

CANADA'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

By William Z. Foster

TIM BUCK'S LATEST BOOK, *Our Fight for Canada*,* a selection of his writings over some 36 years, with an introduction by Leslie Morris, is a splendid piece of work. The Communists in our country, as well as in Canada, would do well to read and study this book. Tim Buck, the tested head of the Communist Party of Canada, is well known throughout the Communist world for his many sterling qualities. He is a staunch fighter, an excellent Marxist-Leninist theoretician, and generally a splendid Party leader and mass worker. This book exhibits his many good points.

The book is a survey of the Canadian Party's organizational and theoretical history, giving the general highlights of both; at the same time it contains numerous excellent resumes of the major campaigns of the Party over the years. It is a fine blending of the theory of the Party and its application of this theory among the masses. Tim Buck writes very well, and his descriptions of the many struggles that the Canadian working class and the Party have engaged in are models of good agitational material, as well as fine examples of Marxist-Leninist analysis. The book is packed with many valuable lessons and should be in every American Communist's library.

The Canadian Communist Party, our next-door neighbor, is a brother Party of the CPUSA, and many of the writings about the early days of the Canadian Party largely parallel the history of our Party. One of the pieces of duplicative history in the book that interested me very much had to do with the Trade Union Educational League. The Canadian Party, as well as our own, backed this organization, which played such a big part in the early life of our respective Parties. Tim was one of the leaders of our joint TUEL, which was born in the USA, and he relates that it struck so deeply into the working class of Canada that at least one-third of the organized workers of the country followed the lead of the TUEL in some of its campaigns. This is about in line with the situation south of the border. It is too bad for us that Tim Buck didn't deal with the joint experiences of our two Parties, especially in such instances.

The Canadian working class, like that of the United States, is heavily foreign-born, or of immediate immigrant parentage. Its component nationalities are essentially the same as ours, except that there is a larger per-

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centage of representation in it from the English, Irish, and Scotch, due to Canada's long period as a colony of Great Britain. People of French descent are also a large factor in Canada. This is the source of most of its 42% Catholic minority. Canada is in fact today a bi-national state, which presents the Communist Party with one of its most complex problems—to help the oppressed French minority protect itself from the oppressive Anglo-Saxon domination. There are also fewer Negroes in Canada than in the United States. In the vast, thinly settled north, the Indians remain a very important factor. Canada, with nearly 18 million inhabitants, is growing very rapidly. Covering more than 3,845,000 square miles, Canada is larger territorially than the United States (not counting Alaska and Hawaii).

The Canadian working class has a complicated record in politics. Active Marxists began to play a role about the turn of the century. The Socialist Party of Canada was formed in 1904. The scattering communist groups from 1919 onward eventually crystallized into the Workers' Party of Canada in 1922. This became the Communist Party in 1924. The Party was outlawed in 1931, and regained its legality in 1936. It was outlawed again in 1940, and in 1943 it re-established itself as the Labor-Progressive Party. It resumed the name Communist Party at its 16th convention in October, 1959. The Communist Party of Canada has always been very active, and for the most part, percentage-wise, it was larger than the Communist Party of the United States, and it is so today.

Canada has had a rich and complex history with its trade-union movement, as Tim Buck's book emphasizes. It is full of the contradictory policies of Canadian, British, and American trade unions, competing with one another for the backing of the working class. This injured the solidarity of the workers to a large extent. The Canadian workers produced many unions of a Canadian affiliation, both local and general. They constitute a growing national factor. One of the most famous of Canadian unions, organized in 1919, was the "One Big Union," a sort of Canadian IWW, which had a large following. Since then, there has grown a large number of very important Canadian labor organizations.

The unions with general headquarters in the United States have played a large, if not decisive, role throughout Canadian labor history. Such trade unions, as early as the 1880's, both in the shape of the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor, had a considerable membership in Canada, which was then a sparsely settled frontier country. In fact, the first name of the AFL, given to it at the founding convention of that body in 1881, was the "Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada," showing the strong Canadian influence. This name it retained until 1886, when it adopted its present title of the American Federation of Labor. The AFL unions (and the independent Railroad Brotherhoods) eventually gained the upper hand in Canada over the few British unions, and to a large extent also over the native labor movement. They even undertook to cram the Canadian unions

into what was an AFL district council, the "Trades Congress" of Canada. To this extent they hamstrung the Canadian labor movement, disrupted the workers' influence in Canadian life, and played into the hands of the bosses (both Canadian and United States) in Canada. In later years, Canada experienced the great influence of the CIO, the AFL-CIO amalgamation, etc., and the AFL-CIO, through its Canadian affiliates, is dominant in Canada. Another United States union, in the early days, was the Industrial Workers of the World, which was very influential in Canada. The Communists played an important role in all these organizations, with a continuing stress upon the need for the workers of Canada to have a free and untrammelled movement of their own, not dictated to by the leading figures of the United States trade union movement.

Canadian labor history is full of hard-fought strikes, in coal mining, metal mining, railroads, lumber, longshore, automobile, various building crafts, etc., in all of which the Communist Party was an important factor. One of the most celebrated of these strikes, indeed one of the most famous strikes in the history of all North America, was the general strike in Winnipeg in May, 1919. The striking AFL workers had decisive control of the provisions of the tied-up city. This strike shook the bourgeoisie of the whole continent, and correspondingly inspired the workers throughout the Americas. Generally, Canadian heavy industry strikes, reflecting much of the brutal United States open shop spirit, were very hard fought. Canadian communists, especially being led by Tim Buck, for more than a

generation past, have been noted as first class trade-union fighters.

The Canadian Communist Party has had a special role with the farmers, as is well illustrated by Tim Buck's book. Canada is a country with a highly modern industry; it has a large number of industries in coal mining, metal mining, oil, lumber, etc., and they are very advanced in their technique and capitalist tendencies. Canada is also especially developed in agriculture, and is one of the great grain producing countries of the world. Canada does not have so many huge dairy ranchers, fruit growers, cotton growers, and other large farming interests, such as are to be found in the United States. The small farmers are a larger percentage in Canada, and they have played an important part politically in the history of the country. The Communist Party has long been deeply interested in these popular struggles, in the East as well as the West. Consequently, it has had a larger percentage of representatives, both national and local, in the government than we have had in the United States.

Another basic activity of the Canadian Communist Party which is dealt with at length in Tim Buck's book, is the fight against war and the loading down of the Canadian people with armaments. Particularly since the cold war began, the anti-war struggle in Canada has become more and more intense. The mainspring of the pro-war preparations is the United States, as Buck makes very clear. The USA has attempted to treat Canada like a military outpost, having not only used all its influence in the country (which is great) to put across various militariza-

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tion propositions, but it has also loaded up the country with American military bases, troops, and other paraphernalia of war, as well as planning to use Canada's excellent fighting forces for its own purposes.

The United States has inflicted upon Canada the Marshall Plan, in its special Canadian form, and other militaristic programs, and has done its best to make the Canadian people believe that war is both inevitable and indispensable. The American style red-baiting has been the common fare of the Canadian people for many years past. The Communist Party has met this war issue head-on. It has boldly and ceaselessly fought every step to militarize Canadian life, pointing out that this was primarily the work of the imperialist invader of the country—the United States. At the same time, it insisted that war was not inevitable. The whole thing was recognized and condemned as a part of the United States fight for world domination. Especially, the Canadian Communist Party has fought ceaselessly against the growing menace of fascism.

At its 16th National Convention (October 9-12, 1959), (which takes us somewhat beyond the confines of the book), the Canadian Party gave its utmost attention to the total disarmament proposal placed before the United Nations by Premier Khrushchev of the USSR, and to the somewhat modified foreign policy of the United States government. Khrushchev indicated that this showed the possibility of easing the cold war and of eventually making war impossible. In Buck's Keynote Speech at the 16th Convention, he said: "There is ground for confidence

that we are on the path to widespread adoption of policies of peaceful co-existence . . . The world is entering a new phase of international relations. . . . It must be emphasized, however, that the battle to achieve full acceptance of peaceful co-existence is only at its beginning. It will have to be fought for every inch of the way . . ."

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Throughout its history, Canada has led a bitter struggle for national existence against the attempts of the United States to absorb it. Since the Communist Party was organized, this fight for nationhood has permeated all its activities. Ever since the United States was formed it has engaged in a program of rapid expansion. It seized (sometimes by forceful "purchase") the whole mid-west from France; the Floridas, Mississippi and Alabama from Spain; the entire southwest from Mexico; California, also from Mexico; big slabs of Oregon and Washington from England; Alaska from Russia, etc. Half a continent was thus added to the original 13 states, and the basis laid for the great United States empire.

The United States expansionists did not overlook Canada. During the Revolutionary War, with very considerable support inside that country, they tried to take over Canada proper, but were militarily defeated by the Canadians and British. In the War of 1812, they also set as their major objective, Canada, but again they were frustrated on the field of battle. After the Civil War they plotted to seize Canada, but could not make it. From that time on they have undertaken to strengthen

their economic and political influence in Canada generally by grabbing industries and the land, the banks, etc. Even today there is a vigorous minority that is looking for every means possible to grab Canada. For about a century, until recently, Great Britain seriously resisted American attempts to seize Canada, but British influence was overwhelmed. The Communist Party has been amongst the most intelligent and militant in this fight for Canadian nationhood, and in realizing that the nation must be led by labor.

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The Canadian Communist Party had a bout with revisionism in the past couple of years, which Comrade Buck deals with sharply in his book. But this deviation was certainly not as insolent and destructive as its counterpart in the United States. So relatively mild was its influence, and so firmly was it met by the Party, that Tim Buck, in his book, doubts that the whole affair in Canada should be dignified by the name of a crisis. The Party rallied sharply against the revisionist attack, which was led by J. B. Salsberg, and the Party leadership took a firm stand, as well as against dogmatism and sectarianism. Hence, the whole attack was a dud.

In his excellent analysis of revisionism, Tim Buck says, "the campaign of attempted revisionism attacked Lenin's position all along the line." In addition to slandering Marx, the revisionists argued that Lenin was all right for Russia, but out of place in Canada—much along the line taken by the United States revisionists. The gen-

eral position of the Canadian revisionists was, according to Buck, "the vulgar claim that in Canada social reforms can be gained and built one on another until capitalism is reformed and becomes socialist Canada." The revisionists attacked the whole body of Marxism-Leninism in detail, with special stress upon the vanguard role and democratic-centralism. These principles were especially under fire in the United States also. About democratic-centralism, which was a special target for the revisionists in the United States as well as Canada, Buck says, "One of the first signs of a revisionist tendency was the proposal to abolish democratic-centralism." The Party rebuffed this whole opportunist line, however, and the 1957 convention overwhelmingly voted down the revisionists.

In a progressive spirit, the Canadian Party called for a general Party recruiting drive of 10% in the 1959 convention period. This was over-fulfilled, and a Party increase of 15% or better was achieved. At the just concluded 16th convention, another Party recruiting drive of 10% was agreed upon, and no doubt the Canadian Communists are enthusiastically building their Party in the excellent situation that exists for Party growth. The Party goes ahead in its work firmly based in its ideology, practice, and constitution on Marxism-Leninism.

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The concluding chapter of Comrade Buck's book is entitled "The Road to Socialism in Canada." In the vivid life struggle of the Party, this decisive objective of the Party has always been kept to the front. In the Party's long

fight to ready the working class for their great socialist task, it has had to fight against innumerable schemes of the revisionists and opportunists to sabotage and defeat this historically successful fight. In his book, Buck singles out one such reactionary argument and delivers some telling blows against it. This is the contention that Canada would not, in any event, be able to establish socialism because its aspiring boss, the United States, would not permit it to do so. But Tim Buck demolishes this contemptible defeatism. He asserts, and he is correct, that when the Canadian people are ready to set up socialism they will receive adequate support from the working class of the United States, and from the socialist forces of the world.

The contemptible revisionist argument, demolished by Tim Buck, has a familiar smell to the Communist Party of the United States. It is part of the trappings of Browderism. Just before the arrival of the Duclos article, Browder noticed that the Australian Communist Party had a militant program of socialism, whereupon he wrote to that Party that the United States, which supposedly had a crushing power

in Australia, would not permit it, but would smash any such socialism; so the Australian working class had better adjust itself to the slower tempo of the American working class. Browder claimed that this letter to Australia was the best piece of "creative" Marxism he had ever written. But, of course, the Australian Party, headed by Comrade L. L. Sharkey, indignantly repudiated it.

Comrade Buck designates the present period, when socialism is growing so fast throughout the world, "the epoch of the fulfillment of Marxism." In this spirit, he proudly calls the Canadian Communist Party the Canadian section of this greatest movement of world history. The recent Canadian Party convention said: "The 16th National Convention meets at a time when the superiority of the socialist over the capitalist system is being universally acknowledged. Interest in socialism is rising. Capitalist illusions are crumbling with the deepening crisis of imperialism. Conditions today provide increasingly favorable possibilities for Party growth and the extension of its influence. We must make this possibility a reality."