis. This theory then focuses on those groups which are most deprived within the society by this crisis and consequently, most effected by an income decline, for the strongest response to this economic crisis. "The greater the source of deprivation, the greater the magnitude of violence."<sup>21</sup> Thus, according to the "immiseration" theory, those persons who participate in mass uprisings are from the most immiserated classes within the society.

This theory focuses on the interclass relationships amongst the various strata of society. It hypothesizes that somehow the economic distance amongst the various levels has increased. This theory focuses on the plight of those who have suffered the greatest drop in income from their previous level of economic sufficiency and calls this increased economic distance, "immiseration". It in no way attributes the fate of those at the bottom to any action by those at the top. All the strata are seen as passive elements within a submissive system governed by external forces, called economic conditions, which indiscriminately effects the buying power of the units and sometimes causes immiseration.

20. C. Tilly op cit., Pg. 102

21. T. Gurr op cit., Pg. 9

This immiseration, in turn, stimulates those most immiserated by the economic crisis to mass action. Therefore, if the most deprived (such as those with only minimal work skills, the unemployed, the handicapped or the senior citizens) rebel during a time of economic crisis, the "immiseration" theory is supported. This explanation of social conflict is called social disorder due to deprivation or immiseration.

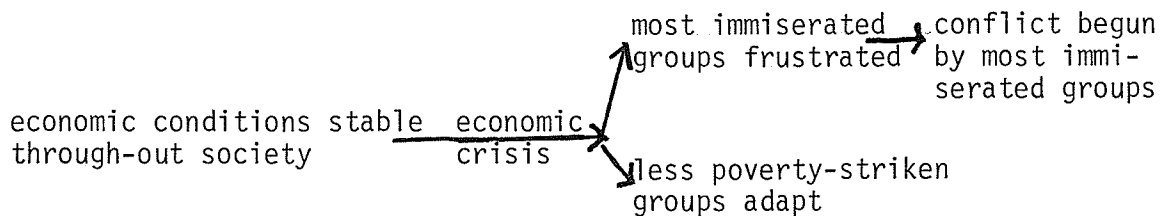
The "immiseration" theory dictates that conflict will develop in response to an economic crisis and will be instigated by the group which is most immiserated by that crisis. This theory contains several implications about the nature of the previous relationships amongst the various groups in the society. By suggesting that conflict develops as a consequence to an economic crisis, it implies that previous economic conditions were acceptable within the society. It further implies that these acceptable economic conditions were the linking force amongst the various groups in the hierarchy of stable social relations. These assumptions imply several thoughts about the nature of society as seen by the "immiseration" perspective. It regards economic stability as the major linking factor between all groups. It views these groups as being content with their differential economic rewards as long as the system is stable. Thus, only an economic crisis can destroy this complementary linkage, by differentially immiserating groups and stimulating the most immiserated group to rebellion.

These assumptions by the "immiseration" theory on the nature of society led Gurr to conclude several things about how conflict would emerge. Based on the premise that an economic crisis stimulates conflict, Gurr divides the society into those groups which are either more or less immiserated by the crisis. He assumes that those less

immiserated can adjust more easily to the new economic situation, since they are less effected by the change. Therefore, he concludes that the most immiserated groups will initiate the conflict, since they will be most effected by the change, they will have the greatest difficulty living on their depreciated incomes and will rebel in frustration.

"A general assessment of any group's potential for collective violence theoretically can be made by determining the rate of change in its absolute share of each class of values; the extent to which other groups in its society are experiencing a more rapid increase in value position; the extent to which values are, or thought to be, expandable, and the number of alternative courses of value-enhancing action open to members of the group. Estimating the potential for collective violence in a whole society requires this kind of analysis of each class of group in the society, evaluated according to their proportional size (scope)."22

Society, in the "immiseration" perspective, is differentiated into a series of economic levels. Those on the lowest strata are seen as being most effected by the crisis since they can least afford to lose anything. The role of those in the higher economic strata is minimized since Gurr believes that they can more easily adapt to the depressed economic conditions. The role of the most immiserated group is emphasized as it moves from contentment within the society to frustration about these new immiserating conditions. An economic crisis provides the catalyst for this shift. In short, the "immiseration" theory hypothesizes that conflict emerges from the most immiserated groups who are most effected by an economic crisis and who therefore, rebel in frustration.



22. T. Gurr op cit., Pg. 325-326

Unstated Assumption 1: The society consists of a variety of inter-related groups.

Unstated Assumption 2: These groups are economically stratified.

Unstated Assumption 3: If the society remains economically stable, these groups will co-operate.

Stated Assumption 1: If there is an economic crisis, the economic order will be disrupted and greater economic pressure will be placed on all groups, but on some more than others.

Resulting Hypothesis: Conflict emerges by the groups who are most immiserated by the economic crisis.

### "Organizational" Theory

The fourth theoretical perspective, the "organizational" theory, which can also be called the marxist theory of revolution, was formulated by K. Marx in "The German Ideology" (1846), "The Communist Manifesto" (1848), as well as in numerous other books. This explanation of social conflict is similar to the "immiseration" theory in postulating that social uprisings occur at times of economic crisis. Unlike the "immiseration" approach, Marx hypothesized that the nature of the interclass relationship necessitated an economic crisis. He divided the society into two distinct classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He stated that the economic gap between these classes was increasing due to the active amassing of private property to itself by the bourgeoisie, through its exploitation of the proletariat as cheap wage-labour, which leaves the proletariat destitute.

"The production which these productive forces could provide was insufficient for the whole of society and made development possible only if some persons satisfied their needs at the expense of others and therefore some - the minority - obtained the monopoly of development, while others - the majority - owing to the constant struggle to satisfy their most essential needs, were for the time being (i.e. until the birth of

new revolutionary productive forces) excluded from any development."<sup>23</sup>

The "organizational" approach also differs from the "immiseration" theory, in that it locates the origin of mass action against the bourgeoisie, not necessarily within the most immiserated group but within the group best organized to act during a time of economic crisis. The "organizational" explanation of social protest, examines groups which were organized prior to the crisis, particularly those groups which were developed for meeting the needs of such a crisis (such as consumer groups, citizens' action leagues and labour unions). This theory expects that groups which were organized before the crisis would have a better capacity to cope with the situation through their established structural channels. It further asserts that it must be awareness of a common cause which leads the group to action. This group must transform its common interest into a consciousness of kind and act as a co-ordinated unit to bring about change. Thus, this theory focuses on those groups who are conscious, active and organized. It does not necessarily expect that those who are left most destitute by the crisis will respond to the presence of destitution by initiating a social protest against the bourgeoisie. "The class making a revolution appears from the very start, if only because it opposed to a class not as a class but as a representative of the whole society; it appears as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class."<sup>24</sup>

The "organizational" outlook on the emergence of conflict focuses its attention both on the interclass relationship as well as the intra-

23. K. Marx The German Ideology (New York: International Publishers) c 1970 edited by C.H. Arthur Pg. 116

24. K. Marx "ibid" Pg. 66

class relationships within the society. It expects that the cause of economic crises has been initially determined by the unequal nature of the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It also predicts that within the proletariat as a whole the most organized groups would meet this economic crisis and act to protest for the total proletariat class. Therefore, if the most organized groups within the proletariat ally to lead a protest of the total proletariat against the bourgeoisie during a time of economic crisis caused by the bourgeoisie taking an increasing share of the scarce resources, then the "organizational" theory is supported.

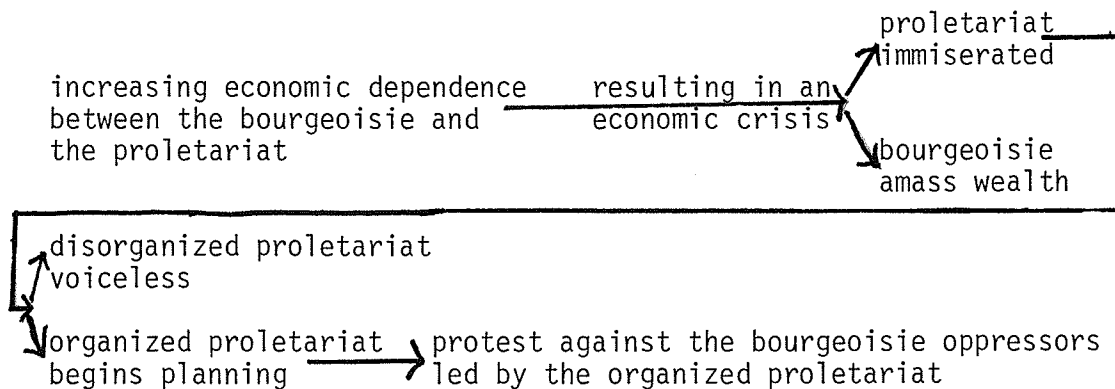
The "organizational" theory charges that conflict emerges in a society in response to an inevitable economic crisis caused by the greedy bourgeoisie. This theory makes several assumptions about the nature of the relationships within the society prior to this crisis.

- 1) While previous economic conditions were not acceptable to the proletariat, they did link the various classes into a stable interaction pattern centred around their roles in the means of production system.
- 2) Inevitably, the increasing gap between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat gradually destroys economic linkages by destroying any reciprocity in the relationship. "That is, because the situation of the proletariat is so desperate that it has nothing to lose by revolution, it has no special interests in the existing order to protect."<sup>25</sup>

Marx also hypothesizes that the society is divided into more or less organized groups, and that these groups which have previously developed an awareness about the inevitability of the economic crisis will be able to respond to it when the crisis eventually occurs. Thus,

25. K. Marx "ibid" Pg. 13

he predicts that these organized groups will provide the voice for any protest which develops from the proletariat in response to this crisis. He looks for varying degrees of structure within groups and hypothesizes that the best structurally organized groups within the proletariat will lead the protest against the bourgeoisie. The role of the less organized proletarians is minimized since they do not have the necessary tools to organize a protest. The role of the well-organized proletarians is emphasized as the driving force in a social protest: their role changes from interacting in stable linkage patterns to the destruction of these patterns as they become increasingly immiserated by them. The inevitable economic crisis provides the catalyst for this shift from latent to manifest conflict. Therefore, the "organizational" theory hypothesizes that when the economic crisis inevitably occurs, the most organized groups within the proletariat will lead the protest against the bourgeoisie who are responsible for the crisis.



Stated Assumption 1: The society consists of two interrelated classes, the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Stated Assumption 2: These classes are stratified into an interdependent system of controllers of the means of production (bourgeoisie) and the wage-labourers (proletariat).

Stated Assumption 3: An economic crisis is inevitable as the bourgeoisie amass wealth at the expense of the proletariat.

Stated Assumption 4: Some groups within the proletariat are more organized than others.

Resulting Hypothesis: When the economic crisis inevitably occurs, the most organized groups within the proletariat will lead a protest against the bourgeoisie who are responsible for the crisis.

In comparing these four theoretical perspectives on the emergence of conflict, it becomes apparent that the hypotheses developed in each theory tend to overlap in some aspects. Since the theories are not mutually exclusive, this would mean that the evidence could ambiguously support more than one theoretical perspective. Thus, it is essential to compare the competing hypotheses of each theory, to discover which theory best reflects the evidence in total.

By parallelling the "elitist" theory with the "uprooting" view, it was found that the "uprooting" theory hypothesizes that any rapid social change which disrupts the normative order within a society will produce social unrest. Due to its pervasive nature, the hypothesis in the "uprooting" theory includes the particular type of change referred to in the "elitist" outlook in the emergence of social conflict. The "elitist" theory focuses on a particular group, the elite, and hypothesizes that the controlling elite has altered the nature of its authoritative role in the society, specifically by loosening its control over the masses. This loosening of control by the elite leads to a disturbance. Any data which lends support to this hypothesis will also lend support to the "uprooting" theory which views any social alteration as a stimulus to conflict. The reverse is not necessarily true. If the data are found to indicate a tightening of control over the masses by the elite stimulated conflict, this - being a social change - would support the "uprooting" theory but would not support the "elitist" per-



spective. Also, if there was any type of change on the other sectors of society, this would lend support to the general proposition in the "uprooting" theory but it would bring the "elitist" theory into question since it did not incorporate any changes which may occur in the other sectors of the society. Thus, in determining the cause of social unrest, the "elitist" theory is a more specific version of the "uprooting" theory.

These two theories are indirectly opposed in whom they predict will initiate mass action. The "elitist" theory hypothesizes that a new elite will develop from the educated and knowledgeable within the society and will organize itself and lead the disorganized masses against the weakening old elite which is no longer capable of performing its role as the ruling authority of the society. Contrarily, the "uprooting" theory does not look for a knowledgeable and educated elite to organize a change but rather turns to those uprooted, marginal groups who are only tenuously connected to the social system to initiate action against any change since they are having the greatest difficulty adapting to social variation. "Poorly integrated sections of the community are the most likely to engage in mass action outside and often against established social institutions."<sup>26</sup> Any data which lend support to the hypothesis developed by the "uprooting" theory, that persons who engage in mass action are only marginally connected to the society, indirectly contradict the "elitist" assumption that these people are the new leaders, educated and knowledgeable about, the social system. Although, it is not directly stated, in order for the elite to become both knowledgeable and educated, it would necessitate more than a marginal linkage to the

26. W. Kornhauser op cit., Pg. 66

social structure to develop these skills. Therefore, it is the hypothesis about who will lead the revolt which is the distinguishing feature between the "elitist" and the "uprooting" theories.

In examining the "elitist" and the "immiseration" perspectives, it was found that they focus on different aspects of the social system but do not necessarily contradict one another in predicting the impetus to conflict. The "immiseration" theory postulates that an economic crisis within the society will stimulate mass action, while the "elitist" theory predicts that a loosening of social controls by the elite will lead to social unrest. If the data show that a loosening of controls by the elite led to an economic crisis, or vice versa, which in turn led to a social disturbance, then both theories are supported. For either theory to be brought into question, the data would have to show that the conditions were met for only one of the theories and that these conditions alone were sufficient to lead to the outbreak of open conflict.

Where these two theories do directly oppose one another, is in whom they predict will initiate this mass action. The "elitist" theory predicts that a new elite will emerge from within the general society. It will organize itself into a leadership force and will stir the disorganized masses to revolt against the weakening old elite which is no longer performing its role as the ruling authority in the society. In the "immiseration" theory, one does not look towards the knowledgeable to organize a response to the changing conditions but to the most immiserated within the society. The concepts of knowledgeable and immiserated are directly opposed. The most immiserated, by definition, have the least resources. Knowledge and education are societal resources

which require monetary expenditure to obtain. (Therefore, since the immiserated lack money, these categories are ipso facto mutually exclusive.) Thus, any data which lend support to the "elitist" perspective on leadership will be data which necessarily contradict the "immiseration" approach and vice versa.

The "organizational" theory predicts that: (1) an economic crisis within a society will produce social unrest, and (2) that the cause of this crisis is the tightening of economic controls by the elite. This concept is in direct opposition to the "elitist" perception of conflict which postulates that it is the loosening of controls by the elite over the masses which leads to social unrest. Thus, any data which lend support to the "organizational" concept of tightening controls will be in direct opposition to the "elitist" perspective which predicts that it is the loosening of controls which leads to the emergence of conflict, and vice versa.

Where these two theories are somewhat congruent is in whom they predict will lead this protest. The "elitist" theory hypothesizes that a new elite will develop from the educated and knowledgeable within the general society and will organize itself and lead the disorganized masses against the weakening old elite. The "organizational" theory also hypothesizes that a new force will develop from within the proletariat from those aware groups who have organized themselves to deal with the impending economic crisis. It implies that the proletariat who organize the protest against the bourgeoisie will be skilled and knowledgeable in the ways of protest and will provide the leadership for the rest of the proletariat. Thus, although these two theories make similar predictions about the type of leadership which will lead

the populace in their protest against the established authorities, they differ greatly in their idea of what conditions are necessary to stimulate this action against the controllers of the society.

In analyzing the "uprooting" and the "immiseration" perspectives, the "uprooting" theory hypothesizes that any rapid social change in society will produce social unrest. Due to its general nature, this theory also embraces a more specific type of change described in the "immiseration" perspective, (i.e. an economic crisis). Any data on the economic conditions present at the time of the uprising which lend support to the "immiseration" theory will also lend support to the idea of social change as cited in the "uprooting" theory, although the reverse is not necessarily true. If the data isolated a positive economic change which resulted in social unrest, this would support the "uprooting" hypotheses but would contradict those in the "immiseration" theory. If there was any change within the other sectors of the society, this would support the "uprooting" perspective but would call the "immiseration" outlook into question at this point, since its more specific hypotheses do not involve any changes outside the economic realm. Thus, "immiseration" perspective can be considered a subset of the "uprooting" theory in predicting which conditions are required to stimulate the emergence of social conflict.

With regard to the hypotheses generated by these two theories on the leadership of the revolt, one finds that they are also congruent. The "uprooting" view forecasts that uprooted, marginal groups which are only tenuously connected to the society and which therefore, have difficulty adapting to change will lead the revolt. The "immiseration" theory looks to the poorest groups within the society to lead the uprising.

These concepts of poverty and marginality are not expressly linked but the most immiserated are, by definition, only weakly connected to the social structure since they do not have the monetary resources to participate fully within the society. They are, ipso facto, marginal. Thus, any data on who participated in the revolt which support the "immiseration" perspective will lend support to the "uprooting" theory, but the reverse is not necessarily true. If the data pointed to a marginal group which was not economically depressed but was isolated from the society due to other factors, as the leaders of the protest, this would support the "uprooting" hypotheses but would be in direct opposition to the "immiseration" theory. Thus, the "immiseration" theory must be viewed, in total, as a subtype of the "uprooting" theory, in that it makes more specific both the conditions required for the emergence of social conflict and the group which is most likely to lead the protest.

In paralleling the "uprooting" and the "organizational" theories, it was found that the "uprooting" theory speculates that any social variation in society will produce disruption. Due to its general nature, it includes the more specific change cited in the "organizational" view, which focuses on a particular type of change, specifically an economic crisis caused by the tightening of the economic controls by the bourgeoisie, which in turn leads to a social protest by the immiserated proletariat. Any data on the economic conditions present at the time of the social protest which lend support to the "organizational" theory will also lend support to the "uprooting" theory, but the reverse is not necessarily true. If the data reveal a positive economic change which results in social unrest, this would lend support to the "uprooting"

hypotheses but would be in direct opposition to the "organizational" perspective. If there was any change in the other sectors of the society which did not effect the economic conditions but which led to mass action, this would support the "uprooting" theory but would bring the "organizational" explanation of conflict into question since it did not deal with these other changes. Thus, in examining the aspect of social conditions needed to precipitate a revolt, the "organizational" theory can be considered to be a more specific version of the "uprooting" perspective.

In regard to who will lead this protest, these theories directly oppose one another. The "organizational" theory predicts that those within the proletariat who are best organized to meet the crisis provide the leadership for the protest. The "uprooting" theory, does not focus on the organized to initiate mass action but rather on the uprooted, marginal groups who have the greatest difficulty in adapting to any change. Any data which lend support to the hypothesis developed in the "uprooting" theory that the persons who engage in social protests are only marginally linked to the social system and have the greatest difficulty adapting to change will contradict the "organizational" assumption that these groups are best organized to respond to the social change caused by an economic crisis. If they are not well-linked to the society, they will not be organized for, but isolated from, change. Thus, the hypothesis predicting who will lead the social conflict is the distinguishing factor between these two theories.

In contrasting the "immiseration" and the "organizational" perspectives, both predict that an economic crisis is the stimulating social condition which gives rise to social protest. Due to its more

general nature, the "immiseration" theory includes the more specific form of economic crisis formed in the "organizational" perspective which specifically attributes the cause of this crisis to the tightening of the economic screws by the bourgeoisie, but the reverse is not necessarily true. If the data isolated an economic crisis that was not attributable to a greedy bourgeoisie, (such as a famine or an earthquake), this would support the "immiseration" theory but would oppose the "organizational" hypotheses. Thus, the "organizational" theory must be viewed as a subset of the "immiseration" theory with regard to its prediction concerning the conditions required for a social conflict to emerge.

Where these two theories oppose one another, is in whom they predict will lead the social protest. The "organizational" theory forecasts that the best organized to meet the economic crisis will provide the leadership for the social protest. In the "immiseration" perspective, one looks for the most deprived groups and those least capable to cope with the crisis to initiate mass action. Since the most immiserated are only marginally connected to the social system, they are isolated from the social structure and by definition, unorganized. They have neither the monetary resources nor the social resources of education to facilitate organization. Thus, any data which support the "organizational" theory will be data which will contradict the "immiseration" theory or vice versa.

Thus, only by fully supporting any of the theories can at least one aspect of all the other theories be brought into question. The "immiseration" theory is the exception, since it is really only a more specific subset of the "uprooting" theory, if it is fully supported it will not bring the "uprooting" theory into question.

Due to the overlapping nature of the theories, there are similar predictions for some aspects of each theory. This means that the data may support or contradict all theories to some degree. Therefore, this paper must not only determine if there is any evidence to support the theory but determine which theory establishes the best predictive base for determining the emergence of the conflict in this case. The following table summarizes most of the comparable features of these theories that have been discussed on the preceding pages. It is from the analysis of these features that the best theory, for this case, will be determined.



Table I - The Comparable Features Of The Alternative Theories

	Time 1		Time 2	Time 3			
The Theory	Differentiated Groups	Relationship	Nature of Change	Response		Leadership of Revolt	Revolt Against Who?
				divided	other		
"Elite"	Elites	controllers	control loosens	new old		new elite	old elite
	Masses	controlled					
"Uprooting"	Integrated	consensus	rapid social change		adapt		
	Marginal	consensus			anomie	marginal groups	
"Immiseration"	None(undifferentiated)	stable	economic crisis	welloff	adapt		
				immiserated	frustrated	immiserated groups	
"Organizational"	Bourgeoisie	increasing economic dependence	economic crisis				
	Proletariat			organized	protest	organized groups	bourgeoisie
				disorganized			

### Chapter III - Analysis of Data Sources

This chapter lists the sources of data used in analyzing the case of the Winnipeg General Strike. It explains the advantages and the drawbacks of each of the historical records and shows the need for caution in interpreting some sources. The accuracy of these four alternative theoretical perspectives will then be tested against this historical data, in chapter IV.

Many statistical sources have been utilized: The Census Of The North-West Provinces 1906, The Census Of The Prarie Provinces 1916, The Census Of Canada 1911 and 1921, The Canada Year Book 1916/17, "Historical Statistics For Canada" by Statistics Canada as well as certain statistics from selected issues of the Labour Gazette from 1919 to 1921, The Henderson Directory For Winnipeg from 1914 through to 1921 and "Human Settlement In Canada", a government publication put out by the Department of Urban Affairs.

Of the various statistics used in this study, the "Historical Statistics For Canada" were the best organized for the purposes of this research. They used a consistent base when determining the cost-of-living from year to year. They referred to the same particular set of items for developing their indexes and were careful to note any changes which were made, specifying the year. While the Labour Gazette also kept an index on the cost per week of an average family budget, it varied its commodities from month to month, to reflect the changing needs of the householder from summer to winter, making it difficult to analyze the actual increase in a specific set of commodities.

Although the "Historical Statistics For Canada" were the best organized, there were shortcomings found in all the statistical data

available for that time. The main interest of researchers seemed to be centred around discovering the national origins of immigrants and examining the rate of agricultural production. There was little consumer information collected and practically no concern for the amount of unemployed within the community. The only group which kept records of unemployment were the unions, but they were only concerned with the level of unemployment amongst their own members. This creates a problem if statistics on the the amount of unemployment in unions was extrapolated to the amount of unemployment expected for the general community. At that time, unions could not guarantee work for their members, since they were competing with non-union members for their jobs in open plant shops which were often hostile to union members. Therefore, union membership required a personal committment and often necessitated a job to afford to pay the union fee. Thus, in times of high unemployment, workers would often forget their union affiliation and attempt to find work at lower non-union rates. This would lead to the illusion of a lower rate of unemployment for union members than was actually being experienced within the general community. Since no statistics covered the total community in determining the rate of unemployment, it is impossible to assume a particular rate of unemployment for the community as stated in these partial statistics.

Federal, provincial and municipal statutes and by-laws were examined. These records were searched back to 1907 and major institutional changes which took place from that time up until just before the outbreak of the strike were noted. The problems in analyzing this type of qualitative data are threefold: 1) determining what was a "major" institutional change, 2) discovering to what extent these laws were

actually enforced and 3) deciding how far back changes would be examined as contributing to the conflict. In deciding what was a "major" change, there was no problem in choosing the enactment of the federal War Measures Act of 1914, since it greatly curtailed freedoms for all groups within Canada. In examining the provincial and municipal statutes, this same criterion of how greatly it effected the freedom of the individual was used. This criterion was used to denote a "major" legislative change since the "elitist" theory, which is the only theory that bases its hypotheses on the emergence of conflict on legislative changes, specifically dealt with the amount of control which the elite allowed to the masses.

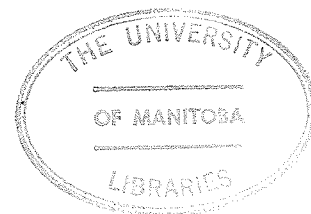
Determining the extent to which these laws were actually enforced was established by whether the law was legislated as mandatory or merely advisory in nature. Greater emphasis was placed on compulsory legislation. Advisory legislation, such as the labour legislation that was brought forth in Manitoba from 1915 to 1918, was viewed as less critical since the legislation could be ignored without penalty.

2. Deciding how far back to consider changes as having a bearing on the emergence of the general strike in Winnipeg, was difficult. None of the theories indicated a time lapse between the conditions necessary for conflict and its emergence. 1907 was arbitrarily chosen since it was felt that any changes before this point were too distant from the outbreak of the strike to have an identifiable effect on the conditions required to produce social conflict. 1907 was also chosen since there no major changes for several years before it and it was the year in which the first in a series of changes effecting the rights and priviledges of the public occurred. This change was an increase in the rights of the indi-

vidual at the municipal level. At that time, Winnipeg lowered the amount of personal property required for a tenant in order to qualify to vote in the municipal elections, from personal property assessed at \$200.00 to an assessed value of \$100.00, thus allowing many citizens the vote who were previously unable to do so.

The Winnipeg General Strike was chosen as a historically significant case of overt urban conflict for which sufficient data exists to test each of the theories in some fashion. The descriptions of numerous historians were utilized in attempting to get a clear picture of this arena of conflict. This paper focused mainly on two historical sources. It examined D.C. Masters book "The Winnipeg General Strike". His report was published in 1950 when government documents on the strike were still closed. Although his book contains several inaccuracies, such as maintaining that the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA) remained neutral during the strike, it was the first attempted historical account of the strike which dispelled many unfounded illusions that had plagued organized labour, such as the illusion that the strike was an attempt to take-over the government in Winnipeg.

The second historical source on which this paper relied heavily was D.J. Bercuson's "Confrontation At Winnipeg", published in 1974. This is one of the most recent books about the strike and the author benefits greatly from the research of those who went before him. His book was written after the fifty year closure on the strike documents was lifted which enabled him to examine many governmental documents which were not available to Masters. Thus, Bercuson's analysis of the events leading up to the strike is assisted by his knowledge of the government's perception of these events.



Also used as a historical source was the brief account of the strike in W.H. Crook's "The General Strike; a study of labor's tragic weapon in theory and practice", published in 1931. It was here that many of the controversial issues involved in the strike were first raised in an analytical fashion. Some information was also taken from K. McNaught's and D.J. Bercuson's "The Winnipeg Strike: 1919", published in 1974. The "Robson Report", a report by the Manitoba government published on November 6, 1919, contained the conclusions of a commission established immediately after the strike to examine the issues and the causes of the strike. The combined data from these historical, legislative and statistical sources were utilized to determine which theory or theories best describes what actually occurred in Winnipeg to produce the general strike in 1919.

## Chapter IV - Analysis of the Theories

This chapter will confront each theory with the historical, legislative and statistical data collected on the situation in Winnipeg at that time, to determine which theory or theories is best supported by the events and conditions which actually surrounded the strike. It will take into consideration the cumulative nature of the conditions. Thus, as more and more of the conditions discussed by each of the theories are met, the greater the possibility of open conflict emerging, according to that theory. Therefore, the theory which will be chosen as the theory which is best supported by the conditions, will be the theory which has the greatest number of its propositions supported by the data.

### "Immiseration" Theory

The "immiseration" theory, the most specific of the theories this paper researched, hypothesizes that social conflict develops in response to an economic crisis. For the Winnipeg General Strike to have developed as a consequence of this hypothesis, it would lead us to expect the following conditions:

- a) an increase in the cost-of-living without a compareable increase in wages, and/or
- b) a decrease in wages without a compareable decrease in the cost-of-living, and/or
- c) a drop in the size of the job market without a compareable drop in the size of the labour market, and/or
- d) a rise in the size of the labour market without a compareable rise in the size of the job market.

If the strike occurred in response to any of these substantive manifestations of an economic crisis, then the "immiseration" theory is supported. The greater the number of substantive manifestations that are supported, the greater the possibility that this theory accurately "predicted"

the strike, due to the cumulative nature of the conditions.

Studying the conditions in Winnipeg, at the time of the strike, there is evidence to suggest that an economic crisis was occurring. Graph I indicates evidence of rapid increases in the cost-of-living through-out Canada, at the unusual rate of +10% per annum, for the unusually long time span of six years. Neither the time span of this inflationary period nor the rate of inflation has since been equalled in Canadian history. Graph II demonstrates that the cross-Canada trend of rapid inflation for that period was preceeding at a similar rate in the province of Manitoba. This would lead one to expect that the conditon of inflation in Winnipeg was similar to that being felt in the rest of Canada.

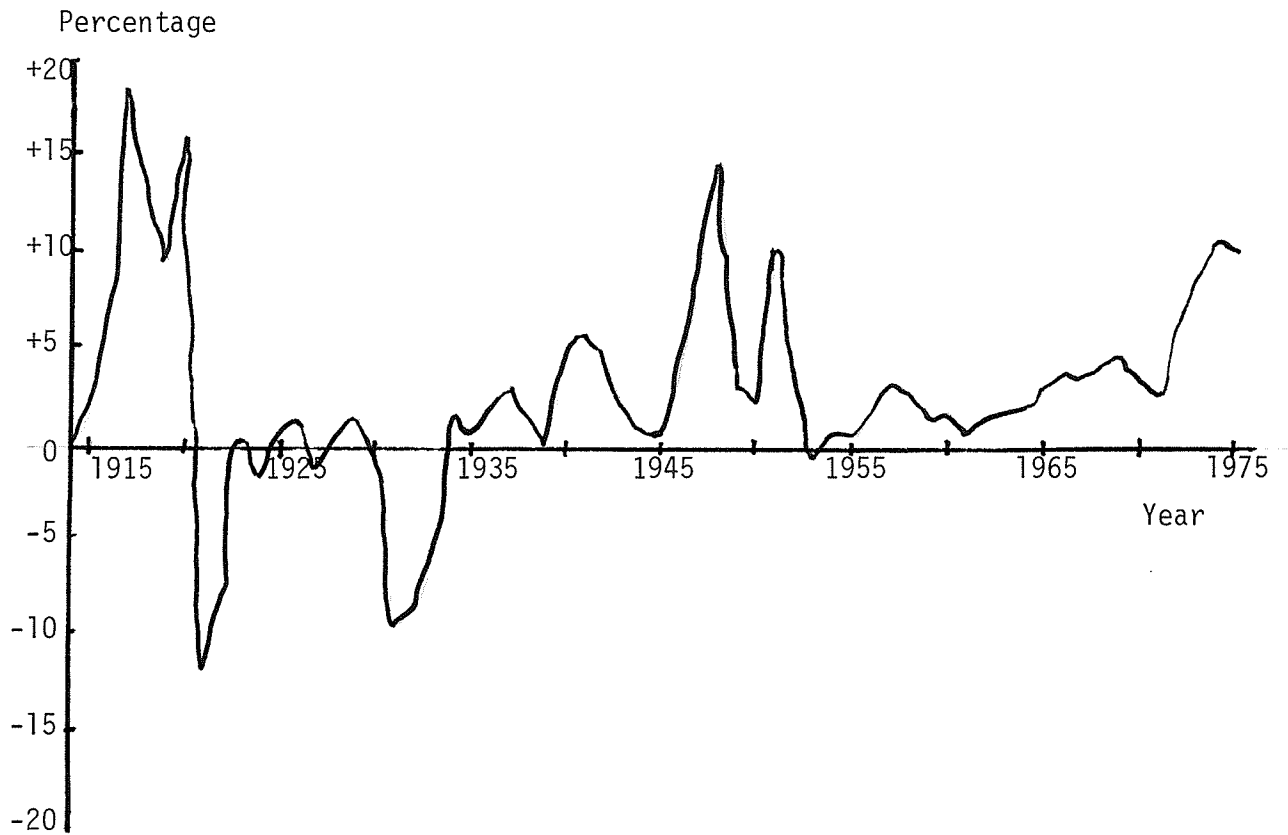
With inflation preceeding at this unprecedented rate, the evidence in Table II indicates that wages were not keeping up with prices. While prices rose by 51.5% for the period from 1914 to 1919, wages in these selected industries rose from 17.43% up to 44.4% leaving the wage earner with a net decrease in real wages. Thus, the evidence in Table II indicates that there was no compareable increase in wages for that time. This evidence satisfies the condition for an economic crisis as established in factor a) of the substantive manifestations previously listed.

Although no records on the size of the labour market could be found for the year 1919, one can presume that conditions c) and d) that were described previously, were also met, for two reasons. 1) As war industries disbanded with the end of the Great War in 1918, since there was no longer a need for war materials, the demand for labour was also decreasing. 2) As the soldiers returned home, with the end of the war



Graph I

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX FOR CANADA  
(%change from year to year, 1914 to 1975)



Source: Statistics Canada - Winnipeg

Graph II

COST PER WEEK OF A FAMILY BUDGET

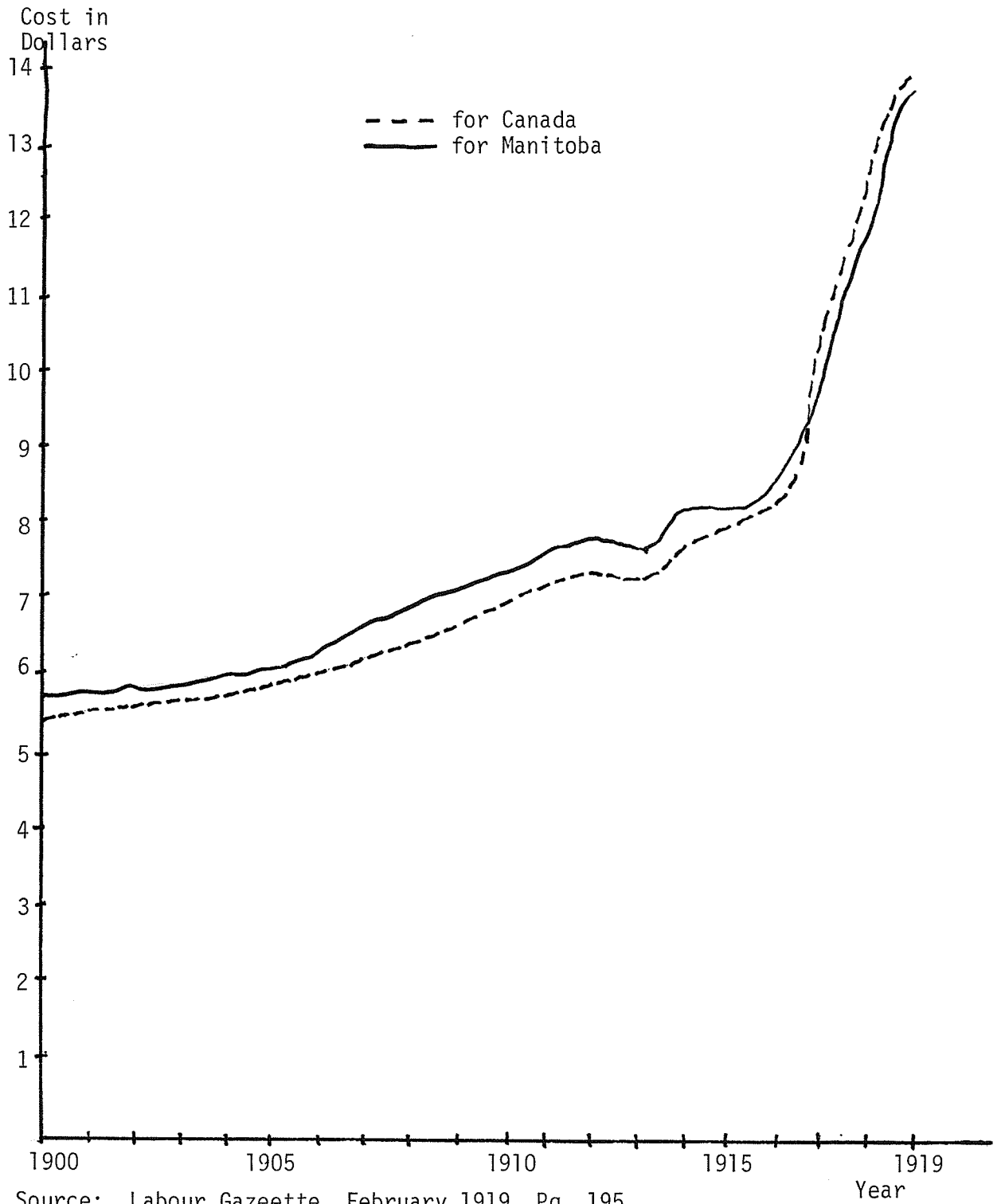


Table II

	PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN HOURLY WAGE RATES FOR <sup>1</sup> SELECTED BUILDING TRADES IN WINNIPEG, 1914 to 1920				CONSUMER PRICE INDEX <sup>2</sup> FOR CANADA (% change from year to year, 1914 to 1920)
Year	Carpenter	Electrician	Plumber	Labourer	
1914	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
1915	0.	44.4	0.	0.	1.7
1916	4.16	0.	0.	9.	8.5
1917	9.09	0.	7.27	16.66	18.2
1918	8.33	7.69	10.16	8.57	13.3
1919*	25.58	7.14	23.07	31.57	9.8
1920	33.3	22.	25.	16.	15.8

\*new wage rate increase was effective  
on September, 1919, after the strike

1. Source: Historical Statistics For Canada, Wages and Working Conditions Pg. 87
2. Source: Statistics Canada - Winnipeg

and attempted to enter the job market, the supply of labour was increasing. Therefore, the "immiseration" theory is well supported by this data which points to one actual manifestation and two presumed indicators of an economic crisis which preceded the initiation of mass action in Winnipeg.

As well as predicting what conditions will lead to a civil revolt, the "immiseration" theory also attempts to isolate who will instigate this action. It predicts that those who participate in mass uprisings come from the most deprived groups within the society. According to Gurr, it is increasing immiseration that stimulates groups to mass action. For the case of the Winnipeg General Strike, this hypothesis would lead us to expect that:

- a) those groups on fixed incomes (such as pensioners) who would have the greatest problem coping with inflation would initiate the conflict, and/or
- b) those groups who suffered the greatest drop in their income would initiate the conflict, and/or
- c) those groups who became unemployed as a result of the decrease in the job market would initiate the conflict, and/or
- d) those groups who were unable to enter the job market as a result of the increase in the labour market would initiate the conflict.

If the strike in Winnipeg was initiated by one or more of the most deprived groups within the community, as indicated by the substantive manifestations recorded above, then the "immiseration" theory is supported. The greater the number of substantive manifestations which are found that supported this hypothesis, the greater validity this hypothesis has.

Although a general strike, by its very nature, includes all members of the work force, in examining the conditions apparent in Winnipeg

it was found that the most deprived did not play a leading role in initiating the conflict. In analyzing those groups who did instigate the strike, it was found that they did not fit into any of the substantive descriptions previously indicated. They were "the two chief pillars of organized labour in Winnipeg."<sup>27</sup> While the building trades were suffering from low wages and high unemployment due to a shortage of building contracts, they were neither the lowest paid sector of the community nor did they have the highest unemployment rate, due to their skills. The other organization involved in initiating the strike, the metal trades, had little unemployment and their wages were quite high despite the discrepancy between the lower wages in the small contract shops and the highly paid, successfully unioned, railway shops. "The leadership represented the labour elite of skilled craft workers, while the great majority of European immigrants in Winnipeg held unskilled jobs, if any."<sup>28</sup> While persons having difficulty entering the job market, as described in factor d) could be seen as being represented by the participation in the strike by the returned soldiers, they did not initiate the strike, but joined in only after it was started by the previously mentioned labour associations. Therefore, the "immiseration" theory is not supported by the data found on who actually initiated the conflict in Winnipeg.

In sum, the data do not entirely support the "immiseration" perspective. The data on the strike confirms the prediction that mass action is caused by an economic crisis but the data do not support the hypothesis that the most immiserated within the community will initiate

27. D.J. Bercuson op cit., Pg. 23

28. K. McNaught and D.J. Bercuson The Winnipeg Strike: 1919 (Don Mills, Ont.: Longman Canada Limited) c 1974 Pg. 52

the conflict. Therefore, although the theory is supported in part, in that it seems to accurately pinpoint the cause of mass action, there is no evidence that it can isolate who will respond to this economic crisis and initiate the conflict.

### "Uprooting" Theory

The "uprooting" theory, the most general of the theories in hypothesizing the conditions required for conflict, proposes that social uprisings occur in response to the breakdown of social norms. It further proposes that the social norms break down due to any rapid social change. According to Durkheim, social change leads to social disorganization, "For, as nothing restrains the active forces and assigns them limits they are bound to respect, they develop haphazardly, and, come into collision with one another, battling and weakening themselves."<sup>29</sup> Uprooting theorists, in short, view any type of social change as potentially disruptive. More specifically, the "uprooting" theory would lead us to the expectation that conflict results from:

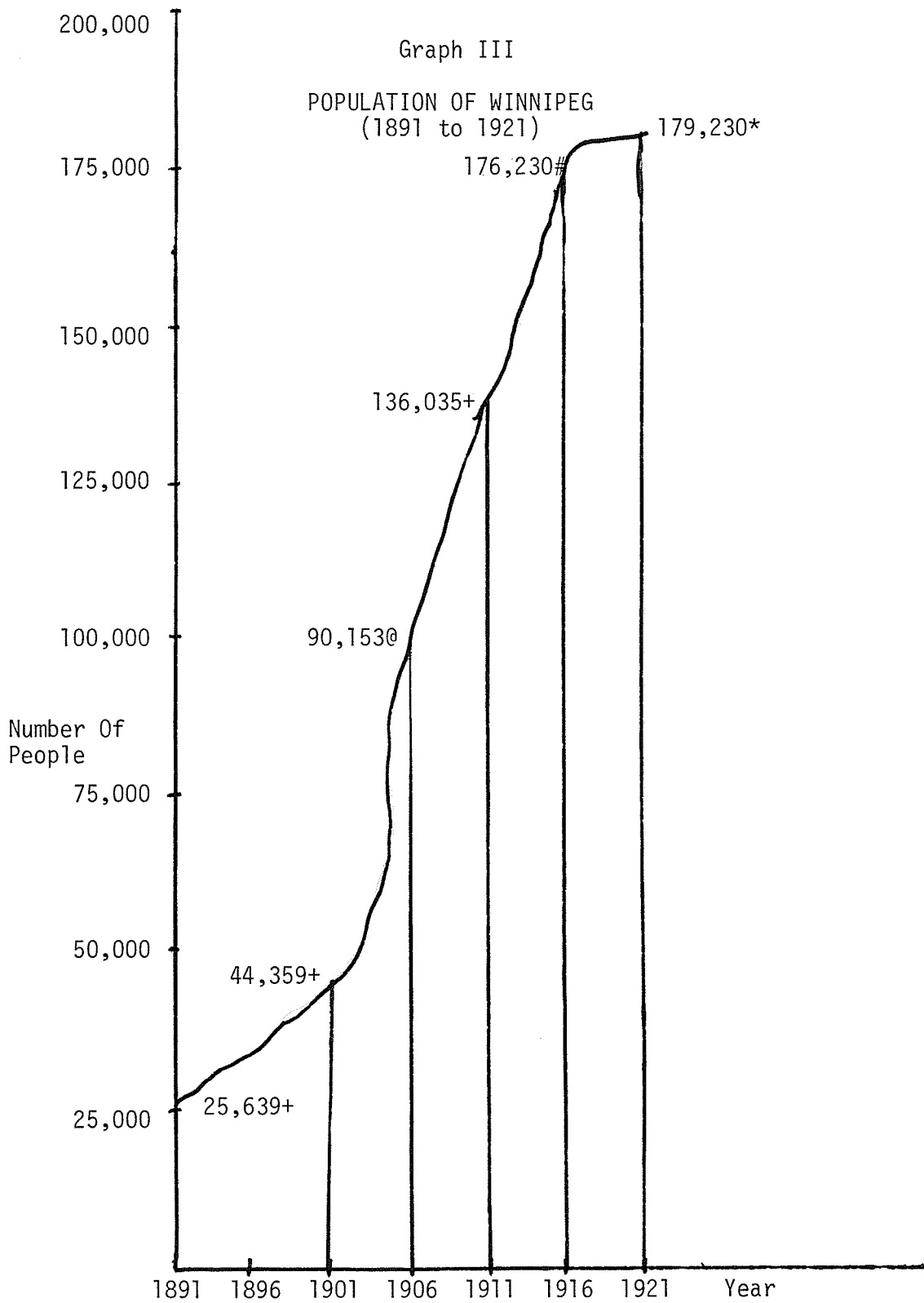
- a) any type of rapid technological change such as: (1) a sudden increase or decrease in the division of labour within the job market, (2) a sudden increase or decrease in the level of complexity require for a particular job, (3) a sudden increase or decrease in the level of comfort (i.e. noise level) on the job site, and/or
- b) any type of rapid population change such as a sudden increase or decrease in city size, and/or
- c) any type of economic change such as: (1) a sudden increase or decrease in the cost-of-living, (2) a sudden increase or decrease in the amount of work available, (3) a sudden increase or decrease on the amount of men looking for work, and/or
- d) any recent institutional change such as tightening or loosening the controls of the government over the people in a general way or over specific groups

29. E. Durkheim The Division Of Labour In Society Pg. 2

If the strike in Winnipeg occurred in response to any of these substantive manifestations of social change, then the "uprooting" theory is supported. The greater the number of substantive manifestations that are supported by the data, the greater the validity of the proposition set forth in this theory.

There is evidence that rapid social change was occurring at the time of the strike, in Winnipeg. Although no direct evidence could be found which supported factor a), that of rapid technological change, it is not unreasonable to assume that the demand by the war for better and better products more quickly, led to many advances in all industries, including the building and metal trades. However, by assuming that an indication of rapid technological change could be found by examining the changes in the division of labour, it was found that the number of job categories in the building trades industry in Winnipeg had increased from 11, in the 1911 Census Of Canada; to 15 categories by the 1921 Census Of Canada. Similarly, the metal trades industry has also increased the number of its job categories, in that same time span, from 6 to 27. If division of labour can be used to indicate technological transformation, this seems to indicate that rapid changes were occurring in those industries, at that time.

The second indication of rapid social change to be scrutinized, is rapid population change within Winnipeg. It is evident from Graph III that rapid population change was not occurring in Winnipeg at this time. The graph does show that rapid population growth had occurred from 1901 to 1916 but from 1916 to 1921, the population of Winnipeg had grown at an extremely slow rate. Since it is due to immigrants and other marginal groups that this theory predicts conflict will develop, special attention

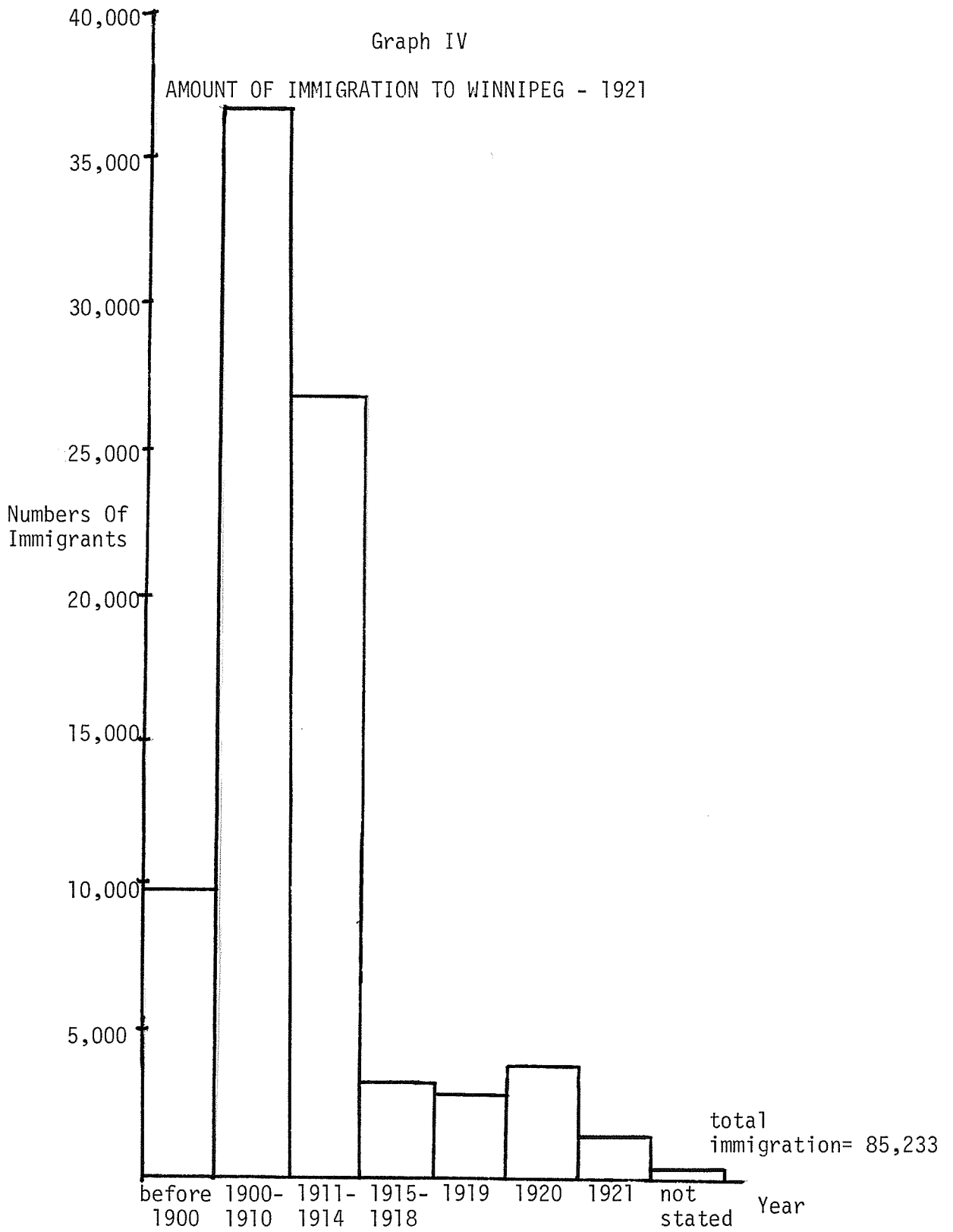


Source: \* Census Of Canada 1921  
 + Census Of Canada 1911  
 # Census Of The Prairie Provinces 1916  
 @ Census Of The North-West Provinces 1906



was paid to immigration figures. It was found that this decline in the population growth rate could be attributed to by a marked drop in immigration to Winnipeg after 1914 (see Graph IV). Thus, during the period in which the strike fell, immigration was minimal and growth was gradual, a direct contradict to what should be expected. Therefore, the "uprooting" theory is not supported by this population data. However, it must be noted that these graphs would not indicate the large influx of discharged soldiers returning to Winnipeg after the end of the Great War in November 11, 1918, which Masters suggested contributed heavily to the atmosphere which created the general strike. These persons would already be listed as residents of the city but may have caused a huge jump in the actual population of the city. No source could be found which indicated either the exact number of men who left for the war or the number who returned after it was over. If the returning soldiers were only a small portion of the total population of Winnipeg (less than 5% of the total 175,000) this would not have a significant effect on the gradual growth figures. However, if the number of returned soldiers had exceeded 5%, it could have had a significant effect on the real population change. Since the data do not show any rapid population change at the time of the strike and in the absence of information on the influx of returned soldiers, the "uprooting" theory is not supported.

The third feature of rapid social change to be examined, was rapid economic change. This would include any accelerated positive or negative change on the cost-of-living or in the rate of unemployment within Winnipeg. Although no consumer price index could be found for Winnipeg alone. it was previously evident from Graph I that the rate of economic change through-out Canada began climbing at the beginning of



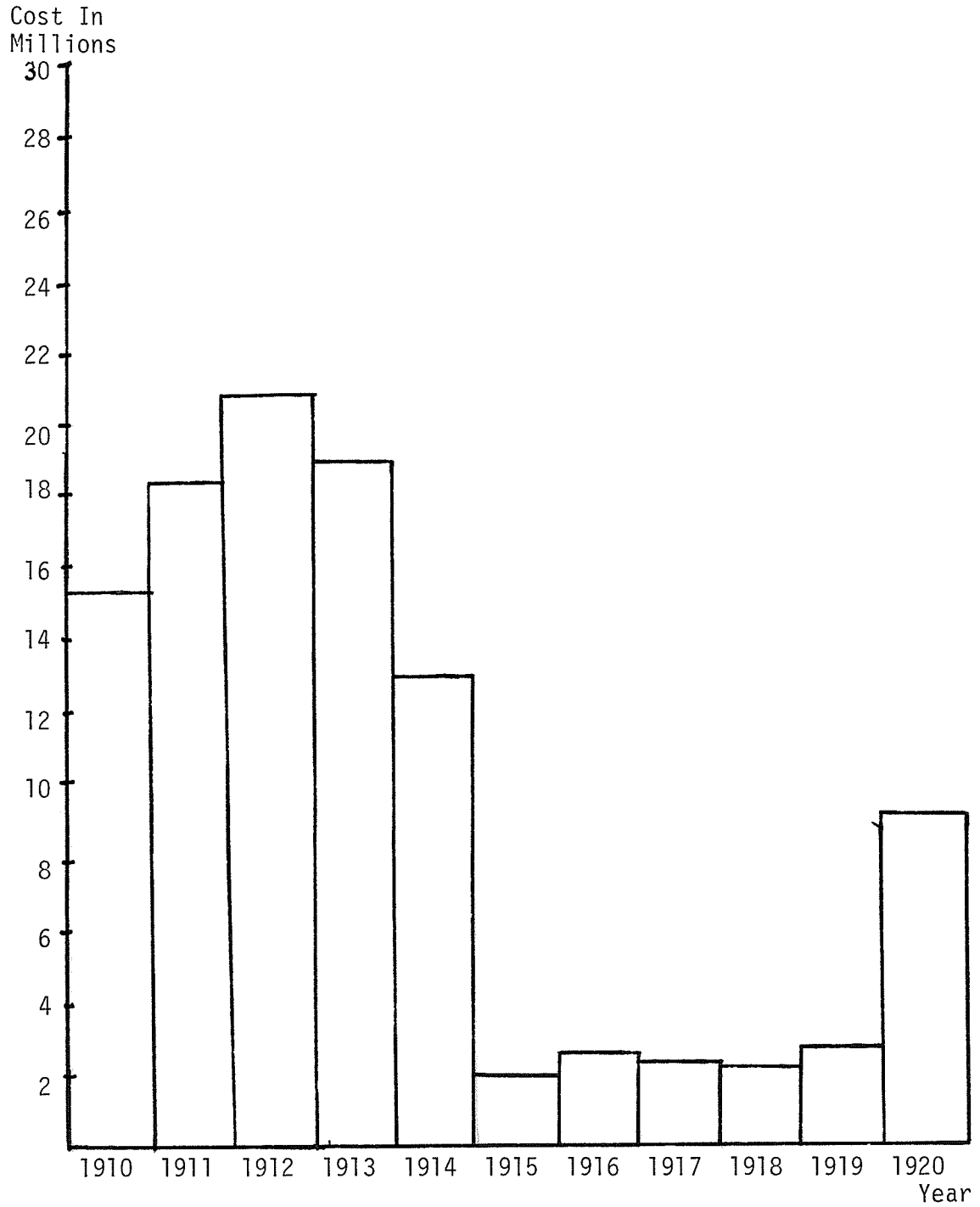
Source: Census Of Canada 1921, Pg. 418

war years and by 1917 had reached a level of inflation of 18.2%, which was not to be equalled again in Canadian history. The national rate of inflation then persisted at a +10% level until 1920. The cost of a family budget for a week, seen previously in Graph II, compared to that needed for Manitoba and Canada. It showed only minute price differences between them in their estimate of the weekly budget. In both cases, the cost of providing basic family essentials was skyrocketing in the period just before the general strike occurred in Winnipeg. From examining these graphs, it is evident that rapid economic changes were occurring both in Canada as a whole and in Manitoba specifically, at the time of the strike. In examining the building trades, one of the industries where trouble first emerged in Winnipeg, it is evident that it too had undergone rapid economic change. After a development boom, from 1914 onward, this industry was suffering from a virtual depression. The demand for building had ceased and men who had relied on this industry for a steady income were left jobless. As illustrated in Graph V, the amount of building required from 1915 to 1919 was at a standstill. Therefore, the "uprooting" theory is supported by this economic data, in that it points to both an inflationary crisis through-out Canada and Manitoba, as well as a job market crisis in the building industry of Winnipeg.

Another indicator of rapid economic change is the rate of unemployment. Unfortunately, no comprehensive statistics were kept on the rate of unemployment in the total potential work force, at that time. Some records of the amount of unemployment were kept by various trade unions on their members (see Graph VI). As noted in chapter III, this is not a good indicator of the actual amount of unemployment for the

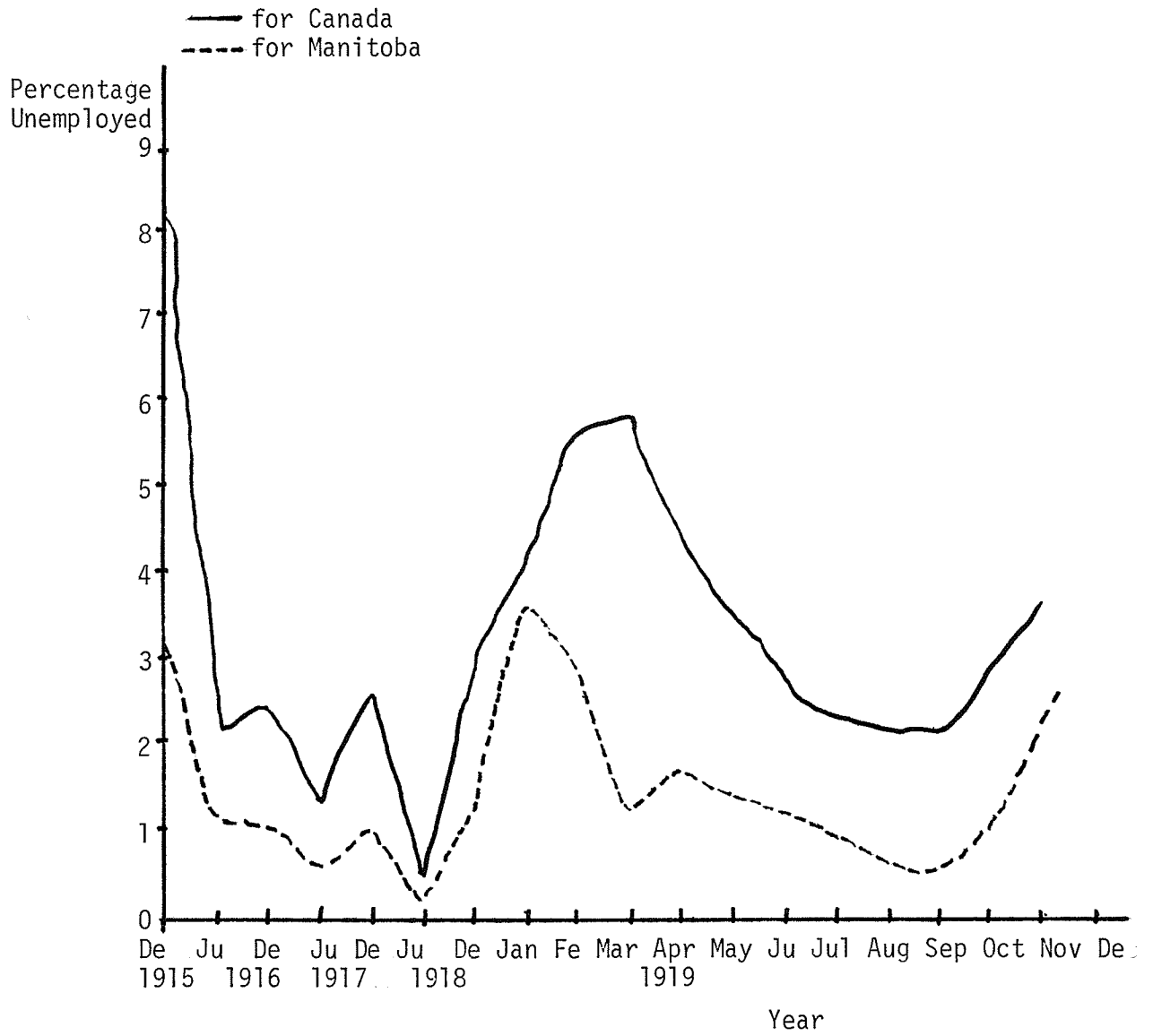
Graph V

ESTIMATED COST OF BUILDING WORK IN THE YEARS 1910-1920,  
AS INDICATED BY THE BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED IN WINNIPEG



Source: Labour Gazette, February 1921, Pg. 218

Graph VI  
 PERCENTAGES OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN TRADE UNIONS  
 (1915 to 1919)



Source: Labour Gazette, February 1921 Pg. 219

total Winnipeg area, because the rate of unionization was greatly affected by the amount of employment available. When job opportunities were plentiful, people sought union membership in order to bargain more effectively for a decent wage. When jobs were scarce, people would drop their union affiliation and would work for lower wages in order to have work of any kind.

"In the days before the automatic check-off and the closed union shop, it took a more active personal commitment to join a union, particularly in the face of management opposition. A union, therefore, had to demonstrate the advantages of affiliation. It had to show prospective members that it could protect them from anti-union employers and that it could win real gains in higher wages and better working conditions."<sup>30</sup>

Thus, unemployment in unions would not be a good indicator of the amount of unemployment within the general community. A better indicator of the economic situation would be determining the number of jobs available.

Graph V has already indicated that the activity in the building industry had decreased sharply since 1914, creating an economic crisis in that industry. The Census Of Canada in 1911 when compared to that in 1921 showed that while the number of men employed in the building trades had dropped from 10,697 in 1911 to 4,141 in 1921; for that same time period the steel industry nearly trebled its numbers, from 1,327 in 1911 to 3,306 in 1921. This shows that the employment picture in Winnipeg was undergoing a rapid restructuring process in these industries from 1911 to 1921. The "uprooting" theory is supported by this economic data, in that it points to a rapid employment shift from the building trades to the metal trades, with a net decrease in the amount of work available in these two industries.

The final indicator of rapid social change to be examined was the establishment of any recent institutional changes by the various

30. D.J. Bercuson op cit.; Pg. 45

levels of government; in the city, in the province and in the country as a whole. There was considerable tightening of the institutional controls, by the federal government, with the declaration of the War Measures Act in 1914. Under this act, which was not repealed until 1927, immigration was halted, the right to strike was restrictive to those industries which were not considered essential to the manufacture of war materials, censorship was imposed and freedom of movement was restricted. Also, based on the argument that fighting a war necessitated a firm control of the society, the federal government continued to whittle away at many freedoms through Orders In Council, which allowed laws of national security to be passed without parliamentary process. One such order in 1916 required that all labour register by job classification, in order to better serve its war industries. Another in 1917 imposed conscription. These changes were of such magnitude and followed each other with such rapidity, that it is possible that some segments of the population of Canada may have not had sufficient time to allow them to adjust to these restrictive compulsory institutional changes, by a government which had formerly not interfered with the personal freedom of its citizens.

On the other hand, after 1915, the newly elected government of Manitoba, increased the number of individual liberties to some of its constituents. It was the first province to legislate female suffrage, in 1916. It also attempted to establish some protection for labour. Although most of the legislation from 1915 to 1919 found in the Manitoba statutes concerning labour was recommended policy rather than compulsory regulation, it was the first attempt by any level of Canadian government to protect the rights of its workers. These changes grossly changed the

interaction pattern for women and workers. These changes were both rapid and unprecedented, which may not have allowed marginal elements of the population of Manitoba sufficient time to adjust.

Within Winnipeg itself, there were no major changes in the city by-laws since 1907, when the amount of personal property required for tenants to vote was lowered from \$200.00 to \$100.00; however there was considerable support for the proposition that rapid institutional change at both the provincial and federal level had left certain segments of the province and the country in anomie. Although no changes were occurring within the civic legislation of Winnipeg, the contradictory directions of the federal and the provincial government may have cause anomie within the marginal segments of the population of Winnipeg. Thus, the "uprooting" theory is supported by this data on rapid institutional change.

In examining all the manifestations of rapid social change, all of them except one, population change, are supported by the data on the conditions apparent at that time. Therefore, the instigating condition of the "uprooting" theory, rapid social change, is clearly evident in the data on the circumstances which preceded the Winnipeg General Strike.

The "uprooting" theory also predicts who will lead the social uprising within the community. According to Kornhauser and Durkheim, individuals who are only marginally connected to the society will become more easily dislocated from changing social norms and will initiate the revolt against their rising anomie. Applying this hypothesis to the situation in Winnipeg at the time of the general strike, we are led to expect that:



- a) those individuals who are least involved in community affairs would initiate the conflict, and/or
- b) those new immigrants who due to language and cultural differences, had not yet been fully integrated into the social structure of the Canadian culture would initiate the conflict, and/or
- c) those who were unemployed and had lost viable contact with the social structure would initiate the conflict, and/or
- d) those with physical or other handicaps that prevented them from participating fully in society would initiate the conflict.

If the strike was initiated by any of these marginal groups within the community, then the "uprooting" theory is supported. The greater number of substantive manifestations of this hypothesis which are found to have instigated the strike, the greater the viability of this proposition.

To determine the extent of marginality of the instigating groups, the attachment to the community of the strike leaders was probed. According to Masters' description all were Canadian citizens (two were born in Canada, while the rest had migrated from the British Isles before 1911), thus, all were well acquainted with the ways of Canadian society. All the strike leaders were considerably involved in community affairs: in addition to union activities, three were ministers, two were civic aldermen and one was a member of the federal parliament. All the strike leaders were well-educated, some had university degrees (at a time when most of the population of Winnipeg received at most a grade school education) and all were excellent public speakers.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, information concerning the ten strikers who were arrested on or after June 17, 1919 does not support the hypothesis that the strike leaders were dislocated from the community and rebelled in a state of anomie.

The "uprooting" theory, then, is not wholly supported by the

31. D.C. Masters The Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) c 1950 Pg. 8-11

evidence. Although it seemed to have predictive possibilities in isolating the cause of the conflict, it was not in any way correct in its forecast of who would lead the general strike.

### "Elitist" Theory

The "elitist" theory contains several propositions about the conditions which must precede social unrest. It hypothesizes that social uprisings occur in response to a growing weakness within the elite, (i.e. those who control the society). The substantive manifestations of this proposition as stated by Pareto include "an increased humanitarian and altruistic sentiment"<sup>32</sup> which leaves the elite less capable of defending itself, while still maintaining its greed for the goods of others, leading to a situation of elite dominance without force. Force, in this sense, refers to the rigid control placed by the elite over the society. Applying this concept to the arena of the Winnipeg General Strike, we would expect that conflict would result from a loosening of controls by the elite which would be indicated by:

- a) the various levels of government initiating reforms leading to greater degree of individual freedom, and/or
- b) the plant owners' factories in which the general strike was initiated, allowing unions or other forms of employee control that gave increased freedom to their workers,

to be accompanied by attempts to maintain dominance by, for example:

- a) increasing taxes, and/or
- b) decreasing wages relative to prices productivity

If the strike occurred in conjunction with any or all of these substantive manifestations of elite dominance without force, then the "elitist" theory is supported. The greater the number of manifestations that are

32. V. Pareto op cit., Pg. 41

supported by the data, the greater the viability of this proposition.

The logic of dominance without force had been advanced as the cause of the strike by the business community of Winnipeg at that time. They insisted, through their paper, "The Winnipeg Citizen", that the Great War, The Russian Revolution and other examples of foreign governmental weakness had excited the population of Winnipeg to the point of revolt.<sup>33</sup> They insisted that the Canadian government show some direction by dealing firmly with these upstarts in Winnipeg,<sup>34</sup> to combat this revolution and to demonstrate to the citizens of Winnipeg that the elite of this country had not lost its capacity to govern. "On May 19, the first issue of the Citizen appeared, from then until the end of the strike, this citizen's committee paper portrayed the strike as naked revolution whos purpose was to establish a soviet style government in Winnipeg."<sup>35</sup>

In examining the conditions which actually prevailed in Winnipeg and in Canada at the time of the strike, there is little indication of government weakness. In sifting the federal, provincial and civic statutes, it was found that most of government had developed a fairly firm line of direction during the Great War to create a smooth running social system. The federal government, through its War Measures Act of 1914, had curtailed many freedoms. It imposed censorship, restricted freedom of movement (particularly to new immigrants) and curtailed labour's right to strike in any industry which was considered essential to the war effort. On June 26, 1915 the federal government further tightened

33. "Not A Strike -- A Revolution" an article in The Winnipeg Citizen May 19, 1919

34. "The One Big Issue" an article in The Winnipeg Citizen May 22, 1919

35. K. McNaught and D.J. Bercuson op cit., Pg. 54-55

its control of immigrants by demanding the compulsory registration of all immigrants who were of alien origin, and later these immigrants were forced to carry a certificate of parole to allow them freedom of movement. In 1919, the federal government demanded the registration of all labour, by job classification, to obtain a list of available men to stock their war industries. These lists were later used to obtain soldiers when conscription was imposed on August 29, 1917. As well as conscripting labour, a compulsory income tax was levied on all income above \$1,500.00 in the federal Income Tax Act on September 20, 1917 to help obtain funds for the war effort. Although the introduction of an income tax could be considered increased domination of the resources of the populace, it only occurred after increased restrictions on the citizenry were in place. In other words, this situation does not have the appearance of "dominance without force" but of dominance in conjunction with increased force.

A new provincial government was elected in Manitoba, in 1915. It seemed more humanitarian towards its populace than the previous government. In 1915, this new government established a Labour Bureau to analyze labour problems and develop statistics on working conditions, wages and hours; but this board had no authority to act in labour disputes and was only advisory in nature. In 1916, the electoral restrictions were loosened and women were allowed to vote. In 1918, an Employment Bureau was established by the provincial government. It did not have the ability to create jobs but it served as a clearing house for the labour market. Also in that year a Minimum Wage Act was introduced which set up an advisory bureau to investigate conditions and to suggest a series of minimum standards for wages, hours and working conditions

to maintain a reasonable standard of worker health. These laws only seemed to loosen the control of the employers over their employees. All provincial labour legislation was only advisory in nature. It could be ignored by employers and often was. Thus, at the provincial level of government, there was some indication that the apparent loosening of controls may have contributed to an attempt by some of the workers in Winnipeg to lead a press against the ruling system of production and challenge the established government.

The civic government of Winnipeg had always held tight reins over their constituents. Voting rights were weighted heavily in favour of the propertied elite. Residents were allowed to vote in every ward in which they held property. While the vote was allowed to tenants if they held personal property which was assessed at a minimum value of \$100.00 as of 1907, their landlord was also allowed to vote in that ward, resident in it or not, by virtue of the property owned there. This could effectively cancel the vote of the tenant, while it gave the landlord the possibility of casting up to seven votes, if property was held in every ward of the city. Neither of these by-laws were repealed until 1965. There is no indication of any humanitarian legislation for that time period, and every indication that the local government advocated a policy of individual initiative and shunned support of the weak.

"The city fathers envisioned a golden future for Winnipeg based on industry and trade, a future that could only be created if conditions conducive to the free operation of industry were established. This did not mean that a concerted campaign against trade unions was about to be launched, only that if labour challenged any of the essential components of the municipal-industrial relationship, it would draw upon itself the wrath of both."<sup>36</sup>

These previously mentioned by-laws plus this firm attitude by the city

36. D.J. Bercuson op cit., Pg. 17

fathers indicates the stress that the Winnipeg civic government placed on domination through force.

The industries in which the general strike began (Vulcan Iron Works, The Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works, Dominion Bridge as well as the Association of Building Trades Employers) had all maintained unyielding attitudes towards their respective employees. Although the Building Trades Employers had previously attempted negotiations with an association of their employees, all had refused to officially recognize unions on their work sites. They had not allowed their employees sufficient wage increases to keep up with the rapidly rising cost-of-living and the three iron works shops employers were particularly resolute in refusing to grant wage increases which were compareable to the other iron works shops in the city. According to historians and the Robson Report, there is some evidence to suggest that it was this firm attitude and not any weakness within this business elite of Winnipeg which led to the strike. "In the contract shops the machinists had had a long tradition of unsuccessful negotiations with their employers".<sup>37</sup> Although the lower wages in the industries in which the strike began could be considered an indication of increased dominance by their employers over their employees, this only occurred in conjunction with increased measures of force over their employees through the continued blockage of unionization and the consistent inability of their employees to successfully negotiate with them. These do not appear to be conditions of "dominance without force" but rather, dominance through force. In total, there is little support for the proposition that a weakening within the government and the business elites led to the emergence of the Winnipeg

37. D.C. Masters op cit., Pg. 18

## General Strike.

Pareto predicts that this social conflict will erupt in an organized manner, and will be led by a new rising elite. "The new elite appears as the vindication of the humble and weak against the powerful and strong."<sup>38</sup> It takes on the cause of the oppressed in order to gain power, then quickly disassociates itself from the masses, once victory is assured. Therefore, one must look for an organized revolt led by a new elite which espouses the cause of the masses, for Pareto's hypothesis of circulating elites to be supported. For the situation at the time of the general strike in Winnipeg, this hypothesis would lead us to expect that:

- a) a structured protest such as a petition, a protest march or a strike, which was
- b) led by a new elite such as the influential members of the community or those with skills which were superior to those of the general community, who
- c) espoused the cause of the masses by appealing to the whole community through promising to vindicate the whole community from the control of the old established elite.

If the general strike was initiated by a new elite, in an organized manner, by arguing the needs of the community as a whole, then Pareto's concept as defined in the "elitist" theory is supported. The greater the number of proposition which are supported by the data, the more viability this theory has.

In examining historical data, it was found that the strike had originated from a petition by the dissatisfied workers in the building and metal trades (two of the highest skilled job categories in the city) to the labour elite, the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council (WTLC), for

38. V. Pareto . op cit., . Pg. 41

support. They asked WTLC to conduct a vote amongst the total membership of the city, to see if they would support them in their fight for union recognition and for higher wages through a general sympathy strike. The strikers' records of how they proceeded documented a planning stage of a little over a week. During this period, they polled their membership and assessed the results. When the results showed an overwhelming majority in favour of the sympathy strike to support the cause of the metal and the building trades workers, a General Strike Committee (GSC) was established. This committee had three members from each striking union whose task it was to maintain essential services and monitor any other problems which might be caused by the strike. "The strikers had organized the machinery to conduct and maintain the strike. The forces of labour had been mobilized and held in line with remarkable efficiency."<sup>39</sup> In practice, the overall efficiency of the GSC was questionable, but the framework of responsibility was established. Therefore, Pareto's concept of an organized revolt led by a new rising elite is supported by the data found in the strikers' records referring to the role played by both the WTLC and GSC in both organizing and leading the general strike in Winnipeg.

In reviewing Pareto's theory, he also suggests that this new rising elite will assume the cause of all the oppressed. With reference to the role played by the WTLC and the GSC, this is not correct. These committees stressed only the injustices done to a small minority of the total labour force, (those in the building trades and in the metal trades contract shops) and tried to rally the support of a sympathetic majority of the work force. Thus, while this theory correctly

39. D.C. Masters op cit., Pg. 81



pointed to who would lead the strike, it did not determine how this new rising elite would secure the support of the Winnipeg labour masses in their initiation of mass action against the old established elite.

The evidence for the "elitist" theory, in total, is not wholly supported by the data on the Winnipeg General Strike. The circumstances under which it predicts conflict will emerge, is not supported by the data. However, the predicted manner that overt conflict will emerge is partially confirmed by the data. Therefore, according to the evidence on the Winnipeg General Strike, there is little foundation for the "elitist" theory in predicting the source of this specific conflict and only limited foundation for determining the leadership of the mass action.

#### "Organizational" Theory

The "organizational" theory contains two basic propositions about the conditions which precede social protests. It hypothesizes, similarly to the "immiseration" approach, that social protests occur in response to an economic crisis. The criteria for determining an economic crisis were already established in the "immiseration" perspective. They included the substantive manifestations of rising inflation and increasing unemployment. However, due to the nature of the second hypothesis made by Marx about the source of this economic crisis, some adjustment must be made to the indicators of an economic crisis. Marx postulates that this crisis is due to the increasing greed of the bourgeoisie which have gathered a greater and greater share of the scarce resources to themselves leaving the proletariat in poverty. In applying these two hypotheses to the case of the Winnipeg General Strike, they would lead us to expect that:

- a) an increase in the cost-of-living without a compareable increase in wages, or
- b) a decrease in wages without a compareable decrease in the cost-of-living, and/or
- c) a drop in the size of the job market without a compareable drop in the size of the labour market, with the bourgeoisie using this as an excuse to lower wages, or
- d) a rise in the size of the labour market without a compareable rise in the size of the job market, with the bourgeoisie using this as an excuse to lower wages.

If the strike occurred in response to any of these substantive manifestations of an economic crisis precipitated by a grasping bourgeoisie, then the "organizational" theory is supported. The greater the number of propositions which are supported by the data, the more viability this theory has.

The conditions in Winnipeg at the time of the strike indicated that an economic crisis was occurring. Sutcliffe states that "the struggle of the workers to maintain or increase real income in the face of the rising cost of living was the major cause of dispute activity".<sup>40</sup> The task of determining whether this crisis can be directly attributed to the bourgeoisie is more difficult. The logic for assuming that it was attributable to the bourgeoisie is as follows: Graphs I and II showed that the cost of goods was rising rapidly, while Table II indicated that wages were not rising as rapidly. Since the bourgeoisie own the means of production and thus own the goods which are being produced there and sold in the marketplace, if their employees are not reaping the benefits of the higher prices charged for these goods through comparatively higher wages, then the bourgeoisie were receiving these benefits. Thus, the economic crisis can be attributed to the bourgeoisie.

40. J.H. Sutcliffe Economic Background Of The Winnipeg General Strike: Wages And Working Conditions (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba) 1972 unpub. M.A. Thesis Pg. 123

Unfortunately, closed financial statements of the companies which were directly involved in the strike prevent me from directly pointing to the companies whose workers initiated the conflict.

The "organizational" theory also suggests who will lead the protest against the bourgeoisie. It predicts that those who are best organized to handle the crisis will lead the social protest. The substantive manifestation of this proposition would include any previously organized association which specialized in problems of an economic nature. In regard to the Winnipeg general Strike, this would lead us to expect that:

the groups who initiated the conflict were previously organized for this purpose (such as unions, citizens' action leagues and/or consumer associations)

If the general strike in Winnipeg was organized by any or all of these groups which were developed specifically to deal with economic problems, then the "organizational" theory is supported. The greater the number of groups involved, the greater the viability of this proposition.

In examining all the different groups which were involved in both initiating and maintaining the strike, it was found that most groups were previously organized specifically for dealing with economic problems and that the new groups which were formed had developed from old groups specifically for dealing with the specific problem of the Winnipeg General Strike. The groups which initiated the strike, the building and metal trades workers, were highly skilled occupational groups which required that their members be flexible to the many technological innovations which were occurring within their trade. Both of these groups had previously organized themselves into a Building Trades Council(BTC) and a Metal Trades Council(MTC) respectively, to bargain more effectively

with their employers over their economic conditions as an industry-wide unit. In both cases, the employers had refused to bargain with these organizations, thus, the councils began industry-wide strikes to back their economic demands.

Once the industry-wide strikes had begun, with no success in sight, they took their case to an organization to which they belonged, the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council (WTLC). This council represented all the unions within the city of Winnipeg. The MTC and BTC asked that the council query all its members to see if they would support them in a general sympathy strike. When the vote was counted and it was found that their membership was overwhelmingly in favour of supporting these two unions, the WTLC formed a General Strike Committee (GSC) to provide the leadership for this strike. This committee was drawn from the previously organized unions of the WTLC. It was composed of three members from each of the striking unions as well as three members from the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA) who had decided to support the strike once it had begun and three members from the Winnipeg Ministerial Association (WMA) who had decided to act in an advisory capacity in an attempt to bring together the BTC and the MTC with their respective employers. Therefore, the "organizational" theory is supported by this data which shows the role played by previously organized groups which had been formed for the purpose of dealing with such economic difficulties, in both initiating and leading the strike.

Thus, the evidence which has been uncovered, supports the "organizational" theory in all its propositions. It accurately predicted which conditions would lead to an economic crisis. It also correctly determined who would lead this protest against the bourgeoisie. Thus,

the "organizational" theory is fully supported by this data on the emergence of the Winnipeg General Strike.

While all the theories are supported to some degree, only for the "organizational" theory are the hypotheses on the instigating conditions and the leadership involved both supported. Thus, we may conclude that the "organizational" theory is the best supported by the data uncovered on the actual circumstances which led to the emergence of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.

## Chapter V - Conclusions

This study has explored the problem of how urban conflict first emerges as a visible force in the form of a general strike. Four competitive theories on the emergence of conflict were examined and the hypotheses established by each were compared. These theoretical postulates were translated into substantive propositions by stating the developments which were expected by each of the theories. These expectations were compared to the conditions as they actually arose in the case of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. It was found that the "organizational" theory was supported since both of its postulates were confirmed by the data.

The "immiseration" theory hypothesized that social conflict emerged from the most deprived groups within the society who were most effected by an economic crisis and rebelled in frustration. It was partially confirmed by the data in that the Winnipeg General Strike was caused by an economic crisis, but the most immiserated did not initiate the action.

The "uprooting" theory hypothesized that social conflict was instigated by marginal groups, least linked to the social structure, who rebelled in anomie as a response to rapid social change. This theory was also partially confirmed by the information found on the strike, in that there was an indication of rapid social change just before the outbreak of the strike, but it was not the marginal groups who responded to this change.

The "elitist" theory predicted that conflict would emerge in response to a weakening established elite, led by a new elite which appeals to the masses by promising freedom for all. It correctly predicted

who would lead the strike but did not reveal the conditions which would surround its emergence.

Although both the "immiseration" and the "uprooting" theses were partially indorsed in that they correctly predicted some conditions that would precede open conflict, neither of these theories accurately pointed to the leadership of the protest. Contrarily, while the "elitist" theory correctly pointed to who would initiate the protest, it did not correctly indicate the conditions which would lead to the social conflict. In examining these three theories, the "elitist", the "uprooting" and the "immiseration", it was found that they were only ratified to the point in which their established expectations were congruent to the expectations established in the "organizational" theory. Therefore, since the theories were not mutually exclusive, it was necessary that all be at least partially supported by the data, if any one theory was fully supported. In that these theories were confirmed only to the extent to which they supported the "organizational" perspective, this further confirms the "organizational" theory for this case. Thus, this paper concludes that the "organizational" theory best describes the emergence of urban conflict as it occurred in the case of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.

## Chapter VI - Suggestions for Future Research

In its examination of these alternative theories of conflict, this study has focused on only one stage of conflict, the emergence of overt social protest. It may be that the evidence which supports the "organizational" theory is peculiar only to the emergence of conflict. Thus, further research should also be done on the later stages of the chronological development of conflict. These later stages are particularly important since the manner in which the Winnipeg General Strike ended has also been a point of considerable discussion. The strike was suppressed by the forces of the federal government. The government agreed with the business community that the strike was a contravention of law and order. Therefore, the strike leaders were arrested and the city was eventually placed under military rule until the strikers yielded and returned to their jobs. The government justified its actions by stating that intervention was necessary since the strike had undermined the principles of authority as established in Canadian society. The strikers countered the government's argument by accusing it of usurping its own legal processes by firing the constituted authorities, promoting unethical legislation and inciting a riot in order to justify its unusually restrictive measures employed in the suppression of the strike.<sup>41</sup> Which of the theories discussed in this paper would have accurately indicated this outcome? It may be that the "organizational" theory, which show strength in predicting the emergence of conflict, fails to predict the other stages of conflict and that another theory more accurately predicts the development and/or the resolution of the conflict.

Further research should also be done in confirming the ability

41. H.C. Pentland op cit., Pg. 14



of the "organizational" theory to generally predict the emergence of conflict by examining another general strike. The Seattle General Strike emerged at approximately the same time as the general strike in Winnipeg. It had also begun as an industrial strike in the well-organized metal trades shops and grew to a general strike encompassing the whole city of Seattle. However, while the Winnipeg strike lasted six weeks, the Seattle strike lasted only four days. Which theory would accurately predict how the general strike emerged in Seattle? It may be that the evidence which supports the "organizational" theory in the Winnipeg General Strike is peculiar to Winnipeg alone and that another theory could more accurately describe the events as they took place in Seattle. However, even if the Seattle General Strike also supports the "organizational" theory, two studies in support of one particular perspective, both of which are based on the general strike motif, is insufficient evidence to establish it as a theory of social conflict. Much more research should be done in exploring other forms of social conflict to discover the extent of its general usage.

Conditions which led to the development of a relatively peaceful general strike may not be the same as those conditions surrounding the outbreak of violent conflict, such as ghetto riots or armed insurrections. Were the circumstances which preceded the eruption of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, similar to or different from, those conditions which were apparent at the time of the Winnipeg General Strike? Were the people who initiated the conflict of similar background or different from, those who led the strike in Winnipeg? It may be that the evidence which supports the "organizational" theory is peculiar to only peaceful conflicts and does not accurately describe the circumstances

as they emerge in violent confrontations.

Another aspect of the conflict situation, the size of the conflict, may also be a factor in determining which theory accurately describes how conflict emerged. Conditions which lead to the development of a geographically specific conflict may differ from those conditions which lead to the outbreak of a conflict at a regional or national level. Is the theory which accurately predicts the emergence of an industrial dispute, the same theory which foretells the development of a civil war? All these questions must be answered before the "organizational" theory can be utilized as the predictive base in developing a sociology of conflict.

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