

CLASS STRUGGLE, THE COMMUNIST PARTY, AND THE POPULAR FRONT IN
CANADA, 1935-1939

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ABSTRACT

Class Struggle, The Communist Party, and the Popular Front in Canada, 1935-1939

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This thesis is an attempt to provide a critical history of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) during the Popular Front era, roughly November 1935 to September 1939. This study contains a detailed examination of the various stages of the Popular Front in Canada (the united front, the height of the Popular Front, and the Democratic front), with special attention paid to the CPC's activities in: the youth movement, the labour movement, the unemployed movement, the peace movement, and the anti-fascist movement. From this I conclude that the implementation of the Popular Front, the transformation of the CPC from a revolutionary party to a bourgeois party, was not a smooth process, but instead was punctuated and resisted by elements within the CPC in what can be considered a process of class struggle internal to the CPC itself.

Keywords: Communist Party of Canada, communism, Soviet Union, labour, Popular Front, Great Depression, socialism, Canada

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I. Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to provide a critical history of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) during the Popular Front era, roughly November 1935 to September 1939. In this introduction I will briefly introduce the history of the CPC, before exploring the nature of the Popular Front, and finally looking at the place of the Popular Front in the current historiography of Communism: both Canadian and international. From there, I examine the period from October of 1934 to November of 1935, which I term the Genesis of the Popular Front. I then describe the period of the Popular Front proper, from November of 1935 –the Ninth Central Committee Plenum of the CPC- to October of 1937 –the Eighth Dominion Convention of the CPC. I briefly look at the Eighth Dominion Convention of the CPC, which took place in October of 1937. I describe the process by which the Popular Front transitioned into the Democratic Front between November 1937 and June 1938, when the CPC held its Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum. Finally, I finish by looking at the Democratic Front proper, from June 1938 to September 1939. From this I conclude that the implementation of the Popular Front, the transformation of the CPC from a revolutionary party to a bourgeois party, was not a smooth process, but instead was punctuated and resisted by elements within the CPC in what can be considered a process of class struggle internal to the CPC itself.

A Brief History of the Communist Party of Canada

A first attempt at the founding of a communist party in Canada occurred in 1919, in the context of what Craig Heron has termed the post-war “workers’ revolt”.¹ Due to a series of police raids in the wake of WWI, the first attempt at the formation of a Communist Party in Canada was forced underground and ultimately failed.² However, following the Russian Revolution, nascent Communist formations were also formed in the United States. Unable to unify on their own for a variety of reasons,³ the Comintern (an international communist organization comprised of the respective national Communist Parties) sent a representative to the United States in the spring of 1921 in order to help broker a unity deal. Two of these organizations – the United Communist Party of America and the Communist Party of America – also had sections in Canada. The Comintern representative, Caleb Harrison (known as Atwood in Canada)⁴, travelled to Toronto in April of 1921 in order to arrange for the two Canadian sections of the American parties to unify. He was successful and on May 23, 1921 representatives from the two American parties as well as the Socialist Party of North America met in a barn outside of Guelph and formed the Communist Party of Canada (CPC).

While the CPC was conceived of as an underground organization, leading members soon felt the “necessity for public legal work.”⁵ As a result, they suggested the formation of a broader party; following a series of cross-country tours by leading

¹ Craig Heron, *The Workers’ Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

² Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 29-48.

³ For an account of the early American revolutionary left, see: Bryan Palmer, *James Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

⁴ William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 36.

⁵ Tim Buck eds. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, *Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1977), 110.

Communists, delegates assembled at the Toronto Labour Temple on December 11, 1921 to form the Workers' Party of Canada (WPC).⁶ The WPC quickly grew, and in the ensuing year embraced many sections of the workers' movement –including sections of the Socialist Party of Canada, as well as large organizations of left-wing immigrants- which had not been included in the initial formation of the CPC.

The Fourth World Congress of the Comintern marked an important shift in the tactics employed by the Comintern and its constituent sections. Held from 5 November 1922 to 5 December 1922, the Fourth World Congress put forward the strategy of the united front. The *Theses on Comintern Tactics* stipulated that “[t]he Communist International requires that all Communist Parties and groups adhere strictly to the united front tactic”.⁷ The united front was conceptualized as a means of “uniting all the forces of the working class against capital” “involving all workers, and a coalition of all workers’ parties around economic and political issues”, the success of which “depends on a real movement “from below”, from the rank-and-file of the working masses.” Whereas previously the Comintern had emphasized the necessity of breaking from the old socialist parties of the Second International, it now shifted gears, arguing that it was the “reformists” that would benefit from splitting the workers movement. Following the

⁶ William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 46; Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 97.

⁷ *Theses on Comintern Tactics*, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/tactics.htm>, accessed July 8, 2016.

formation of a united front, the Comintern argued that “the entire state apparatus must pass into the hands of a workers’ government.”⁸

Perhaps most significantly for the CPC was the slogan issued by the Comintern to concretize the united front: the workers’ and peasants’ (or farmers’, in the case of Canada) government. The *Theses on Tactics* argued that the “slogan of a workers’ government ... can be used practically everywhere as a general agitation slogan”. The call for a workers’ and farmer’s government, however, was ambiguous; it was unclear whether or not such a government could be formed using the bourgeois state apparatus (parliament), or necessitated the smashing of such an apparatus first. Indeed, the Comintern allowed for the possibility of a “workers’ government that comes about through an alignment of parliamentary forces”.⁹ The relationship between the workers’ and farmers’ government and revolution was left ambiguous; on the one hand the “most elementary tasks of a workers’ government must be to arm the proletariat” but on the other hand “the continued existence of any such government committed to revolutionary politics, must lead to a bitter struggle with the bourgeoisie or even to civil war”.¹⁰

The slogan of the workers’ and farmers’ government was taken up in earnest almost immediately by the WPC. In early 1923 the WPC issued a *Manifesto of the Workers Party of Canada on the Immediate Problems of Canadian Labor* which stated

⁸ *Theses on Comintern Tactics*, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/tactics.htm>, accessed July 8, 2016.

⁹ *Theses on Comintern Tactics*, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/tactics.htm>, accessed July 8, 2016.

¹⁰ *Theses on Comintern Tactics*, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/tactics.htm>, accessed July 8, 2016.

explicitly that the WPC stood “for the establishment of such a Labor-Farmer Government as will carry out a program of the socialization of industry under workers’ control... .”¹¹ For the WPC the Labor-Farmer government was not seen as a rupture with bourgeois democracy, but rather existed within it; it was to “lay the basis for a Canadian Republic of Workers and Farmers.” In terms of the immediate tasks of the workers’ movement, the WPC supported a call for the creation of a genuine federated Labor Party that, while primarily oriented towards elections, would also organize the “masses politically and industrially to support and advance their class aims.” In lieu of such a party, workers were called upon to join the WPC as a means of building a “the United Front and ... a real Labor Party”.¹²

The 1920s proved to be a difficult decade for the fledgling Communist movement in Canada.¹³ A general deradicalization plagued the working class in Canada, which hurt the CPC’s and WPC’s prospects for growth. As the WPC developed, the dual-party structure that had been established in 1921 became increasingly clumsy. The third convention of the CPC in 1923 stipulated that within six months the CPC should abolish itself as a distinct organization, and the name of the WPC should be changed to the CPC.¹⁴ This ultimately did not happen. In late 1923 Maurice Spector, editor of *The Worker* and chairman of the CPC, travelled to Europe, and in early 1924 he began a series of discussions with the Executive Committee of the Communist International

¹¹ TFL, KC, *Manifesto of the Workers Party of Canada on the Immediate Problems of Canadian Labor*.

¹² TFL, KC, *Manifesto of the Workers Party of Canada on the Immediate Problems of Canadian Labor*.

¹³ John Manley, “Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging? Communism, Labourism, and the Canadian Trade Unions, 1921-1928,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 41 (Spring 1998), 147.

For an account of the early years of the CPC, see: William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968); Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981).

¹⁴ William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 65.

(ECCI) on the respective directions of the two Canadian parties. While the ECCI refrained from immediate comment, out of those conversations the ECCI made a series of recommendations that ultimately resulted in the WPC resolving, at its convention held between 18 April 1924 and 20 April 1924, to change its name to the CPC, and adhere to the *Terms of Admission to the Communist International*.¹⁵ The two organizations were now formally merged into one.

Shortly following the consolidation of the WPC and the CPC into a new and broader CPC, the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern was held. From 17 June 1924 to 7 July 1924 delegates from the Communist Parties across the world assembled in Moscow to deliberate the pressing questions facing the international Communist movement. Among them were Tim Buck, Malcolm Bruce, and A. T. Hill from the Canadian party. The Congress took place in the context of a temporary retreat of the international Communist movement; following the defeat of the 1923 uprising in Germany, the prospects for world revolution seemed distant. The main concern of the Congress was clarification on the united front tactic, as well as the slogan of the workers' and farmers' government. Confusion on this latter point was apparent among the Canadian delegates; Tim Buck is reported to have remarked that "A Farmer-Labor government in Canada and the United States would be a Liberal-Labor government."¹⁶ Buck's interpretation was however rebuked; in line with a suspected "rise of a new revolutionary wave", Communists were instructed that "[u]nited front tactics were and

¹⁵ William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968, 77.

¹⁶ Quoted in Fergus McKean, *Communism Versus Opportunism*, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ca.postww2/mckeanbook/chapter4.htm>, accessed July 8, 2016.

remain a method of revolution, not of peaceful evolution.”¹⁷ In turn, the workers’ and farmers’ government had been interpreted by “[o]pportunist elements in the Comintern ... as a ‘government within the bourgeois-democratic framework’”, but this interpretation was rejected by the Fifth World Congress. Instead, ending any ambiguity on the question, the workers’ and farmers’ government slogan was declared to be:

the slogan of the proletarian dictatorship translated into popular language, into the language of revolution. The formula workers’ and peasant’s government, ... was and can be nothing but a method of agitation and mobilization of the masses for the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of Soviet power.¹⁸

A second important feature of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern was the question of Bolshevization. During the Congress, a series of statutes for member sections of the Comintern were presented by Zinoviev. These statutes, building upon the initial *Terms of Admission into the Communist International*, set out how sections of the Comintern were to be structured, conduct for members, the relationship of sections with the Comintern, and also set forth a structure for the Comintern as well. Most significant for the CPC were statutes five and six, which mandated that the basic unit of organization for Communist Parties was to be the factory cell, and which specified what was meant by democratic centralism, respectively.¹⁹ Both of these statutes had implications for the CPC’s language federations.

¹⁷ Jane Degras, *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents: Volume II, 1923-1928* (London: Routledge, 1971), “Theses on Tactics”, 152.

¹⁸ Jane Degras, *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents: Volume II, 1923-1928* (London: Routledge, 1971), “Theses on Tactics”, 152.

¹⁹ “Statutes of the Communist International Adopted at its Fifth Congress,” *Inprekorr*, July 1924, p 1569.

Coming out of the Fifth World Congress the CPC began restructuring the party in accordance with the newly adopted statutes.²⁰ Concretely this meant an end to the autonomy of the language federations (United Jewish People's Order, Finnish Organization of Canada [FOC], and the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association [ULFTA]) and the creation of factory sections rather than neighbourhood or linguistic sections. Despite protests against Bolshevization in Canada from CPC leaders, the Comintern was explicit on the necessity of changing the CPC's structure. Thus, in 1925, the CPC reluctantly began the shift.²¹ The implementation of Bolshevization was an almost total disaster.²² Mechanical separation of existing organizations and units, primarily based on linguistic and national ties, resulted in the creation of party units in which the members were unable to communicate with one another. Combined with a general deradicalization of the working class in this time period, the party lost a significant portion of its members,²³ from a high of 4 808 in 1923 to around 3 000 in 1927.²⁴ The remaining members of the CPC struggled –increasingly with less success– for the formation of a Canadian Labour Party, formed a legal defence organization – the

²⁰ John Manley, "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging? Communism, Labourism, and the Canadian Trade Unions, 1921-1928," *Labour/Le Travail*, 41 (Spring 1998), 178.

²¹ The firm insistence on universal structures to each section contained within the *Statutes*, and the ability of the Comintern to enforce its decisions while disregarding the autonomy of its member sections, is an indication that the Comintern, now firmly under the control of Zinoviev, was going through a period of bureaucratization.

²² John Manley, "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging? Communism, Labourism, and the Canadian Trade Unions, 1921-1928," *Labour/Le Travail*, 41 (Spring 1998), 179.

For a detailed account of Bolshevization in the CPC, see: Rodney, William. *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 81-89.

²³ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 141-143.

²⁴ John Manley, "Moscow Rules? 'Red' Unionism and 'Class Against Class' in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935," *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (Fall 2005), 15.

Canadian Labour Defence League (CLDL) - and built the Trade Union Education League (TUEL) as a “militant minority” within the trade union movement.²⁵

By the late 1920s, it was clear that the current strategy of the CPC was not working. The Canadian Labour Party had all but fallen apart, and communists had been expelled from many of their unions.²⁶ Following the new line of the Comintern, the CPC shifted sharply left, in what is known as the ‘Third Period’.²⁷ According to the Comintern, world capitalism had been characterized by a series of “periods” after the end of the First World War. Immediately after the war was a period of crisis, leading to wars and revolutions. Then, in the early 1920s, capitalism has stabilized. Now, approaching the end of the decade, the Comintern argued that capitalism would soon be facing another crisis, leading to the possibility of mass radicalization of the working class in the capitalist countries. Communists were to shift their tactics accordingly. Social-democrats –now called “social fascists” – were considered to be the main enemy of the working class. In the place of the united front, the CPC pursued a strategy termed “the united front from below”, which sought to win social-democratic workers away from their leaders.

Immediately following the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, in late 1928, the CPC was beset by internal conflicts. Maurice Spector was expelled for his support for

²⁵ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 164-178; William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 90-135.

²⁶ Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 51-53.

²⁷ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 256-316; Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 54-95

Trotsky.²⁸ The Sixth National Convention of the CPC, held from May 31, 1929 to June 7, 1929, was also rife with factionalism. Despite the attempts of the Tim Buck clique –now enjoying patronage from Moscow – to sweep the leadership elections, the leadership was split between the Tim Buck slate and the forces around the traditional leader, Jack Macdonald.²⁹ However, in the months following the Convention, Macdonald resigned, allowing the Buck clique to fully consolidate its leadership over the Party. Despite some small conflicts with the leaders of the language federations, Buck’s leadership went virtually unchallenged.³⁰

In the context of the Great Depression, the 1930s were markedly more successful for the CPC.³¹ Following the advice of the Comintern to form the “united front from below”, the CPC founded a trade union centre: the Workers’ Unity League (WUL). The WUL lead militant strikes in Estevan, Stratford, and other locations. In line with the focus of the Comintern, the CPC and WUL built a large organization of unemployed workers, the Relief Camp Workers Union. At its height, the WUL had organized around 35 000 workers.³² Furthermore, the CPC militantly resisted home and farm foreclosures, evictions, and repossessions. In Toronto, responding to its new illegal status, the CPC

²⁸ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 201-217; Bryan D. Palmer, “Maurice Spector, James P. Cannon, and the Origins of Canadian Trotskyism,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (Fall 2005), 130-131.

²⁹ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 225-246; William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 147-158.

³⁰ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 247-255; William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 147-158.

³¹ John Manley, “Preaching the Red Stuff: J.B. McLachlan, Communism, and the Cape Breton Miners, 1922-1935,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 30 (Fall 1992), 113.

³² Stephen L. Endicott, *Raising the Workers’ Flag: The Workers’ Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 321.

engaged in pitched street battles with police as part of the free-speech fights.³³ Entering the decade with record-low membership numbers, by 1933 the CPC had begun to recover.³⁴

Because of the CPC's new-found success, it was made illegal under Section 98 of the Criminal Code in 1931, and its leadership was arrested. The Canadian Labour Defence League launched a massively successful campaign in defence of the arrested CPC leadership. When CLDL leader A E Smith was charged in 1934 with sedition, the CLDL also successfully came to his defence. As a result, thousands of workers who had previously not worked with the CPC –including members of the newly formed Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) – were brought into the orbit of the CPC's political work.

Despite the fact that Communists were expelled from many mainstream labour organizations and the CPC was illegal, the CPC was becoming a real force in Canadian political life. Slowly workers began to join the CPC again, and in 1934 its membership was 5 500.³⁵ Thus, when Tim Buck was released from jail in 1934, both he and the CPC enjoyed a popularity that was previously alien to both; indeed, upon Buck's release, a crowd packed Maple Leaf Gardens to hear him speak. It was in the context of this newfound popularity and in the context of changes to the Comintern's line internationally, that the CPC's orientation shifted again: this time to the Popular Front.

³³ See: Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Little Band: The Clashes Between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishments in Canada, 1928-1932* (Ottawa: Deneau Publications, 1982)

³⁴ John Manley, "Introduction" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935* (St. John's, 1995), 9-10.

³⁵ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Comintern Fonds (CF), K-288, File 171, *For Seventh Congress Exhibition Commission*.

The International Level

The major impetus for the rise of the Popular Front line internationally was the rise of fascism. Upon Hitler's ascension to the position of Chancellor on January 30, 1933, new elections were called for March. On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag was burned, and the blame was laid at the feet of Dutch ex-Communist Marcel Van der Lubbe.³⁶ Hitler wasted no time to act. On March 2, 1933, Hitler addressed a gathering of Nazis and said that "Bolsheviks" had been responsible for the Reichstag fire. Despite protests from both the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and the Soviet government, Thaelmann, the leader of the KPD, was arrested on March 3. On March 5 the elections occurred in a state of semi-openness; despite the arrest of the KPD's leader, the KPD received 4.8 million votes, compared to the Nazis 17 million.³⁷ With the new majority, Hitler again acted: on March 9 Dimitrov, head of the Western European Bureau of the Comintern, and stationed in Berlin, was arrested and charged with alleged involvement in the Reichstag fire. Hitler then effectively banned the KPD, and on March 16, a law was voted on in the Reichstag giving Hitler the power to make legislation without parliamentary oversight. Most of the KPD leadership was subsequently arrested.

The destruction of the KPD did not initially affect a shift in line within the Comintern, or a shift in the Soviet Union's foreign relations. In the months following March, the Soviet Union sought to normalize relations with Nazi Germany with the same orientation it had shown towards the previous government. However, as Hitler became

³⁶ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 87.

³⁷ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 88.

more aggressive towards the Soviet Union, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Litvinov, began to seek rapprochement with the West.³⁸ It was not until January 1934 that Stalin, at the Seventeenth Party Congress of the CPSU, publicly gave support to Litvinov's efforts, indicating the possibility for a shift in priorities in Soviet international relations.³⁹

In early 1934 two events occurred which catapulted the Comintern towards the line of the Popular Front. First, in an aggressive move towards the Soviet Union, on January 26 Germany and Poland signed a ten year treaty of non-aggression and mutual aid.⁴⁰ Second, Dimitrov, fresh from winning his trial in Berlin against charges relating to the Reichstag fire, arrived in Moscow on February 27.⁴¹ As early as 1932 Dimitrov, in his position as head of the Western European Bureau of the Comintern, had petitioned for a "revolutionary united front of the working class against the offensive of capital and Fascism."⁴² Upon his arrival, Dimitrov was given the latitude to pursue this line within the Comintern.

Supported by Stalin and the right-wing of the Comintern, Dimitrov replaced Knorin as the head of the Central European section of the ECCI in April 1934.⁴³ This precipitated a struggle within the Comintern between Knorin, Bela Kun, Lozovsky, and Wang Ming on the one side, arguing for a continuation of the Third Period line, and Kuusinen, Manuilsky, and Dimitrov on the other side, arguing for a revision of the

³⁸ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 117.

³⁹ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 118.

⁴⁰ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 268.

⁴¹ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 124.

⁴² E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 125.

This foreshadows the language Dimitrov would use in his presentation of the Popular Front.

⁴³ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 126.

Comintern's line.⁴⁴ Failed fascist coups in Spain and France, as well as a warming of relations between France and the Soviet Union gave the upper hand to the reformers.⁴⁵ An article in *Pravda* on May 23, 1934, emphasized the possibility of a united front between social-democrats and Communists.⁴⁶ This indicated that the new line had support from the leadership of the CPSU. In July 1934 Dimitrov proposed a new line for the Comintern, emphasizing: the united front from above and below, the united front of trade unions, better relations with the petty bourgeoisie, and a reorganization of the mass work of the Communist Parties towards anti-fascism.⁴⁷ In September, the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations.⁴⁸ In October 1934 a circular sent to all sections of the Comintern centred anti-fascism as the theme of the upcoming Seventh Comintern Congress;⁴⁹ the new line had won.

Shortly after, the Comintern gave Cachin and Thorez, leaders of the Communist Party of France (PCF), the green-light to meet with leaders of the Second International. While this initial meeting in late 1934 was not successful, it opened the door to future unity endeavours, especially in France. On October 24, 1934, *Humanité* publicly referred to the "Popular Front", describing a process of cooperation between the PCF and the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) that had been ongoing for the better part of the year. Despite some final resistance within the Comintern leadership to the Popular Front in November 1934,⁵⁰ at a meeting of the presidium of the ECCI in

⁴⁴ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 126.

⁴⁵ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 137-138.

⁴⁶ Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform: Volume 1, The Crisis of the Communist International* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 174.

⁴⁷ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 127.

⁴⁸ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 138.

⁴⁹ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 140.

⁵⁰ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 144.

December 1934, Stalin finally declared himself in favour of the line pursued by the PCF.⁵¹ Stalin's approval, combined with the Franco-Soviet Pact, signed May 16, 1935, paved the way for the formal adoption of the Popular Front among nearly all sections of the Comintern.

What is the Popular Front?

The term "Popular Front" is an ambiguous one. In the context of this thesis, it is used to refer to an era (the period between the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in 1935 and the outbreak of World War Two in 1939). It is used to refer to a particular set of political strategies that characterized the era. It is also used to refer to a "thing", in the sense that the goal of the Popular Front was to build a front against fascism. Finally, the term Popular Front is also used to refer to specific political movements, particularly the Popular Front government in France. Further complicating the issue is the relationship between the Popular Front and the united front (and both its "from above" and "from below" variants), the "proletarian united front" and the "anti-fascist People's Front" called for by Dimitrov at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, and the democratic front.⁵² Before going forward in my analysis of the period between 1935 and 1939, it is necessary to explain the different meanings of these phrases.

Broadly speaking, the term "Popular Front" refers to a set of politics adopted by Communist Parties, characterized by: class collaboration, the abandonment of Lenin's

⁵¹ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 145.

⁵² Georgi Dimitrov, *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism*. Accessed from: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm#s8 on June 23, 2016.

theory of the state and support for bourgeois democracy, the primacy of anti-fascism, a focus on unity with social-democratic and liberal political organizations, the recasting of Communism to accord with the various national traditions of the Communist Parties' respective countries, an organizational de-Bolshevization of the Communist Parties, a focus on electoralism, and an end to militant tactics on the part of Communist organizers. The Popular Front era is the time period in which these politics became the leading political perspectives within the international Communist movement: in Canada, the Popular Front was decisively the leading political perspective between the Ninth Central Committee Plenum in November 1935 and the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, though on the international level, the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in the summer of 1935 marks the beginning of the Popular Front era.

At the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, Dimitrov had called for the creation of a "proletarian united front" to form the basis of a broad "anti-fascist People's Front." In Canada, the proletarian united front initially took the form of the liquidation of the WUL and attempts to engage in joint electoral work with the CCF. In some ways the "proletarian united front" of the Popular Front era resembled the "united front" of the Comintern's early days: it was an attempt to build working-class unity towards common action. However, in other ways it was different. The enmity shown towards the leadership of the CCF by the CPC resembled more closely the "united front from below" strategy of the Third Period, whereas the liquidationist approach of the CPC and the organizational focus on leadership and bureaucracy could be more accurately called a "united front from above." At any rate, insofar as the CPC had abandoned socialism as an immediate goal during the Popular Front era, the "proletarian united front" had a very different end-goal

than the classical “united front”; the latter was intended to win over the majority of the working class for revolution, whereas the former was to serve as the basis of an anti-fascist coalition. What is particularly interesting is that while the strategy of the Popular Front era was decidedly different than that of earlier periods, the Comintern expressed the new political line in the language of the “united front” era; the CPC even resurrected, albeit briefly, the slogan of the “workers’ and farmers’ government”.⁵³

The end of the “proletarian united front”, what I refer to as the period of the United Front, ended with Ninth Central Committee Plenum, and the public willingness of the CPC to liquidate itself into the CCF. The period that follows –from November 1935 to May 1938- I refer to as the height of the Popular Front. The main political perspectives of this period were outlined by the CPC in a document titled *Towards a Canadian People’s Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*. While the CPC had started what would become the “anti-fascist People’s Front” in 1934 in the form of the Canadian League Against War and Fascism (CLAWF), in the period after November 1935 it took on particular importance for the CPC. It was to form the basis of the CPC’s Spanish aid efforts, the CPC’s campaign against the Padlock Law, the CPC’s solidarity work with China, and most of the CPC’s domestic anti-fascist work. During this period the CPC moved consistently to the right, first aligning itself with social-democrats, and ultimately with Social Credit and even the left-wing sections of the Liberal Party. The strategy used by the CPC initially proved useful –May Day 1936, for instance, was the most successful in the Party’s entire history – but by 1937 the popularity of the CPC was beginning to fade in nearly every

⁵³ Thomas Fisher Library (TLF), Kenny Collection (KC), *The Communist Election Program: A Program for a Better Life*.

arena in which it was present. Furthermore, during this period the CPC's attempt to affiliate to the CCF decidedly failed; by the end of 1937, the relationship between the CPC and the CCF was at a low-point. Thus, in early 1938, in the context of increased war danger and the increased desire of the Soviet Union to gain foreign allies, the CPC moved even further to the right in search of new allies.

The period that I term the period of the "Democratic Front" begins properly in May, 1938, with the CPC's submission to the Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. By May 1938, the CPC had essentially abandoned any pretenses to working-class politics at all, and instead was advocating for what can only be described as bourgeois nationalist politics. The CPC argued that incomplete national unity prevented progress on key issues for Canadians, and thus it was up to the CPC to ensure that national unity could come about. At the Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum in June 1938, the CPC issued a document titled *A Democratic Front for Canada*, outlining the CPC's willingness to work with the Liberal Party, progressive sections of the Conservative Party, and even demagogic new movements like Herridge's New Democracy Movement. The CPC even went as far as to run some candidates for provincial office under the New Democracy ticket. At any rate, at this point the CPC was basically in a period of decline, and was willing to work with anyone in Canada – regardless of class, regardless of politics – to ensure the creation of a Democratic Front in defence of Canadian bourgeois democracy. The absurdity of the CPC's strategy was tested when the Munich agreement was signed, and again when the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and the USSR was made public, but it was the outbreak of the Second World War that ultimately put the Democratic Front to rest.

How Should the Popular Front be Understood?

Debates on the nature of the Popular Front are closely related to –and often sometimes overshadowed by– debates on the nature of Communism itself. In turn, the relative lack of study on the Popular Front itself has led to the differing interpretations of the Popular Front being tucked away in articles and works on different subjects. This section will provide a brief, and decidedly not exhaustive, overview on some of the historiographical debates on the nature of the Popular Front. I will first examine those debates internationally, starting from Fernando Claudin and then looking at some works on the Popular Front in the US, Britain, and France, before finally examining how the Popular Front has been understood by Canadian historians.

Fernando Claudin's *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform*, published in 1975, is one of the first critical examinations of the Popular Front. Claudin, an ex-Politbureau member of the Communist Party of Spain, argues that the Popular Front internationally was initially created to provide support for the Franco-Soviet pact; it was only after increasing antagonisms between the USSR and Nazi Germany in early 1934 that cooperation between social-democrats and Communists became an option.⁵⁴ Claudin argues that at the time of the Seventh Comintern Congress it would be incorrect to say that the Comintern had abandoned revolution; instead, the Popular Front tactics flowed naturally out of the understanding that fascism was a safeguard for capitalism. Thus, defeating fascism or stopping fascism's rise would open space for the struggle for

⁵⁴ Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform: Volume 1, The Crisis of the Communist International* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 174-178.

socialism.⁵⁵ However, as the Popular Front developed, the Comintern moved sharply to the right: at the time of the 1936 strike wave in France, which Claudin argues was a pre-revolutionary situation, the French Communist Party's (PCF) main concern was the maintenance of France's military strength as a bulwark against Nazi designs on the Soviet Union.⁵⁶

Unfortunately, Claudin's critical interpretation did not become hegemonic. Largely in reaction to the established anti-communist narratives on the history of American communism (initially under the guise of "political" or "institutional" schools of thought, and later under the guise of the "traditionalists")⁵⁷, in the 1970s and 1980s historians influenced by the New Left sought to re-understand the history of American communism. These "revisionist" historians emphasized the American character of the Communist Party in the US, and tended to adopt a somewhat uncritical view of the actions of the Communist Party, focusing instead on micro-narratives which emphasized the agency of individual actors in determining Communist activity.

Maurice Isserman, decidedly in the "revisionist" school of thought, was one of the first historians to attempt to reinterpret the meaning of the Popular Front along revisionist

⁵⁵ Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform: Volume 1, The Crisis of the Communist International* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 162-163.

⁵⁶ Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform: Volume 1, The Crisis of the Communist International* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 201.

⁵⁷ The "political" and "institutional" interpretations of American communism were largely based in Cold War anti-communist narratives, which stressed the foreign character of American communism and its domination from Moscow. Theodore Draper is the central figure of these schools. In the 1970s, the conclusions of the political and institutional schools were revived by the "traditionalists"; Harvey Klehr and John Early Haynes are the chief figures in the traditionalist school. Bryan Palmer, "Rethinking the Historiography of US Communism," *American Communist History*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2003), 159.

lines.⁵⁸ Isserman, in *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War*, argues that while the Popular Front was ultimately decided by Moscow, it “made it legitimate for the American CP to moderate its political position at about the same time that Franklin Roosevelt was moving to the left to build popular support for the new deal.”⁵⁹ Thus, the American Communists were able to pursue locally-oriented politics even while considering themselves revolutionaries.⁶⁰ While Isserman concludes that the Popular Front failed,⁶¹ in allowing the American Communist Party to control its own activities the Popular Front restored some of the democratic content to the Communist movement.⁶² For Isserman, the important aspect of the Popular Front is the extent to which it allowed the American Communist Party a degree of autonomy from Moscow,⁶³ and the extent to which it allowed for the “Americanization” of communism. The departure from revolutionary politics is downplayed.

Simultaneous to the emergence of historical revisionism in the US, a similar historiographical trend emerged in Britain. If the uncritical acceptance of the Popular Front

⁵⁸ Bryan Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of US Communism,” *American Communist History*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2003), 159-160.

⁵⁹ Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 3.

⁶⁰ Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 4.

⁶¹ Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 9.

⁶² Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 13.

⁶³ It is worth noting that this is not the consensus among historians of American communism. For instance, Mark Naison in “Rethinking America: Communists and Liberals in the Popular Front” argues that while the Popular Front was not just a means of manipulating liberals, it was ultimately hamstrung by its connection to the USSR. For Naison the fidelity to the USSR is a defining feature of the Popular Front; for Isserman the USSR is an afterthought.

Mark Naison, “Remaking America: Communists and Liberals in the Popular Front” in eds. Michael E. Brown, Randy Martin, Frank Rosengarten and George Snedeker, *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993), 46, 69-70.

in the US had its origins in a leftward shift in the historiography, the opposite was true in the UK; Eric Hobsbawm's defence of the Popular Front in "Fifty Years of Peoples' Fronts" had more to do with his abandonment of Leninist orthodoxy and his shift towards labourism. Written in 1985 but published in 1989, in "Fifty Years of People's Fronts" Hobsbawm argues that the Popular Front emerged out of the failures of the early Comintern and the necessity to explore new strategies.⁶⁴ For Hobsbawm, the Popular Front was the first systematic re-examination of the failed strategies of the 1920s.⁶⁵ Hobsbawm writes that the Popular Front was:

a set of concentric circles of unity: at its centre the united front of the working-class movement, which in turn formed the basis of an even broader anti-fascist people's front, which in turn provided in the relevant countries the base for a national front of all those determined to resist fascism in the form of the danger from Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese, and finally – even more loosely – an international front of governments and peoples – including the USSR – against fascism and war. Each of these circles had, as it were, a different degree of unity.⁶⁶

Ultimately, Hobsbawm takes an uncritical approach to the Popular Front: he is satisfied that the Communist Parties gained membership and votes in their respective parliaments during the Popular Front era, and therefore the Popular Front should be considered a success worth emulating.⁶⁷

Missing, however, in Hobsbawm's conception of the Popular Front is the Popular Front's relation to class struggle. While Hobsbawm asserts that "in the 1930s and 1940s the front line between fascism and anti-fascism was indeed that of the class struggle, and

⁶⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, "Fifty Years of Peoples' Fronts," in *Politics for a Rational Left: Political Writing 1977-1988* (London: Verso, 1989), 104-105.

⁶⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, "Fifty Years of Peoples' Fronts," in *Politics for a Rational Left: Political Writing 1977-1988* (London: Verso, 1989), 107.

⁶⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, "Fifty Years of Peoples' Fronts," in *Politics for a Rational Left: Political Writing 1977-1988* (London: Verso, 1989), 108.

⁶⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, "Fifty Years of Peoples' Fronts," in *Politics for a Rational Left: Political Writing 1977-1988* (London: Verso, 1989), 111.

the popular front strategy enabled the left to fight [the class struggle] with the maximum number of allies... ,⁶⁸ Hobsbawm's focus on unity as the important feature of the Popular Front betrays his assertion. If the Popular Front's basis, as Hobsbawm asserts, was unity between classes as part of the anti-fascist people's front, and even unity between progressive and otherwise reactionary (but not fascist) political forces as part of the democratic front, how then could class struggle play a decisive role in the politics of the Popular Front?

In 1990, another British historian, Kevin Morgan, offered a competing and more nuanced interpretation of the Popular Front. In his investigation of the British Communist Party's activities during the Popular Front, Morgan argues that "the Party effectively abandoned any attempt to sustain a distinctively Communist oppositional culture... the essence of the new strategy was that Communists should work in a non-sectarian way in broad organisations which stood for far less than Communism."⁶⁹ The Popular Front, for Morgan, is characterized by confusion: the "revolutionary party acclimatising itself to a situation offering few opportunities for revolutionary activity without abandoning its fundamental conceptions and expectations."⁷⁰ The confusion was, in part, due to an "uneasy and ambiguous relationship between immediate defensive struggles on the basis

⁶⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, "Fifty Years of Peoples' Fronts," in *Politics for a Rational Left: Political Writing 1977-1988* (London: Verso, 1989), 108.

⁶⁹ Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935-1941* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 12.

⁷⁰ Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935-1941* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 15.

of bourgeois democracy and the conviction that capitalism could no longer satisfy even the most elementary human requirements... .”⁷¹

While Morgan is more critical of the Popular Front than Hobsbawm, many of the same shortcomings of Hobsbawm’s approach can be found in Morgan. In looking at Morgan’s interpretation of the Popular Front, the reader is still left wondering what the role of class struggle was in the conception of the Popular Front. For Morgan, the Communist Parties were to work within broad organizations which were decidedly not Communist; the fact that this necessarily entailed the abandonment of class struggle politics is not to be found in Morgan’s conception. If Hobsbawm over-determines the centrality of “unity” to the detriment of other issues in the Popular Front strategy, Morgan does not centre the question of unity –which was indeed central to the Popular Front, but as unity between classes – to the extent it deserves.

It was in this context that Julian Jackson published *The Popular Front in France: defending democracy, 1934-1938*. In this text, Jackson presents an uncritical view of the French Popular Front. Jackson looks only to France as the source of inspiration for the Popular Front, virtually ignoring the Comintern despite arguing that the origins of the Popular Front stemmed from the necessity of protecting the Franco-Soviet Pact.⁷² Contrary to Isserman, Jackson argues that the Popular Front was successful insofar as it: transferred wealth and power to the workers’ movement, made the PCF a mass movement, defended the Republic, transformed the anti-fascist movement into a

⁷¹ Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935-1941* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 21.

⁷² Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: defending democracy, 1934-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 7.

movement of liberation, and ultimately promoted fraternity and “life enrichment”.⁷³

Unlike in Claudin, there is no criticism of the PCF’s actions during the 1936 strike wave; the possibility of revolution does not factor into Jackson’s understanding of the Popular Front.

In 1996, Michael Denning published one of the most prolific works on the history of the Popular Front: *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Denning, squarely in the revisionist camp, emphasizes the American character of the Popular Front; indeed, *The Cultural Front* is largely concerned with how the Popular Front shaped American culture well beyond its formal end in 1939. Denning sees the Popular Front as a “social movement” and as a “radical historical bloc” which unified “industrial unionists, Communists, independent socialists, community activists, and émigré anti-fascists around laborist social democracy, anti-fascism, and anti-lynching.”⁷⁴ Denning uses the term “historical bloc” in the Gramscian sense, meaning that the Popular Front was, for Denning, simultaneously the ruling force in society (the Popular Front exercised hegemony) and an alliance of political forces.⁷⁵ The material basis of the Popular Front, which served as the pole around which the various political forces aligned, was the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).⁷⁶ In turn, Denning

⁷³ Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: defending democracy, 1934-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 284-287.

⁷⁴ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 4.

⁷⁵ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 6.

⁷⁶ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 6-7.

criticizes those historians who see the Popular Front as purely “New Deal liberalism, with the Communist Party a “fellow traveler”.”⁷⁷

A number of years after these various critical and uncritical accounts of the Popular Front were published, Bryan Palmer also weighed in on the debate.⁷⁸ In “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” Palmer provided a history of the various histories of American communism, which now included the proliferation of revisionist works written since the 1970s.⁷⁹ Palmer, coming from a Trotskyist tradition, emphasized the centrality of Stalinism⁸⁰ in understanding the history of communism in the United States.⁸¹ Palmer understands the Popular Front to be the American variant of Stalinism,⁸² which resulted in a turn away from revolutionary politics, a commitment to unity between classes domestically and a defence of the USSR

⁷⁷ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 10.

⁷⁸ Contemporary to Palmer’s “Rethinking American Communism,” John Manley also published “Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935.” While Manley is primarily concerned with the Third Period, he touches on many of the historiographical debates at play in the scholarship on the Popular Front. Indeed, Manley is pre-occupied with the “traditionalist” versus “revisionist” dichotomy, for which Kevin Morgan would later critique Manley in his 2009 rejoinder, “The Trouble with Revisionism: or Communist History with the History Left In.”

John Manley, “Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (Fall 2005), 9-49; Kevin Morgan, “The Trouble with Revisionism: or Communist History with the History Left In,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 63 (Spring 2009), 131-155.

⁷⁹ Bryan Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” *American Communist History*, Vol 2., No. 2 (2003).

⁸⁰ While this thesis does not use the theoretical concept of “Stalinism”, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive critique of the concept. I place special emphasis on the extent to which the Popular Front represented a departure from earlier periods in the history of the CPC, precisely because of the abandonment of revolutionary class-struggle politics during the Popular Front. To the extent that Stalinism began to consolidate itself in 1924, it seems prudent to focus on the uniqueness of the Popular Front era.

⁸¹ Bryan Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” *American Communist History*, Vol 2., No. 2 (2003), 143-145.

⁸² Bryan Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” *American Communist History*, Vol 2., No. 2 (2003), 152.

internationally.⁸³ Palmer criticizes both Isserman and Denning for their “political accommodations” in justifying what Palmer argues were Stalinist turns in line, as well as for underplaying the importance of Stalinism in understanding the Popular Front.⁸⁴

Perhaps related to the relative lack of scholarly work done on the CPC,⁸⁵ many of the debates in the historiography of other Communist Parties –on the relative extent of independence from Moscow, on the importance of Stalinism, etc. – are absent in the works on the Popular Front in Canada. The Popular Front in the historiography of Canadian communism tends to be either dismissed with hostility as a Communist ploy in a long line of Communist ploys, or treated relatively uncritically. The exception to both of these schools of thought is the work of John Manley, who has written the only material explicitly on the Popular Front. Each will be examined in turn.

The anti-communist historians tend to reject the Popular Front, not from a critical position, but because of its association with either communism or the Communist Party. Cy Gonick’s account of the Popular Front in *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh* falls squarely into this category.⁸⁶ Ivan Avakumovic’s *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* can also be considered in the anti-communist camp, despite its relatively positive appraisal of the Popular Front period from the perspective of the CPC.⁸⁷ I also include Ian Angus’ *Canadian Bolsheviks* in this category, not because Ian Angus is an

⁸³ Bryan Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” *American Communist History*, Vol 2., No. 2 (2003), 154.

⁸⁴ Bryan Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” *American Communist History*, Vol 2., No. 2 (2003), 154-155.

⁸⁵ John Manley, “Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (Fall 2005), 15.

⁸⁶ Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2001).

⁸⁷ Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 96-138.

anti-communist, but because Angus rejects the Popular Front due to its association with the Stalinist CPC.⁸⁸ While it is important to note that these accounts exist, they actually tell us very little about the nature of the Popular Front itself; the outright rejection of the Popular Front, or the communist project as a whole, precludes a critical view of the Popular Front as it relates to other periods in the history of Canadian Communism.

Most historians of the Canadian Left who deal with the Popular Front do so from an uncritical perspective. The foremost examples of uncritical examinations of the Popular Front are written by Norman Penner, Joan Sangster, James Doyle, and Stephen Endicott. Norman Penner, a former CPC member, published *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* in 1988. In this text, Penner agrees with Fernando Claudin's description of the Popular Front as being predominantly concerned with Soviet security. Penner, in evaluating the Popular Front, writes:

the recasting of the Communist parties along the Seventh Congress blueprint brought about a complete change in the outlook of these parties, their tactics, and their alliances. Most of them, including the Canadian Party, benefitted greatly from these changes.⁸⁹

Penner argues however that the benefits of the Popular Front were lost when the CPC followed the Soviet Union in opposing WWII, ultimately showing that the CPC was simply a tool of the Soviet Union.⁹⁰ While Penner attempts to utilize Claudin's criticisms of the Popular Front, the conclusions he draws are similar to the revisionist historians in terms of his adulation for the Popular Front.

⁸⁸ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 329.

⁸⁹ Norman Penner. *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen, 1988), 156.

⁹⁰ Norman Penner. *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen, 1988), 156.

Joan Sangster's *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* published in 1989 and heavily influenced by social historians and the revisionist histories of communism, is, as the title suggests, primarily concerned with the activities of women during the 30 years under consideration, as well as the left's evolving approach to issues of gender. For Sangster, the Popular Front marked the high-point of the CPC's membership and influence,⁹¹ and it was primarily a result of "growing Soviet fears of fascist aggression."⁹² However, Sangster argues that for women in particular, the Popular front "generated new opportunities for activism and inspired innovative organizing techniques."⁹³ The new emphasis on anti-fascism, insofar as it was connected to the struggle for peace and community rather than workplace organizing, gave women new opportunities for leadership. However, according to Sangster, the Popular Front did not mean a substantial shift in how the CPC viewed women's issues. The CPC was predominantly concerned with attracting women to the struggle against fascism, not with the liberation of women.⁹⁴ If anything, the Popular Front's natalist focus on women as housewives and mothers rather than workers represented a step back.⁹⁵ While Sangster is critical of the Popular Front's approach to women, she does not interrogate the class character of Popular Front politics.

⁹¹ Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 124.

⁹² Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 125.

⁹³ Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 124.

⁹⁴ Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 124.

⁹⁵ Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 163-164.

James Doyle, in *Progressive Heritage: The Making of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada*, published in 2002, argues that the Popular Front shift positively affected the CPC's publishing apparatuses and literary movement. The Popular Front for Doyle, who is heavily influenced by the revisionist accounts of American Communism, is understood as a line "according to which Communists were expected to make common cause with social democrats and liberals against the increasing threat of genuine fascism."⁹⁶ As a result of the shift, there was a "proliferation of publishing activity": Doyle lists *Advance*, the *Daily Clarion*, *B.C. Lumber Worker*, *B.C. Workers' News* (succeeded by the *People's Advocate*), the *Fisherman*, and most importantly to Doyle, the cultural publication *New Frontier*.⁹⁷ Doyle is encyclopedic in his account of what was published during the Popular Front era. He does not, however, connect the politics of the Popular Front to the works that he examines. For instance, Doyle does not understand the significance of Dyson Carter finishing a short story with the line "PEOPLES FRONT GOVERNMENT TAKES OVER ALL COMMUNICATIONS"⁹⁸. To Doyle, this line represents the coming of the revolution; in the context of the Popular Front, it is significant that it is the People's Government (a government of a bourgeois state) and not the workers seizing the communication apparatus.

Stephen Endicott's uncritical approach to the Popular Front in *Raising the Workers' Flag: The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936*, written in 2012, has more to do with his proximity to the CPC than it does with the influence of revisionist

⁹⁶ James Doyle, *Progressive Heritage: The Making of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2002), 103.

⁹⁷ James Doyle, *Progressive Heritage: The Making of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2002), 103-104.

⁹⁸ Dyson Carter, "Rush This One Muxer!" in *New Frontier* (September, 1936), 18. Quoted in James Doyle, *Progressive Heritage: The Making of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2002), 106.

historians.⁹⁹ In this sense Endicott's work is something of an outlier compared to other contemporary works on Canadian Communism: where other historians have critically engaged the CPC's narrative even when agreeing with its conclusions at times, Endicott accepts the CPC's posthumous justification for the Popular Front. Endicott argues that the unity displayed during the On-to-Ottawa trek foreshadowed the Popular Front.¹⁰⁰ Echoing the official justification given contemporarily for the Popular Front shift, Endicott describes an international struggle between what he characterises as a "sectarian left" and a "non-sectarian left", led in the CPC by Stewart Smith and Leslie Morris respectively.¹⁰¹ Endicott asserts that this struggle was one of the main reasons for postponing the third and final convention of the Workers' Unity League.¹⁰² Endicott, citing E.H. Carr, argues that Dimitrov was finally able to put to rest this struggle internationally, allowing the non-sectarian left in Canada to claim victory. As a result, the WUL merged with the Trades and Labour Congress, and the Popular Front was ushered in in Canada.

Finally, there is the work of John Manley, which constitutes the only attempt at a comprehensive and critical understanding of the Popular Front in Canada. Manley, who has produced numerous works on the history of the CPC, first attempted to describe the Popular Front in a series of introductions written for Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker's *The RCMP Security Bulletins* between 1995 and 1997. Manley was initially ambiguous

⁹⁹ Endicott's argument mirrors closely the "official" argument, which can be found in *Canada's Party of Socialism*.

Canada's Party of Socialism (Toronto: Progress Books, 1982), 111.

¹⁰⁰ Stephen L. Endicott, *Raising the Workers' Flag: The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 299.

¹⁰¹ Stephen L. Endicott, *Raising the Workers' Flag: The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 304-309.

¹⁰² Stephen L. Endicott, *Raising the Workers' Flag: The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 304.

on the nature of the Popular Front and the extent to which it was ultimately determined by foreign considerations.¹⁰³ However, by 1997 Manley takes a decidedly critical approach to the Popular Front. While he still held that the RCMP's contemporary understanding of the Popular Front as a "ruse" was limited, he now argued that "In important respects the RCMP's analysis of popular frontism was profoundly correct."¹⁰⁴ Manley argued that the CPC's vacillation at the outbreak of WWII proved that the CPC was in fact not loyal to Canadian democracy, but rather to "an anti-democratic foreign power."¹⁰⁵ However, Manley emphasized that there was a tension in the experience of the Popular Front: first in Dimitrov's conception "between the need to prepare the working class for a rapid transition from "the defensive to the offensive against capital" and the need to placate bourgeois allies"¹⁰⁶ and second between leaders who "insisted that the CPC remained a revolutionary party" against "a section of the rank and file [which] clearly felt that the party was making too many concessions to democratic unity... ." ¹⁰⁷ Thus, for Manley, Bryan Palmer's conception of "two parties" is an accurate description of the Popular Front period.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ John Manley, "The Popular Front, 1938-39: Hoodwinking the Public?" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part VI, 1938-1939* (St. John's, 1997), 12n9.

¹⁰⁴ John Manley, "The Popular Front, 1938-39: Hoodwinking the Public?" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part VI, 1938-1939* (St. John's, 1997), 26.

¹⁰⁵ John Manley, "The Popular Front, 1938-39: Hoodwinking the Public?" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part VI, 1938-1939* (St. John's, 1997), 26.

¹⁰⁶ John Manley, "Introduction" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937* (St. John's, 1997), 23.

¹⁰⁷ John Manley, "The Popular Front, 1938-39: Hoodwinking the Public?" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part VI, 1938-1939* (St. John's, 1997), 14.

¹⁰⁸ John Manley, "The Popular Front, 1938-39: Hoodwinking the Public?" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part VI, 1938-1939* (St. John's, 1997), 26.

At the end of Manley's introduction for *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, Manley finishes with a harsh indictment of the Popular Front that foreshadows his later conclusions:

As the events of August through October 1939 established, the CPC's ultimate betrayal of Leninism lay in allowing the broad lines of its policy to be determined not by an examination of objective possibilities but by the "erratic directives of the distant heads of world Communism who could not have cared less" about the fate of Canada, Canadian workers, or the Canadian Communist Party. Arguably, the CPC never recovered from performing like a circus dog in fall 1939. Undoubtedly, in the last analysis, the Comintern was the RCMP's best friend."¹⁰⁹

While Manley is correct in emphasizing the extent to which the Popular Front was determined by non-Canadian concerns, he misses the point that the fundamental break of the Popular Front from Leninism was on the basis of the Popular Front's rejection of class struggle and revolution.

Manley next dealt with the Popular Front in two articles published in 2002. In "Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity": Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939", published in the Spring of 2002 in *Labour/Le Travail*, Manley examines the creation and rise of the Tim Buck personality cult. In his article, Manley argues that the Popular Front was a shift away from class politics¹¹⁰ facilitated by the increasing

Here Manley refers to Palmer's introduction to *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985*.

Jack Scott, eds. Bryan Palmer, *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988), 6-7.

¹⁰⁹ John Manley, "The Popular Front, 1938-39: Hoodwinking the Public?" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part VI, 1938-1939* (St. John's, 1997), 29.

¹¹⁰ John Manley, "Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity": Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 49 (Spring 2002), 20.

importance of anti-fascism in the work of the CPC.¹¹¹ Manley writes that Buck's personality was uniquely suited to the tasks of the Popular Front; while the ECCI "set down"¹¹² the new line, Buck was able to use the Popular Front approach to transform the CPC into "a respectable... part of the national body politic...".¹¹³ Somewhat contradictorily, Manley concludes that despite Buck never abandoning socialism as a goal,¹¹⁴ during the Popular Front the CPC "lost any connection to revolutionary politics ... [revised] the Marxist theory of the state... [promoted] the trade union bureaucracy... [and transformed] into a reformist organization to the right of the CCF."¹¹⁵ As for Buck, he agreed with "Stalinism on every key aspect of Popular Front politics, he remained Moscow's man."¹¹⁶

In "“Communists Love Canada!”: The Communist Party of Canada, the “People” and the Popular Front, 1933-1939”, published later in 2002, Manley further argues that the Popular Front caused the CPC to focus on “anti-fascist unity to defend bourgeois democracy”¹¹⁷ rather than socialist revolution. Manley, relying heavily on Fernando Claudin's *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform*, argues that the Popular Front was primarily informed by the Soviet Union's attempt to woo bourgeois

¹¹¹ John Manley, "“Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity”: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 49 (Spring 2002), 23.

¹¹² John Manley, "“Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity”: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 49 (Spring 2002), 40.

¹¹³ John Manley, "“Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity”: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 49 (Spring 2002), 40.

¹¹⁴ John Manley, "“Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity”: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 49 (Spring 2002), 24.

¹¹⁵ John Manley, "“Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity”: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 49 (Spring 2002), 40.

¹¹⁶ John Manley, "“Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity”: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 49 (Spring 2002), 41.

¹¹⁷ John Manley, "“Communists Love Canada!”: The Communist Party of Canada, the “People” and the Popular Front, 1933-1939,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 36 (Winter 2002), 60.

democracies into an alliance against fascism.¹¹⁸ Manley disagrees with Hobsbawms' contention that the Popular Front was a "deliberate shift" from a revolutionary to a parliamentary approach to socialism, and instead argues that the Popular Front in Canada was "in large part dictated by Moscow, which *entirely* subordinated the needs of Canadian... socialism to its security requirements."¹¹⁹ Thus, between 1995 and 2002 Manley's understanding of the Popular Front shifted from arguing that the Popular Front was not predominantly "Stalinist", to eventually arguing that the Popular Front in Canada was entirely the creation of the Soviet Union.

Nearly every work that investigates the Popular Front recognizes that there was some element of struggle either internal to the Popular Front line, or in the implementation of the Popular Front itself. Manley, for instance, highlights the tensions in the conception of the Popular Front,¹²⁰ and also writes that there was significant resistance on the part of the rank-and-file to the shift in line.¹²¹ Buck, in his autobiography, notes that there was resistance among the CPC membership to the unity overtures with the CCF.¹²² Jack Scott goes a step further: the middle-leadership directly disobeyed the upper leadership's orders to not talk about socialism.¹²³ Others, such as Endicott and Abella, note disagreements over the position to liquidate the Workers' Unity

¹¹⁸ John Manley, "'Communists Love Canada!': The Communist Party of Canada, the 'People' and the Popular Front, 1933-1939," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 36 (Winter 2002), 60-61.

¹¹⁹ John Manley, "'Communists Love Canada!': The Communist Party of Canada, the 'People' and the Popular Front, 1933-1939," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 36 (Winter 2002), 82.

¹²⁰ John Manley, "Introduction" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937* (St. John's, 1997), 23.

¹²¹ John Manley, "From United Front to Popular Front: The CPC in 1936" in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936* (St. John's, 1995), 3.

¹²² Tim Buck eds. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, *Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1977), 252.

¹²³ Jack Scott, eds. Bryan Palmer, *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988), 272.

League. Even the official history of the CPC talks about the struggle against sectarianism as being key to the implementation of the Popular Front.¹²⁴ These are just a few examples of many. Interestingly, no account of the Popular Front in Canada has focused on the struggle over the Popular Front line. How should this struggle be understood?

What I argue in this thesis is that the implementation of the Popular Front, the transformation of the CPC from a revolutionary party to a bourgeois party, was not a smooth process, but instead was punctuated and resisted by elements within the CPC in what can be considered a process of class struggle internal to the CPC itself. The contending classes were on the one side the CPC's proletarian core who remained skeptical of the Popular Front line. On the other side was the majority of the CPC's leadership, increasingly bourgeoisified, who sought to push the CPC in a more bourgeois direction, in terms of political line, organizational structure, and membership composition.

This shift in orientation set off a dialectical process—a positive feedback loop—by which the Popular Front's orientation towards middle-class, professionals, and progressive petty-bourgeois increased the number of members of these classes in the orbit of the CPC. In turn, the CPC was able to recruit many of these people. For instance, Peter Hunter, a Young Communist League (YCL) leader, reflects that during the height of the Popular Front in 1937, he was one of the few young leaders with a working-class origin: most of the new leadership came from middle-class and student backgrounds.¹²⁵ Manley corroborates Hunter's assertion, saying that recruits with a non-proletarian class

¹²⁴ *Canada's Party of Socialism* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1982), 111.

¹²⁵ Peter Hunter, *Which Side Are You On Boys... Canadian Life on the Left* (Toronto: Lugas Publications, 1988), 116.

background accounted for 10% of all new members during the middle years of the Popular Front, but despite this fact, they held a disproportionate amount of middle leadership positions.¹²⁶ The demographic shift in the membership further facilitated the CPC's shift to the right.¹²⁷ In turn, the CPC's electoral and union success during the Popular Front put a number of leading members into positions of authority in external structures: many CPC members became full-time politicians in bourgeois governments, in some cases even running the municipal administrations, and many other CPC members became union bureaucrats. By the end of the Popular Front, McKean observed that the "selection of party officials became more and more based ... on the criteria of ability to mix with the bourgeoisie ... in other words on the ability to ape the typical bourgeois politicians."¹²⁸

I will develop this argument fully in the thesis itself. For now it is enough to say that the bourgeoisification of the CPC was based on a number of factors. First, the influence and legitimacy of the CPC's leadership gained from the Soviet state bourgeoisie had a conservatizing effect on the CPC's politics. In turn, the CPC's orientation towards classes other than the proletariat forced the CPC to moderate its politics, thus allowing the Canadian bourgeoisie to consolidate its ideological hegemony over the CPC, even if it was not inside the CPC. Finally, the CPC's activities and political orientation in Canada forced it into positions in which its leading members either

¹²⁶ John Manley, "'Communists Love Canada!': The Communist Party of Canada, the 'People' and the Popular Front, 1933-1939," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 36 (Winter 2002), 74.

¹²⁷ This was not a mechanistic relationship; the CPC's shift towards the Democratic Front was not solely based on the shift in membership. Indeed, the Comintern played the decisive role in the political shift of the CPC during this time. It is also worth pointing out that in many cases the CPC oriented itself towards different sections of the masses without necessarily achieving the desired results; the CPC's membership remained majority working class, even during the Popular Front.

¹²⁸ Fergus McKean, *Communism versus Opportunism: An Examination of the Revision of Marxism in the Communist Movement of Canada* (Vancouver: Broadway Printers, 1946), 227.

became bourgeoisified (in the case of government officials), or had to act like members of the bourgeoisie, thus creating a modest bourgeoisie within the Party itself.¹²⁹ This class shift was paralleled with the political shift towards the Popular Front, which put the CPC's bourgeoisified leadership into class conflict with the Party's proletarian core.

¹²⁹ It is worth pointing out that I am not arguing that the leadership of the CPC constituted a state bourgeoisie, but rather the CPC leadership was undergoing a process of bourgeoisification. The contours of the class struggle within the CPC – a Communist party existing in a capitalist country – were different than the class struggle that existed within the CPSU – a communist party which existed in a proletarian dictatorship.

II. The Genesis of the Popular Front: October 1934-November 1935

Canada and the Lead-Up to the Seventh Comintern Congress

The international developments towards the united front that occurred in the summer of 1934 coincided with a thaw in the illegal status of the CPC. In June 1934, Sam Carr and Matt Popovich were the first of the eight arrested leaders to be released from Kingston Penitentiary. Over the following months the other leaders were released,¹³⁰ ending with the release of Buck in November.¹³¹ Upon release, Buck spoke to a crowd of 17 000 at Maple Leaf Gardens¹³², and then began a speaking tour across Canada. These ostentatious events were the first steps towards the CPC emerging from the underground.

Meanwhile, while Buck and the others were in prison, the CPC had begun reorienting its main work along the lines laid out by Dimitrov and the right-wing within the Comintern. In 1933 the YCL had helped form and partnered with “United Front Committees” in order to raise money to send delegates to the World Youth Congress in Paris. One of the united front delegates was Peter Hunter from Hamilton, who at the Congress was elected to the World Youth Committee. When he returned to Canada he

¹³⁰ “Ewen Is Released - - Buck Must Be Freed!,” *The Worker*, October 3, 1934.

¹³¹ John Manley, ““Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity”: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 49 (Spring 2002), 15; “Tim Buck Is Released From Kingston Pen,” *The Worker*, November 28, 1934.

For a discussion of Buck’s time in prison, as well as Buck’s reflections upon his release, see: Tim Buck, eds. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, *Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck* (Toronto: NC Press, 1977), 162-241.

¹³² “Stop Press!! Hear Tim Buck, Sunday, Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto. Doors open 6 p.m.,” *The Worker*, November 28, 1934; “Greatest Labor Meeting in History Greets Buck’s Return to Struggle,” *The Worker*, December 5, 1934.

moved to Toronto and became the secretary of the Canadian Youth League Against War and Fascism, which also automatically placed him in the national leadership of the YCL.¹³³ The Canadian Youth League Against War and Fascism, with the support of the language federations, grew quickly and laid much of the ground work for the creation of the Canadian League Against War and Fascism (CLAWF).¹³⁴

The First Canadian Congress Against War and Fascism was held in Toronto on October 6 and 7, 1934.¹³⁵ It gathered together 315 delegates representing 203 organizations and 337 000 people. Among the delegates and organizations represented were CCF clubs, politicians, union leaders, and, of course, members of the CPC and its many mass organizations.¹³⁶ The Manifesto agreed on at the Congress stated that war was a product of “monopolistic capitalism”, that Canada was part of the war system, and that the rise of fascism was connected with the drive towards war. To “effectively combat war and fascism... by arousing and organising the masses ... for active struggle against the war preparations and fascist tendencies of their own governments”, the CLAWF agreed on a plan of action which included: the creation of CLAWF committees across Canada, the struggle against fascist measures at home, and a broad propaganda campaign.¹³⁷ A. A. MacLeod, a labour journalist and CPC member, was elected chair of the CLAWF.

¹³³ It is interesting that simply by virtue of being a leader of a united front organization, Hunter was placed in the leadership of the YCL. This indicates that as early as 1934, the YCL had begun to abandon political preconditions for membership; Hunter was given membership in the YCL due to his standing in another organization, rather than a personal commitment to communism.

¹³⁴ Peter Hunter, *Which Side Are You On Boys... Canadian Life on the Left* (Toronto: Lugas Publications, 1988), 38-53.

¹³⁵ “Great Unity Congress Opens Saturday,” *The Worker*, October 6, 1934.

¹³⁶ “337,000 Unite To Fight War And Fascism,” *The Worker*, October 10, 1934.

¹³⁷ TFL, KC, *Report: First Canadian Congress Against War and Fascism, October 6th and 7th, 1934*; “337,000 Unite To Fight War And Fascism,” *The Worker*, October 10, 1934.

In the following months, CLAWF sections were formed across Canada. In Edmonton, for instance, the first meeting of the local CLAWF met on January 24, 1935 and gathered delegates from 40 organizations. They opted to take on work regarding relief camp workers.¹³⁸ On March 23-24, 1935, the Toronto district of the CLAWF held a conference which gathered 115 delegates representing 95 organizations, including church groups, with a total membership of 25 000. The Toronto section of the CLAWF was less involved with local struggles, instead agreeing to broadly support the plan agreed upon at the Congress the previous October.¹³⁹ Preparations were also under way for the expansion of the CLAWF into other regions: on May 18 and 19 the CLAWF held a provincial conference in Manitoba at which 70 organizations with a membership of 24 000 were represented.¹⁴⁰ The RCMP was able to declare with certainty that the “Canadian League Against War and Fascism is becoming more prominent all the time.”¹⁴¹

In early 1935, the CLAWF also launched its first propaganda material. In *Will Canada Escape Fascism?*, the CLAWF mirrored the CPC’s understanding of the united front at that time. It argued that Roosevelt’s New Deal and Hitler’s national socialism were “brothers under the skin”¹⁴², and explicitly stated that the Social Credit movement was the only significant fascist organization in Canada with mass support.¹⁴³ The pamphlet argued that division within the working class would help fascism, specifically

¹³⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #744”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 104.

¹³⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #751”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 201-204.

¹⁴⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #757”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 311.

¹⁴¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #751”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 199.

¹⁴² TFL, KC, *Will Canada Escape Fascism?*, 4.

¹⁴³ TFL, KC, *Will Canada Escape Fascism?*, 19.

pointing to the divisions between the All Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL), the Trades and Labor Congress (TLC), and the WUL, as well as between the CPC and the CCF.¹⁴⁴ The pamphlet ended with a reiteration of the plan of action, but with a specific focus on disrupting war preparations by the Canadian government.¹⁴⁵

The development of the CLAWF will be traced throughout this thesis, because in many ways, it became the vehicle by which the unity of the Popular Front was to be achieved. This in-and-of-itself is interesting: the CLAWF explicitly sought to orient itself towards “labor, farmer, veteran and unemployed organizations, and to interest as well the middle classes.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, from the perspective of a critical look at the Popular Front, as early as late 1934 one can already observe an orientation on the part of what would become the CPC’s main mass organization away from appealing purely to the working class, and instead focusing its energies on a broad range of classes including the middle class.¹⁴⁷

Shortly following the formation of the CLAWF, the CPC held its Seventh Central Committee Plenum, on December 8 and 9, 1934. This meeting was significant in that it was the first time that the shift towards what was referred to as the “united front” was explicitly put forward as the new tactical line of the CPC. Arguing that there was an increased spontaneous desire for a united front among the working class, Stewart Smith (under the name G Pearce) stated that “the party is beginning to understand the united front as a long time perspective, as the key to the entire mass policy of the party, for the

¹⁴⁴ TFL, KC, *Will Canada Escape Fascism?*, 25.

¹⁴⁵ TFL, KC, *Will Canada Escape Fascism?*, 30-31.

¹⁴⁶ TFL, KC, *Report: First Canadian Congress Against War and Fascism, October 6th and 7th, 1934.*

¹⁴⁷ John Manley, “Introduction” in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935* (St. John’s, 1995), 14.

entire epoch in which we are living.”¹⁴⁸ The CPC was to struggle against the sectarianism present in its work,¹⁴⁹ and advance both the united front from above and from below;¹⁵⁰ the Popular Front in France was cited as a successful example.¹⁵¹ The tension between the previous position and the forthcoming Popular Front position was palpable in Smith’s report: he argued that the CPC “must understand how to clearly and patiently link up at all times the immediate struggles, the fight against war and fascism, the necessity for defeating fascism, of preventing the coming to power of fascism, with the revolutionary way out of the crisis, with the slogan of Soviet Canada.”¹⁵²

The Seventh Central Committee Plenum also was the point at which the CPC declared itself in favour of the “mass party” form of organization, rather than the vanguard party form it had previously used. In the organizational report, Jim Warner stated that agreement with the policies of the CPC rather than discipline or commitment to work was to become the basic condition of membership in the Party.¹⁵³ New members were to be given lighter duties than old members; Warner criticized the notion that “the unit takes for granted that the new member by the very act of joining the Party becomes a

¹⁴⁸ TLC, KC, G Pearce, “The Lessons of the Struggle for a United Working Class Front and Our Immediate Tasks” in *The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity* (Montreal: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1935), 16.

¹⁴⁹ TLC, KC, G Pearce, “The Lessons of the Struggle for a United Working Class Front and Our Immediate Tasks” in *The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity* (Montreal: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1935), 17.

¹⁵⁰ TLC, KC, G Pearce, “The Lessons of the Struggle for a United Working Class Front and Our Immediate Tasks” in *The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity* (Montreal: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1935), 28.

¹⁵¹ TLC, KC, G Pearce, “The Lessons of the Struggle for a United Working Class Front and Our Immediate Tasks” in *The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity* (Montreal: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1935), 17.

¹⁵² TLC, KC, G Pearce, “The Lessons of the Struggle for a United Working Class Front and Our Immediate Tasks” in *The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity* (Montreal: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1935), 28-29.

¹⁵³ TLC, KC, Jim Warner, “Towards a Mass Party!: Organization Report at 7th Session of C.C., C.P. of C.” in *The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity* (Montreal: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1935), 49.

full-fledged Communist and demands from him just as much as from an old Party member.”¹⁵⁴

The main form that the united front was to take in late 1934 and early 1935, aside from the CLAWF, was work with other left-wing organizations and parties. As early as December 1934, the CPC, in *The Worker*, had begun to entertain the possibility of unity with the CCF. However, the CPC was still critical of the CCF as a capitalist political party, and frequently antagonized the CCF leadership.¹⁵⁵ In early January 1935, the CPC began reaching out to other organizations for the creation of united front groups in earnest. It immediately had some success: both the Socialist Party in BC and the Alberta Federation of Labour were interested in forming united front committees to work on specific issues.¹⁵⁶ Local CCF clubs also expressed interest in united front overtures.¹⁵⁷ Facilitated by the common work in the CLAWF, in Vancouver the CPC and CCF worked together against the disenfranchisement of relief camp workers in January,¹⁵⁸ and in Montreal the CCF reached out to the CPC in early February to engage in common work.¹⁵⁹ In February 17-19, the Dominion Congress on Unemployment Insurance, held in Ottawa, brought together the CPC, unions, and CCF clubs, to build a broad campaign in

¹⁵⁴ TLC, KC, Jim Warner, “Towards a Mass Party!: Organization Report at 7th Session of C.C., C.P. of C.” in *The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity* (Montreal: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1935), 49.

¹⁵⁵ “Will Rank and Filers of C.C.F. Come Into United Labor Front?,” *The Worker*, December 5, 1934; “C.C.F. Leaders and Unity,” *The Worker*, December 5, 1934; “CCF Leaders Don’t Act on Communist Proposals for United Labor Front,” *The Worker*, December 12, 1934; “Militant Farmers and C.C.F. United to Fight Hunger,” *The Worker*, December 15, 1934.

¹⁵⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #742”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 64.

¹⁵⁷ “Regina C.C.F. Council and Communist Party Discuss United Front,” *The Worker*, February 20, 1935.

¹⁵⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #744”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 100.

¹⁵⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #743”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 92.

favour of non-contributory unemployment insurance¹⁶⁰; CCF clubs participated against the wishes of the CCF's leadership.¹⁶¹ In March, the CLDL, the CCF, and the CPC formed a united front in defence of the Noranda miners.¹⁶² A vibrant united front was being born.

In December 1934, the CPC also began seeking cooperation with the CCF and other left-wing parties and organizations in the electoral sphere.¹⁶³ In Winnipeg, for instance, the CPC reached out to the CCF for the civic elections.¹⁶⁴ Voters in Ontario were urged to vote for CPC, United Front, and working-class candidates in the January 1, 1935 civic elections.¹⁶⁵ In March of 1935, the CPC pushed harder, and extended its unity approach to the federal elections.¹⁶⁶ In *The Communist Election Program: A Program for a Better Life*, the CPC proposed electoral cooperation between the CCF and the CPC, while at the same time critiquing the CCF leadership for pursuing a line of class peace. In a jab at the CCF, the *Election Program* attacked the idea of winning socialism through parliament. In the spirit of the united front, the CPC called "upon the workers, the toiling farmers, office employees, intellectuals, professionals and impoverished middle class

¹⁶⁰ "Free Insurance Demand Made to Federal Gov't," *The Worker*, February 20, 1935.

¹⁶¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #46", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 131-133; "Starvation Plan of Bennett Exposed," *The Worker*, January 26, 1935; "Woodsworth Won't Support Congress," *The Worker*, February 16, 1935.

¹⁶² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #756", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 176.

¹⁶³ Stefan Epp, "A Communist in the Council Chambers: Communist Municipal Politics, Ethnicity, and the Career of William Kolisnyk," *Labour/Le Travail*, 63 (Spring 2009), 86.

¹⁶⁴ "C.C.F. Leaders and Unity," *The Worker*, December 5, 1934.

¹⁶⁵ "Ontario Electors! Vote for these United Front Candidates Jan. 1!," *The Worker*, December 26, 1935.

¹⁶⁶ "Federal Election United Front Can Be Achieved by Labor: Communists Will Make Election United Front Proposals to C.C.F.," *The Worker*, March 2, 1935.

people to unite in struggle for their burning needs.” The program also contained the now standard calls to unite against fascism and war.¹⁶⁷

The CCF leadership was not moved. Instead of forming an electoral alliance with the CPC, the CCF opted to run A. A. Heaps in North Winnipeg – the same riding in which Buck was running.¹⁶⁸ Undeterred, the CPC proposed joint May Day activities between the CPC and the CCF, around a common program of: living wages, the right to strike, non-contributory unemployment insurances, increase in relief payments, against war and fascism, among other issues.¹⁶⁹ Again the CCF leadership denied the request, saying that there was no good reason to work with the CPC.¹⁷⁰

It was at this point that the CPC shifted its strategy and began appealing directly to CCF members rather than the CCF leadership.¹⁷¹ By late March, the CPC and CCF in Hamilton, Ontario had agreed to back Dave Arnot in the federal elections.¹⁷² In St Catharines, Ontario, the CPC and CCF formed a Committee of Action on April 1, consisting of three sections of the CPC and six CCF clubs, to engage in united front activity in the elections.¹⁷³ United front activity also continued to develop in Regina and

¹⁶⁷ TLF, KC, *The Communist Election Program: A Program for a Better Life*.

¹⁶⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #748”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 157; “Terrible Reality Ignored as C.C.F. Leaders Plan Same Policies for Five More Years,” *The Worker*, March 2, 1935.

¹⁶⁹ “United May 1 Appeal Made to C.C.F.’ers,” *The Worker*, March 5, 1935.

¹⁷⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #748”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 160-161.

¹⁷¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #748”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 161.

¹⁷² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #750”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 189.

¹⁷³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #752”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 229; “United Front Lives and Grows,” *The Worker*, April 6, 1935.

Vancouver.¹⁷⁴ Not every attempt at the united front with the CCF was a success though: in Moose Jaw, an election conference deteriorated with Buck accusing the CCF representatives of dishonesty, and the CCF withdrawing.¹⁷⁵

Despite a few setbacks, the CPC's united front overtures proved successful on May Day. The CPC's activities drew larger crowds than ever before; *The Worker* estimated that between 60 000 and 70 000 participated across Canada.¹⁷⁶ In Vancouver, 10 000 marched and as many as 30 000 people gathered to hear Arthur Evans speak.¹⁷⁷ Toronto saw similar numbers, with 9 000 rallying to hear Buck shout "everything the CPC does should be looked upon as a prelude to revolution."¹⁷⁸ Several cities, such as Winnipeg and London, Ontario, saw the largest May Day rallies ever in their respective histories.¹⁷⁹ United front rallies with the CCF and other organizations were organized in Kitchener, Calgary, and Oshawa.¹⁸⁰ From the perspective of the CPC, the only disappointing turnout was in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, where only 50 people gathered to hear J. B. McLachlan speak.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴ "Unity at Regina of C.P. and C.C.F.," *The Worker*, March 16, 1935.

¹⁷⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #754", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 247-248.

¹⁷⁶ "Scores of Thousands on Canadian Streets for May Day Parades," *The Worker*, May 4, 1935.

¹⁷⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #755", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 268-269.

¹⁷⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #755", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 270; "13,000 in May Day Meeting at Gardens," *The Worker*, May 4, 1935.

¹⁷⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #755", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 271, 276.

¹⁸⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #755", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 272, 275-276.

¹⁸¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #755", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 277; Paul Axelrod, "Spying on the Young in Depression and War: Students, Youth Groups, and the RCP, 1935-1942," *Labour/Le Travail*, 35 (Spring 1995), 53.

Three weeks after May Day, another pillar of the Popular Front came into existence: the Canadian Youth Congress (CYC).¹⁸² Work among youth had become a focal point for the CPC, often through the YCL, during the early Popular Front period. While the impetus for the establishment of a Canada-wide organization of Canadian youth did not come from the YCL,¹⁸³ the YCL eagerly responded to the call.¹⁸⁴ In the lead up to the Toronto Youth Conference, the YCL had been active forming local united front organizations: the Student Peace Movement held a conference in Toronto in early March¹⁸⁵ and the YCL had succeeded in establishing a formal youth united front in BC composed of the Cooperative Commonwealth Youth Movement (CCYM), the Young Socialist League (YSL), and the YCL.¹⁸⁶ The Toronto Youth Congress, held on May 24 and 25 in Toronto, was the first in a series of annual congresses held by the CYC between 1935 and 1939.¹⁸⁷ It was broader than the previous YCL efforts among youth had been: it included representatives from the YMCA, other church and political groups, in addition to the YCL, CCYM, and YSL.¹⁸⁸ In total there were 300 delegates, representing 200 organizations with a membership of 162 705. Buck, speaking at the opening session, stated that the CPC was in favour of a united front of all workers' organizations, and that

¹⁸² The CYC was important enough to the CPC and the Popular Front that the RCMP kept careful watch on CYC activities due to fears of Communist influence. Paul Axelrod speculates that the RCMP likely had informers working at the head offices of both the CYC and YCL during this period.

Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 56; Paul Axelrod, "Spying on the Young in Depression and War: Students, Youth Groups, and the RCP, 1935-1942," *Labour/Le Travail*, 35 (Spring 1995), 54.

¹⁸³ Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 13.

¹⁸⁴ Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 14.

¹⁸⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #748", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 159.

¹⁸⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #750", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 190.

¹⁸⁷ "Toronto Youth Congress Opposes War Plans," *The Worker*, May 28, 1935; Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 20.

¹⁸⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #758", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 317.

people had to choose between capitalism and socialism. The resolutions were less radical than Buck's grand-standing would have suggested: the Congress declared itself to be anti-war, in favour of non-contributory unemployment insurance, and endorsed international youth day.¹⁸⁹

Meanwhile, a tumultuous situation was developing in the west. Throughout the early months of 1935, unemployed workers became increasingly agitated about the conditions in the relief camps.¹⁹⁰ On March 10, the BC section of the Relief Camp Workers Union (RCWU) voted to work towards a general strike of all relief camps in Alberta and BC.¹⁹¹ Shortly after, on March 24, the RCWU in Vancouver held a mass meeting announcing its intention to bring all relief camp workers in BC to Vancouver in protest of the conditions in the relief camps.¹⁹² Events moved quickly after that. On March 30, unemployed workers in Calgary voted to strike unless City Council agreed to their demands.¹⁹³ On April 6, unemployed workers in Edmonton voted in favour of a strike,¹⁹⁴ against the wishes of the CPC leadership.¹⁹⁵ The following day, April 7, the relief camp strike in BC officially began.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #758", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 318; "Toronto Youth Unites For Peace, Freedom and Progress," *The Worker*, May 30, 1935.

¹⁹⁰ "Over 40 Slave Camps Strike in Support of Discriminated Men," *The Worker*, December 26, 1934; "5,000 Men to March on Vancouver," *The Worker*, December 29, 1934; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 41.

¹⁹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #750", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 191.

¹⁹² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #752", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 223; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 104-109.

¹⁹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #752", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 225; "Relief Camp Union Proceeds With Walkout Plan," *The Worker*, April 2, 1935.

¹⁹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #753", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 240.

Throughout the months of April and May, the unemployed strikes grew in intensity and spread. In mid-April activity spread to Saskatchewan (Regina¹⁹⁷ and Bienfait) and Alberta (Edmonton and Calgary), and in May to Manitoba (Winnipeg), and Ontario (Stratford and Toronto) as well.¹⁹⁸ In Vancouver, the CPC was initially slow to realize the potential of the strike; at a mass-meeting in mid-April, at which 2000 people attended, strike leader and CPC member Arthur Evans rejected the idea of a parade,¹⁹⁹ clearly indicating that he was skeptical of both the staying power of the strike and the mass appeal it would have. By late April there were now 1 800 striking relief camp workers in Vancouver.²⁰⁰ Energy, however, was waning.²⁰¹ The huge rallies on May Day in support of the strikers likely injected new energy to the strikes, and activity picked up in May.²⁰² Pickets were established preventing unemployed workers from registering for the camps. The strikers were emboldened with a new sense of confidence.²⁰³ On May 22, 1935, the RCMP reported to Prime Minister Bennett that “encouraged by the moral and financial support of a large section of the workers of Vancouver, the strikers have

¹⁹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #753”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 241.

¹⁹⁶ “Over 1,500 Arrive in Vancouver; 750 More Marchers En Route,” *The Worker*, April 9, 1935; Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 84-85; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), 55.

¹⁹⁷ J. William Brennan, “‘The common people have spoken with a mighty voice’: Regina’s Labour City Councils, 1936-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 61.

¹⁹⁸ “100 Percent Response to Edmonton Strike Call: Unemployed in 4 Provinces Take Strike Action, Fight Against Starvation Relief,” *The Worker*, May 2, 1935; Gilbert Levine, *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 1998), 121.

¹⁹⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #751”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 238.

²⁰⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #754”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 255.

²⁰¹ Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 113-114.

²⁰² Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 94; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 129-130, 134; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), 71.

²⁰³ Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 138.

affirmed their determination not to return to the camps and to accept nothing less than complete victory.”²⁰⁴ The same day, police in Vancouver told the strikers that public meetings and disturbances were banned.²⁰⁵

In the face of intransigent local and provincial authorities, the limits of the relief camp strike soon became apparent.²⁰⁶ Against the wishes of the CPC’s central leadership in Toronto,²⁰⁷ the Vancouver district bureau of the CPC made the decision to undertake a trek to Ottawa.²⁰⁸ On May 31, the strikers met and voted to undertake the trek,²⁰⁹ and on

²⁰⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #756”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 291.

²⁰⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #756”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 306; “M’Geer Threatens Martial Law in Vancouver,” *The Worker*, May 23, 1935;.

²⁰⁶ Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 104; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 140; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 52; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), 83.

²⁰⁷ The split between the CPC centre and the Vancouver district bureau is corroborated by a number of sources. For instance, on June 1 *The Worker* ran an article which advised the strikers against trekking to Ottawa. The RCMP reported that Buck, at a meeting on June 12 in Montreal, stated that he was initially against the Trek because he thought it would be impossible for the strikers to achieve their objectives. Evans was overheard by the RCMP speaking to a friend in October, a conversation in which Evans alleged that the CPC national bureau was initially against the Trek. Jack Scott also corroborates the disagreement, saying that the CPC centre took credit for the Trek but was initially against the idea.

“Trek to Ottawa Not Advisable: “The Worker” Believes Camp Strikers Should Reconsider Plan,” *The Worker*, June 1, 1935; Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #761”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 375; Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #777”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 536; Jack Scott, eds. Bryan Palmer, *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988), 28; John Manley, ““Starve, Be Damned!’ Communists and Canada’s Urban Unemployed, 1929-39,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 79 (September 1998), 487; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 146n59.

²⁰⁸ Ronald Liversedge argues that it was not Evans who made the proposal to take the Trek, but that once the proposal was made, Evans latched on to it. Most accounts, however, credit Evans with making the proposal.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #777”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 536; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), 84.

²⁰⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #758”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 323.

June 3 the first group of relief camp strikers, 650 in number, left on a train for Ottawa.²¹⁰ In a final act of protest by the CPC leadership, Evans, the most prominent leader of the unemployed who had congregated in Vancouver, was told by the leadership of the WUL that he was not to follow the Trek past Golden B.C..²¹¹ What would become known as the On-to-Ottawa Trek was now in motion.

The entire CPC apparatus in the west jumped into action.²¹² On June 7 the main group of the strikers, now numbering 800, arrived in Calgary; the local CPC had successfully petitioned the provincial authorities to provide water and gas for the strikers.²¹³ On June 8, Mathew Popovich, a leader in both the CPC and the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA), was sent to Edmonton to prepare unemployed Ukrainians and Poles to join the trek.²¹⁴ On June 9, A.A. MacLeod was sent from Calgary to Medicine Hat to prepare accommodations for the strikers.²¹⁵ On June 14,

²¹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #758", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 314; Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *"Work and Wages!" Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 107; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 143; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 54; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 85; Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History Second Edition* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1996), 61.

²¹¹ Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *"Work and Wages!" Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 106; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 58-59.

²¹² "Whole Country Must Support March to Ottawa," *The Worker*, June 6, 1935.

²¹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #759", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 337; Gilbert Levine, *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 1998), 113-114; Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *"Work and Wages!" Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 111; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 149; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 94.

²¹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #760", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 349.

²¹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #760", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 349; Jean Evans Sheils

the strikers, now numbering 1200, arrived in Regina, where Prime Minister Bennett ordered the RCMP to halt the trek.²¹⁶ That evening a rally was held. The CCF, which had previously expressed misgivings about the role of the Communists in the leadership of the trek,²¹⁷ was now, according to James Coldwell, supportive of the efforts.²¹⁸ Circumstances had forced the CCF into a united front with the CPC.²¹⁹

On June 17, a confrontation between the strikers and the RCMP was narrowly avoided, when upon announcing their attempt to push through the RCMP blockade and travel to Winnipeg, Prime Minister Bennett announced his willingness to allow a delegation of the strikers to travel to Ottawa and voice their concerns.²²⁰ The delegation –

and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 113; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 64.

²¹⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #760”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 350-351; “Cops Massed at Regina to Smash Trek,” *The Worker*, June 15, 1935; Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 122-129; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 159-160; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 99; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), 105.

²¹⁷ On May 27, reacting to statements from a CCF member in Vancouver, the strikers reaffirmed their support for the Communist leadership of the strike. Coldwell had also initially said that the CCF would not back the trek.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #758”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 323; Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #759”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 342.

²¹⁸ “Communist Party, C.C.F. Supporting March in Calgary,” *The Worker*, June 11, 1935.

²¹⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #760”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 350.

²²⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #761”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 364; “Great Regina Unity for Trek,” *The Worker*, June 18, 1935; “Report of Interview Between Mr. Manion and Mr. Weir and Relief Strikers Delegation of the Evening of Monday, June 17,” in Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 138; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 166; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 117, 122-123; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), 108.

consisting of Arthur Evans, Matt Shaw, and others – arrived in Ottawa on June 21.²²¹

Unsurprisingly, the delegation's meetings with Prime Minister Bennett were not successful: Bennett accused Evans of being a criminal, to which Evans replied that Bennett was a liar. The talks fell apart shortly after.²²² The delegation, facing an impasse in Ottawa, departed for Regina on June 24.²²³ Meanwhile, more striking unemployed workers had arrived in Regina, and as of June 26 a group of 1000 was waiting in Winnipeg to join the trek to Ottawa.²²⁴

Evans, now back in Regina,²²⁵ realized that the strikers could not wait in Regina indefinitely. On June 27 he attempted to drive through the RCMP blockades with rented trucks. The RCMP rebuffed his attempt.²²⁶ In the context of escalating tensions, the Canadian government issued an order for the strikers to register for relief camps and demobilize.²²⁷ The strikers refused. A rally was called for the evening of July 1 in downtown Regina. Roughly 2000 people attended. The RCMP attacked the rally, and in

²²¹ Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 143.

²²² Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 144-146; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 171-175; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 133-136.

²²³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #761”, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 365-367; “R. B. Bennett Refuses All Demands of Western Camp Strikers,” *The Worker*, June 25, 1935; Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 149.

²²⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #761”, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 365.

²²⁵ Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 183.

²²⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #762”, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 379; Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 163-164; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 184; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 147, 154; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 111-112.

²²⁷ Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 158.

the ensuing chaos, an RCMP officer was killed; a striker would later die in hospital from injuries sustained by police beating. By the end of the Dominion Day Riot –as it came to be called – 120 people had been arrested by the RCMP. The Trek leaders were charged with violating Section 98 of the Criminal Code.²²⁸ In the following days, 1358 strikers registered to return to their home relief camps; the Trek had been effectively broken.²²⁹

Meanwhile, unemployed workers were gathering in other centres.²³⁰ On July 6, a trek of 200 left Montreal for Ottawa.²³¹ On July 18, a group of striking unemployed workers left Toronto for Ottawa.²³² The trek from Toronto arrived on August 8,²³³ and after two weeks, disbanded and returned to Toronto.²³⁴ The 1 000 striking unemployed workers in Winnipeg were barred from advancing to Ottawa; on July 25 a delegation of the strikers interviewed the Prime Minister, and like the previous delegation, left unsatisfied. That week the strikers began leaving Winnipeg to return to their relief

²²⁸ "Secret Criminal Law Jails Five at Regina Under Section 98," *The Worker*, July 2, 1935; "Country Incensed at Regina Brutality," *The Worker*, July 4, 1935; Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *Work and Wages! Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 181-192; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 190-197; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 169-171; Ronald Liversedge, *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 112-117.

²²⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #762", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 379-388; "Trekking Go Back To Camps Stronger Than Ever," *The Worker*, July 8, 1935.

²³⁰ "Hunger Marchers Now Moving Toward Toronto," *The Worker*, June 13, 1935; "Ontario, Quebec Camps Will Start Great Trek, July 11-16," *The Worker*, July 2, 1935.

²³¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #763", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 397; Rick Salutin, *Kent Rowley: The Organizer: A Canadian Union Life* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1980), 13.

²³² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #766", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 421

²³³ "Trek Reaches Ottawa Despite All Difficulties," *The Worker*, August 10, 1935.

²³⁴ An account of this little-known Trek can be found in: Jack Scott, eds. Bryan Palmer, *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988), 28-40.

camps.²³⁵ By the end of August, however, the upsurge in militancy among the unemployed had essentially ended, and the focus shifted towards the legal defence of those who had been arrested in the course of summer's activities.

The experience of the On-to-Ottawa trek is an interesting case study in the tensions of the early Popular Front era. On the one hand, it represented a last gasp of Third Period militancy; as will be shown below, the CPC leadership endeavoured to make sure that a situation like this would never arise again. However, insofar as the Trek was immensely popular and sympathy was widespread, unity from below forced the CPC and CCF leadership to cooperate on an issue dear to both parties. In this sense it was also decidedly a product of the Popular Front era. The simple existence of the Trek indicated a level of resistance, on the part of both the BC Party organization as well as among the unemployed, to the less militant line now pushed by the CPC central leadership after the Seventh Central Committee Plenum, which was only strengthened after the Seventh Comintern Congress. And indeed, the political conclusions drawn by the CPC membership and its periphery were not necessarily in accord with the Popular Front line; one unemployed worker in Montreal later recalled that in the aftermath of the Trek, the bourgeoisie was treated as a military enemy rather than just an abstract question.²³⁶ The conflicts between the CPC centre and BC, and between the wishes of the CPC leadership and the actions of the unemployed, would become central in the implementation of, and resistance to, the Popular Front in Canada.

The Seventh World Congress of the Comintern

²³⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #766", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 420-422.

²³⁶ Marilyn Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, The Spy Trials, and the Cold War* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1994), 27.

The Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, held in Moscow between July 25 and August 20 1935, gave support to the shift in line in the Canadian party which had been underway since 1934.²³⁷ The main report to the Congress, titled *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism*, was given by Dimitrov. In his report, Dimitrov raised three points of particular importance for the CPC. First, he defined fascism. Second, he clarified the role and position of social-democrats in the face of fascism. And third, he articulated a new tactical line, a development of the united front.

In *The Fascist Offensive*, Dimitrov repeated the conclusion of the Thirteenth plenum of the ECCI that fascism was “the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.”²³⁸ However, pointing to a shift in line towards the more conciliatory aspects of the Popular Front, he defended Roosevelt and the New Deal against actual fascism.²³⁹ This indicated that the Comintern was adopting a more conciliatory line towards bourgeois democracy than had previously been the case.

In relation to the social-democrats, Dimitrov argued that fascism was able to come to power because the working class was split between Communist and social-democratic camps. In this, the social-democrats were primarily responsible, as they pursued a policy of class collaboration. However, social-democracy was now splitting. Alongside the former reactionary social-democrats, there was a growing camp of left

²³⁷ “Seventh Communist World Congress Opens,” *The Worker*, July 30, 1935.

²³⁸ Georgi Dimitrov, *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism*. Accessed from: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm#s8 on June 23, 2016.

²³⁹ TFL, KC, Georgi Dimitrov, *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism*, 97.

social-democrats, who were in favour of the united front and could be worked with.²⁴⁰

What was the reason for the split? First, the Depression had weakened the strata of the working-class which social-democracy relied upon, undermining the ability of social-democracy to act as a bulwark for the bourgeoisie. Second, the bourgeoisie was turning towards fascism and therefore alienating social-democrats. And third, the social-democrats were learning from their defeats in Germany, Austria, and Spain, as well as from the victory of socialism in the USSR.²⁴¹

Taking into consideration these changing conditions, the Communist Parties were to pursue two tactical goals. First, Communists were to form a proletarian united front, “*to establish unity of action of the workers in every factory, in every district, in every region, in every country, all over the world.*” Second, on the basis of the proletarian united front, the Communist Parties were to establish a “wide anti-fascist People’s Front”, as a means of establishing a “fighting alliance between the proletariat... the laboring peasantry and the basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie.” Despite warnings against conceiving of the united front or People’s Front as a parliamentary bloc with social-democrats, Dimitrov suggested that the united front should manifest itself as, going back to the Fourth Comintern Congress, a workers’ and farmers’ government.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Georgi Dimitrov, *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism*. Accessed from:

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm#s8 on June 23, 2016.

²⁴¹ TFL, KC, Georgi Dimitrov, *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism*, 102.

²⁴² Georgi Dimitrov, *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism*. Accessed from:

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm#s8 on June 23, 2016.

The decisions of the Congress were quickly adapted to the Canadian situation.²⁴³

On August 10, *The Worker* ran an article which looked at Dimitrov's report in-depth. The main point highlighted by the CPC was that Communist Parties should be willing to participate in non-communist anti-fascist governments. *The Worker*, in a major revision of the CPC's earlier approach, argued that:

A situation may arise in which the formation of a government by the proletarian united front or anti-fascist People's Front is not only possible but necessary, even before the revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat. At the appropriate moment, the Communist Party supported by an upsurging united front movement, will seize the initiative in forming such a government. The Communist Party will actively support such a government if the government has a platform against fascism and reaction regardless whether the Communist Party enters into the government or not.

...

The question is similar to that of a labor government or a workers' and peasant's government, which occupied the Fourth and Fifth Congresses. However, today's situation is much more mature and the old decisions are obsolete.

The old mistakes were: the right opportunists believed that a labor government could be created in any situation as a pure parliamentary bloc with the Social-Democratic parties. The ultra-leftists wanted to recognize only a government coming to power after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and decline to negotiate with the Social-Democracy.²⁴⁴

The CPC also highlighted that Communists were against so-called "national nihilism"²⁴⁵ and should seek to link themselves up with their respective national traditions, that

²⁴³ Stewart Smith would later argue that the CPC had anticipated the shift in line, and had already adapted its practice to the Popular Front before the VII World Congress of the Comintern. Stewart Smith, *Comrades and Komsomolkas: My Years in the Communist Party of Canada* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1993), 175.

²⁴⁴ "Dimitroff Outlines World Anti-Fascist Task," *The Worker*, August 10, 1935.

²⁴⁵ The CPC was quick to attempt to paint itself as Canadian in the wake of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, and as part of its approach to the 1935 federal elections. For early attempts at "Canadianization," see: "Communists Bearers of Great Tradition," *The Worker*, October 1, 1935; "COMMUNISM IS CANADIAN: Communist Party a Product of the Soil of the Canadian Labor Movement, -A Canadian Party," *The Worker*, October 19, 1935.

Communists were to fight for unity of action against class enemies, and that Communists should strive towards trade union unity.²⁴⁶

In an educational circular distributed in late August, the CPC argued that fascism was not inevitable: it could be beaten by the militant activity of the working class. This was to take the form, as the Congress had pointed out, of the proletarian united front, already under construction with the CCF, and the anti-fascist people's front, which the CPC saw forming out of the CLAWF. There was, however, a shift from earlier understandings of the nature of fascism and Canadian politics. The document differentiated between fascism and bourgeois democracy, declaring the latter favourable to the former. Pointing to the possibility of fascism in Canada, the CPC for the first time clarified that the Social Credit and Reconstruction movements were not fascist per-se, but rather the leaders of the movements were demagogues who represented an incipient form of fascism. Pointing towards unity endeavours in the future, the educational document also noted that while finance capital was in favour of the Mackenzie King Liberals, it was conceivable that fascists would concentrate outside of the Liberal party.²⁴⁷

From the Seventh World Congress to the Ninth Central Committee Plenum

In the period immediately following the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, the CPC's work had two main focuses. First was the Party's campaign in the

²⁴⁶ "Dimitroff Outlines World Anti-Fascist Task," *The Worker*, August 10, 1935.

²⁴⁷ LAC, Communist Party of Canada Fonds (CPC), Reel H-1626, *Canada and the VII World Congress of the Communist International*.

1935 federal elections.²⁴⁸ Second was the defence of those arrested during the On-to-Ottawa Trek.

The focus on the CPC's electoral work in the latter part of 1935 was still the electoral alliance with the CCF.²⁴⁹ Here the CPC enjoyed some further successes; in Kirkland Lake, for instance, the CPC and CCF put forward a joint united front candidate on a common program.²⁵⁰ There were other successes in West York, London, Greenwood,²⁵¹ and there were numerous joint-candidates in British Columbia.²⁵² In a bizarre amalgamation of the Third Period and Popular Front lines, banners at CPC and united front election rallies frequently read "Towards a Soviet Canada!" and "For a United Front of the CPC and the CCF!"²⁵³

The general line that the CPC took in the latter part of 1935 towards the elections was a shift to the right, and marked an abandonment of a Marxist understanding of the bourgeois state. Previously, Communists had participated in elections not out of a belief in the democratic process (they did not think that bourgeois democracy was particularly democratic), nor out of a belief in the possibility of reforms, but rather as a means of

²⁴⁸ Stewart Smith, *Comrades and Komsomolkas: My Years in the Communist Party of Canada* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1993), 179.

²⁴⁹ "C.C.F. Ranks Want Unity," *The Worker*, August 27, 1935; "Communists Offering To Support Woodsworth," *The Worker*, October 1, 1935; "Save Our Youth! Elect Communist and C.C.F. Candidates!," *The Worker*, October 3, 1935; "Elect These Anti-Capitalist Candidates!," *The Worker*, October 10, 1935.

²⁵⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #771", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 474.

²⁵¹ TFL, KC, "The Road to Unity" in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 163.

²⁵² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #776", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 526; "Will Give Support to C.C.F. Candidate in Burrard," *The Worker*, August 31, 1935.

²⁵³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #776", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 523.

popularizing Communist politics.²⁵⁴ The Popular Front approach to elections was different.²⁵⁵ Pushed by the Comintern, Leslie Morris, then living in Moscow, wrote to the CPC on August 31, saying that a program of broad reforms was necessary to appeal to the CCF, and that the CPC had to “frankly explain that the idea that such a GOVERNMENT [the united front government] WOULD INTRODUCE SOCIALISM OR BE A STEP TO SOCIALISM IS AN ILLUSION... .”²⁵⁶ The CPC was quick to respond; on September 7, *The Worker* published a program of demands intended to meet the immediate economic needs of the Canadian people.²⁵⁷ Buck echoed this sentiment at a meeting in Port Arthur on September 25, where he said that the CPC’s electoral strategy was to elect Communist and united front MPs, and build a movement capable of pressuring parliament to enact pro-worker reforms.²⁵⁸

Not everybody was happy with the new orientation. Responses ranged from ignoring the nuances of the shift, to outright disobeying the instructions coming from the centre. In Nova Scotia, J. B. McLachlan seems to have been totally disinterested in the united front. In mid-May Buck and McLachlan had spoken in Glace Bay as part of Buck’s release tour. Buck emphasized the fight against war and fascism, whereas McLachlan focused on the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of Soviet Canada.²⁵⁹ This pattern continued into October; at an election meeting in Sydney,

²⁵⁴ V.I. Lenin, “Should We Participate in Bourgeois Parliaments?,” in “*Left-Wing*” *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. Accessed from: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/lwc/ch07.htm> on August 30, 2016.

²⁵⁵ “What Even One Man Can Do In Ottawa!,” *The Worker*, October 10, 1935.

²⁵⁶ LAC, CF, K-290, File 179, *Letter from ? to CPC, August 31, 1935*.

²⁵⁷ “MAKE THE RICH PAY – to Save Our Country!,” *The Worker*, September 7, 1935.

²⁵⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #776”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 522.

²⁵⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #756”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 289-290.

McLachlan, disagreeing with the new orientation, said that the CPC did not pretend to be able to change anything by electing MPs, but instead that the elected CPC members would be used to organize the masses for the overthrow of capitalism.²⁶⁰ Even after the elections, the CPC centre and the Nova Scotia district interpreted McLachlan's 5000 votes differently: in the pages of *The Worker*, the CPC's newspaper, McLachlan's support was characterized as proof of the existence of "an intelligent class-conscious army in Cape Breton South... who are prepared to fight for the unity of the common people."²⁶¹ The local communist publication took a different approach, saying that the 5000 votes for McLachlan indicated growing support for communism. It is worth noting that there was virtually no united front activity in Nova Scotia in the lead up to the 1935 elections, apart from "united front committees" in the mining pits on Cape Breton. But even here, the "united front committees" were more or less oriented towards the CPC, and were much closer to the classical conception of the "united front" than the CPC's activities elsewhere.²⁶²

In BC the situation was even more severe. On September 16, Stewart Smith wrote to Leslie Morris expressing alarm that "the opponents of the united front in district 9 [BC] are acting as if they really wanted to fight against the party line."²⁶³ While Smith reassured Morris that "there is not the slightest doubt as to where 99% of the membership stands", his prognosis indicated that the opposition to the new line was more widespread:

²⁶⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #776", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 531.

²⁶¹ *The Worker*, October 26, 1935 quote in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #779", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 545.

²⁶² John Manley, "Preaching the Red Stuff: J.B. McLachlan, Communism, and the Cape Breton Miners, 1922-1935," *Labour/Le Travail*, 30 (Fall 1992), 111

²⁶³ LAC, CF, K-289, File 174, *Letter to John Porter from Stewart Smith, September 16, 1935*.

“sectarian practices are still widespread in the election work and are the most serious threat to the possibilities of victory in a number of the main constituencies.”²⁶⁴ Indeed, in early September Buck and Sam Carr, the CPC’s organizational secretary, had travelled to Vancouver in the hopes of meeting with the provincial CPC leadership and correcting their line towards the CCF.²⁶⁵ They were unsuccessful. In early October, far too late to matter for the election results, the CPC in BC agreed to support some united front candidates²⁶⁶ but would not back down from nominating Malcolm Bruce in the riding of Vancouver East. Four days before the election, Bruce and an unnamed representative from BC, probably Fergus McKean, cabled Toronto stating their disagreement with the decision to support any CCF candidates.²⁶⁷ The CPC centre, reporting to the Comintern a month later, remarked that: “In Vancouver we have committed a big mistake, by nominating Comrade Bruce in a constituency where the CCF is strongest. The very fact that we nominated him in Vancouver East, shows the complete isolation of our party from the masses of the people... .”²⁶⁸ This episode marked a sharpening of the disagreements between the BC district and the CPC centre, which had begun with the decision to hold the On-to-Ottawa Trek.

The CPC in Alberta also resisted the implementation of the united front, though in connection with the provincial elections. In a further letter from Leslie Morris to the CPC central committee, Morris criticized the conception of the united front prevailing in the

²⁶⁴ LAC, CF, K-289, File 174, *Letter to John Porter from Stewart Smith, September 16, 1935.*

²⁶⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #772”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 476.

²⁶⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #776”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 526.

²⁶⁷ TFL, KC, “The Situation on the Pacific Coast” in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 207.

²⁶⁸ LAC, CF, K-290, File 180, *Copy of Report on Ninth Plenum – District #9.*

province. “It appeared in the letters of comrades from Alberta,” he wrote, “published in [the Worker] without any notes of correction by the editors. One leading comrade in Alberta, P [likely Popovich], draws the conclusion that Communism is the only alternative to Social Credit and does not mention the united front. ... You know that this is in direct opposition to the 7th Congress line.”²⁶⁹

Despite any disagreements between the CPC centre and the outlying districts, the results of the election, held on October 14, 1935, gave temporary validation to the new line advanced by the CPC’s central leadership. Despite nominating candidates in only 13 ridings, the votes cast for the CPC totalled nearly 30 000 – almost a five-fold increase from its previous total of 6 000.²⁷⁰ The CCF received 369 000 votes. Most significant for Buck was the 920 000 votes cast against the Liberals and the Conservatives, an indication that the masses were moving beyond the old capitalist parties.²⁷¹ At any rate, the Canadian people had thrown Bennett’s Conservatives out of office, an indictment of his government’s “Iron Heel” policies.²⁷² In its place the Liberals now formed the government, with Mackenzie King as Prime Minister.²⁷³

Meanwhile, the CPC also started to build a campaign in defence of those arrested during the Trek. Following his release, and against the warnings of the judge overseeing his case, Arthur Evans began a speaking tour in September to raise awareness of the

²⁶⁹ LAC, CF, K-289, File 174, *Letter from Porter to CPC, September 20, 1935.*

²⁷⁰ “Nearly 30,000 Votes Cast For Communist Candidates,” *The Worker*, October 17, 1935.

²⁷¹ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, “The General Elections” in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 77-79.

²⁷² Stewart Smith, *Comrades and Komsomolkas: My Years in the Communist Party of Canada* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1993), 174; James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 137.

²⁷³ “Rising Resentment Sweeps Bennett Out,” *The Worker*, October 17, 1935.

plight of those arrested.²⁷⁴ The CLDL jumped into action, preparing a Canada-wide defence campaign.²⁷⁵ In early September, the CLDL sent a circular to all of its sections stating that “the Regina cases are the most important cases demanding our attention and activity at the present moment”²⁷⁶, especially because the defence of the arrested strikers also dovetailed with the campaign against Section 98 of the Criminal Code. The CLDL organized meetings across Canada, and raised funds to cover legal expenses. However, a parallel process in the CPC’s legal defence work also began to unfold. Citizen’s Committees began to be formed by CPC organizers, also to work on the defence of the arrested strikers.²⁷⁷

The reason for this overlap in the defence work was two-fold. First, the CLDL was in a state of unraveling. All across Canada, between August and October, CLDL sections at their district meetings reported that membership and dues were decreasing.²⁷⁸ In many cases, there were simply too many arrested strikers for the CLDL to effectively defend. The exception to this was the CLDL in BC, which was thriving.²⁷⁹ Second, there was an attempt by the CPC at this time to move away from “narrow” (class-oriented)

²⁷⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #773”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 491; “Letter from Arthur H Evans to Mr. Charles Marriott, August 28, 1935,” in Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 223.

²⁷⁵ “34,000 Bail Demand For Regina Trek Leaders,” *The Worker*, August 8, 1935; “East, King To Tour For Trek Defense,” *The Worker*, August 13, 1935.

²⁷⁶ “Circular from CLDL National Executive,” quoted in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #771”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 472.

²⁷⁷ Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Markham: Fifth House Publishers, 2003), 262.

²⁷⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #780”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 474 and “Bulleting #776”, 565.

²⁷⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #771”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995),

approaches to mass work. Insofar as the CPC sought to bring the progressive petty-bourgeoisie into the anti-fascist People's Front in the fight to defend bourgeois democracy, the CPC needed a legal defence organization with a broader mandate than just the working class. J.S. Wallace, at a district convention of the CLDL in Montreal on September 29, alluded to this when he said that the CLDL had used too many revolutionary phrases, and as such, many confused it for simply a second Communist Party.²⁸⁰

Both of these themes were on display at the CLDL's national convention, held in Toronto on October 19, 1935. While the organizational report claimed that the CLDL had 58 300 members (10 775 independent, 33 600 trade union affiliates, and 13 925 through CPC language and mass organizations), the reality was that there was only 14 000 members, with only one third paying dues.²⁸¹ The reason was that the CLDL had been, allegedly, too sectarian in character. As such, delegates were urged to form Citizens' Defence Committees as part of building the united front. While the CLDL did not vote to liquidate itself, the writing was on the wall: CLDL members were to help build the organizational replacement for the CLDL.

The Ninth Central Committee Plenum

The next major development in the Popular Front in Canada occurred in early November. At the CPC Central Committee's Ninth Plenum, Stewart Smith dropped a

²⁸⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #776", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 530.

²⁸¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #780", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 474 and "Bulletin #776", 564-565.

bombshell during the opening session on November 2: not only did the CPC seek to build a broad united front party with the CCF, but the CPC was now willing to “in the interests of unity of action...affiliate to the C.C.F.”²⁸² Insofar as socialism was impossible in the short term,²⁸³ such a political compromise, according to Smith, was justified. The following night, Stewart Smith and Earl Browder spoke to a crowd of 3 200 at Massey Hall –the first public meeting of the CPC since it had been declared illegal – during which he announced the shift publicly.²⁸⁴ In no uncertain terms, Smith declared “The C.P. of Canada... is prepared to affiliate to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in the interest of unity and in order to build up a United Front against the rising wave of Fascism and the danger of war.”²⁸⁵ The message was well received.²⁸⁶

There were three other significant political developments at the Ninth Central Committee Plenum. First, the struggle against “sectarianism”, which in the context of the Popular Front meant independent CPC activity and the promotion of open anti-capitalist politics, was to be intensified. In the reply to the discussion on his opening report, Smith lambasted the sectarians:

In the economic struggles the sectarian error frequently has been committed of taking up the position that no struggle can be waged for the release of the masses

²⁸² TFL, KC, Stewart Smith, “The Seventh World Congress and Our Tasks” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 24-25.

²⁸³ TFL, KC, Stewart Smith, “The Seventh World Congress and Our Tasks” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 26.

²⁸⁴ Stewart Smith, *Comrades and Komsomolkas: My Years in the Communist Party of Canada* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1993), 179.

²⁸⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #781”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 581.

²⁸⁶ LAC, CF, K-290, File 180, *Copy of Report on Ninth Plenum – District #9*; “Communists Willing to Affiliate to C.C.F.,” *The Worker*, November 5, 1935.

from the burdens of the crisis, without overthrowing capitalism. Such a position is incorrect.²⁸⁷

In reference to the situation in BC, Buck stated that any electoral weakness faced by the CPC was a direct result of sectarianism.²⁸⁸ Both the ULFTA²⁸⁹ and the FOC²⁹⁰ were criticized for their sectarian attitudes. Nearly every district report also included an element of self-criticism against residual sectarianism.

Second, in line with the criticisms of sectarianism, the CPC declared itself in favour of trade union unity. In the report on “Trade Union Unity and Our Party”, the CPC argued that it would be sectarian to think that the WUL and the TLC could come together in a process of unity struggle before merging. Instead, insofar as trade union unity was a goal, it was quicker to just dissolve the WUL into the TLC.²⁹¹ Somewhat contradictorily, the report also cautioned against liquidationism.²⁹² This new position was a departure from the CPC’s earlier approach to trade union unity; in early March, *The Worker* had come out in favour of an amalgamation of all trade union centres in Canada, but it had proposed a minimum program as a precondition to unity.²⁹³ However, moving into the

²⁸⁷ TFL, KC, Stewart Smith, “Reply to Discussion” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 61.

²⁸⁸ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, “The General Elections” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 79.

²⁸⁹ TFL, KC, Jim Warner, “For a Stronger Party in Canada” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 113.

²⁹⁰ TFL, KC, “The Situation in Northern Ontario” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 176.

²⁹¹ TFL, KC, “Trade Union Unity and Our Party” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 120; John Manley, “Communists and Autoworkers: The Struggle for Industrial Unionism in the Canadian Automobile Industry, 1925-1936,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (Spring 1986), 129.

²⁹² TFL, KC, “Trade Union Unity and Our Party” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 122.

²⁹³ “W.U.L. Urges All Trade Unions To Unite,” *The Worker*, March 2, 1935.

period following the Ninth Central Committee Plenum, it was clear that the CPC was in favour of the liquidation of the WUL.²⁹⁴

Third, the CPC also shifted its conception of the role of women within the movement.²⁹⁵ Previously women had been organized as women workers, largely within the Women's Labour Leagues (WLL). Now, the CPC shifted its focus towards women as housewives and union auxiliaries.²⁹⁶ Housewives were to be “drawn into the work in connection with the high cost of living on such staple foods as meat, milk, etc.”²⁹⁷ The focus on housewives over women workers –on women living in single income households rather than double income households – indicated a shift in the focus of the CPC's work towards wealthier women, “to the middle class and intellectual women who are dissatisfied with the burden they are forced to carry.”²⁹⁸

The Balance Sheet of the United Front Period

The Ninth Central Committee Plenum cemented the perspectives of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern into the political and practical life of the CPC. By the end of the Plenum, all of the main political themes of the Popular Front period had been articulated, and much of the practical work of the Popular Front was either firmly

²⁹⁴ Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History Second Edition* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1996), 63.

²⁹⁵ For a detailed account, see: Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989); and Andrée Lévesque, *Red Travellers: Jeanne Corbin & Her Comrades* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

²⁹⁶ TFL, KC, “The Need for Mass Work Among Women” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 140-141.

²⁹⁷ TFL, KC, “The Need for Mass Work Among Women” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada* 145.

²⁹⁸ TFL, KC, “The Need for Mass Work Among Women” in in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada* 145-146.

established or in its infancy. The CPC's conception of the united front encapsulated the CCF, the unions, and other progressive parties and organizations such as the Independent Labour Parties, and the Socialist Party; the CPC had even gone as far as to announce its willingness to federate to the CCF. The CPC had declared itself for trade union unity, hoping to bring the WUL and the TLC together as part of the process of building the united front. The CPC had changed its approach to the bourgeois state, and now argued that it was possible to win gains for the working class through elections. While the Social Credit Movement and the Reconstruction Party had initially been derided as fascist, the CPC seemed to be warning to them as well²⁹⁹; at the Plenum, Stewart Smith emphatically pointed out that Social Credit was not a fascist party, but rather there were "fascist elements inside who will try and channel it towards fascism."³⁰⁰

The process of transitioning to the united front, and Popular Front, was not without its discontents. Early on the BC district broke from the CPC's central leadership, and pushed the relief camp strike further and in a more militant direction than the central leadership had hoped. These differences also continued to persist into the 1935 elections, where the CPC in BC basically resisted the united front line until the last minute, and even then, only implemented it in a formalistic way. In Nova Scotia the united front was ignored all together, as the overthrow of capitalism and the critique of reformism became the mainstay of McLachlan's campaign. While the central CPC leadership tried to reinvent the Party in a "non-sectarian" image, some members were not keen to go-along

²⁹⁹ The CPC's position gradually transitioned over time. See: "Alberta Demagogue is Making Use of Soil Prepared by Reformists For Fascist Deception of Masses," *The Worker*, March 2, 1935; "Lack of Labor Unity Brings Aberhart Victory," *The Worker*, August 27, 1935.

³⁰⁰ TFL, KC, Stewart Smith, "Reply to Discussion" in *Towards a Canadian Peoples Front: Reports and Speeches at Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada*, 59.

with the shift: many of the reports given at the Ninth Central Committee Plenum criticized the sectarianism of various sections of the Party. It was not a problem that was localized to just BC and Nova Scotia: against the new line, CPC members made frequent appeals to revolution, violence, and arms during the 1935 election campaign.³⁰¹

The growing disagreement over the implementation of the political line of the united front marked the beginning of a hidden class struggle internal to the CPC. On the one hand, the central leadership argued for the liquidation of the CPC's working-class mass organizations, for a liberal understanding of the bourgeois Canadian state, and for a move away from class in terms of organizing goals, evident in the liquidation of the CLDL and also the new approach towards women's issues. On the other hand, the shifts were sporadically resisted by much of the proletarian base of the party; it is no coincidence that the biggest opposition to the united front line came from Eastern European immigrants³⁰², unemployed workers, and Cape Breton coal miners. While this class struggle was not a conscious process, it existed, and would magnify in the following period.

³⁰¹ For instance, A.E. Smith, at an election meeting in Toronto on June 26th, stated that if the government kept responding to the workers with bullets, the workers and strikers were fit to defend themselves.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #762", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 384.

³⁰² In *Patriots and Proletarian: Politicizing Hungarian Immigrants in Interwar Canada*, Carmela Patrias argues that one of the reasons for the radicalization of many Eastern European immigrants was because they tended to be the lowest paid and most precariously employed sections of the Canadian working class.

Carmela Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians: Politicizing Hungarian Immigrants in Interwar Canada* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

III. The Height of the Popular Front: November 1935-October 1937

The Road to Unity

One week after the beginning of the Ninth CPC Central Committee Plenum, the WUL held its Third National Convention.³⁰³ In a speech given at the convention, and later published in pamphlet form, Tom Ewen gave practical expression to the new line of the CPC towards the union movement. "The unity of the workers is growing to such an extent that it is now possible to speak very plainly of the possibility of uniting the different unions in the same industry, of making big steps towards a united Canadian trade union movement..."³⁰⁴ Ewen cited a series of examples such as the apparent near-unity of the needle trades in Toronto, the spontaneous moves towards unity of longshoremen in BC, and the Trek to show that the new approach was correct. Ewen also argued that unity would protect Canada from fascism.³⁰⁵ The conditions for unity laid out by the WUL contained a series of standard economic demands, and only one political demand: that the American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions into which the WUL would liquidate demand the repeal of Section 98 of the Criminal Code.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ "Trade Union Unity IS Major Problem Before W.U.L. Congress," *The Worker*, October 31, 1935; "W.U.L. Congress Opens on Saturday," *The Worker*, November 9, 1935.

³⁰⁴ TFL, KC, Tom Ewen, *Unity is the Workers' Lifeline*, 7; "Give No Hindrance To Trade Union Unity" - - Ewen," *The Worker*, November 12, 1935.

³⁰⁵ TFL, KC, Tom Ewen, *Unity is the Workers' Lifeline*, 16.

³⁰⁶ TFL, KC, Tom Ewen, *Unity is the Workers' Lifeline*, 22-23.

Despite what Steven Endicott contends in his history of the WUL,³⁰⁷ the decision of the WUL to merge into the AFL unions surely came as a surprise to its members. For instance, as late as the summer of 1935, there was no indication that the WUL would be liquidated: in material prepared for the Comintern, the CPC argued that “the strength of the revolutionary unions as compared with the other trade union organisations does not reveal any necessity for pursuing of the U.S. policy of liquidating the revolutionary unions and transferring the entire trade union work to the reformist unions.”³⁰⁸ Indeed, John Manley argues that despite having received directives from the ECCI favouring trade union unity as early as 1934, the CPC continued to argue that there was no objective basis for unity until November 1935.³⁰⁹ While unity negotiations were underway in Toronto, the WUL was initiating organizing drives among trollers in Vancouver³¹⁰ and the RCMP reported that it was stepping up its efforts among food workers in the Food Workers Industrial Union.³¹¹ At the time of the Third National Convention of the WUL, the WUL was involved in a vicious months-long strike of longshore workers on the Vancouver waterfront³¹²; one of the demands was union recognition.³¹³ Shock seems to have been the reaction of the rank-and-file members of the

³⁰⁷ Steven Endicott, in *Raising the Workers' Flag*, suggests that the unity process began in 1934 and was finally completed in 1936. In the final chapter of the text, he essentially skips over two years of the WUL's activity in order to make his argument.

³⁰⁸ LAC, CF, K-288, File 171, *Canadian Material for the World Congress*.

³⁰⁹ John Manley, “Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (Fall 2005), 45-46.

³¹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #784”, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 617.

³¹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #785”, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 626.

³¹² “Vicious Reign of Terror Planned on B.C. Coast,” *The Worker*, May 28, 1935; “Bloody Battle on Coast,” *The Worker*, June 20, 1935; Andrew Parnaby, *Citizen Docker: Making a New Deal on the Vancouver Waterfront, 1919-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 142, 150, 154.

³¹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #786”, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 633.

WUL: Jack Scott recalls that the decision to liquidate was made without the consent of most of the members, and that many were furious.³¹⁴ The resistance to the merger in BC was strong enough that Tom Ewen was moved from Toronto to Vancouver in order to ensure that the WUL in BC carried through with the liquidation plans.³¹⁵

Despite whatever opposition was expressed to the merger, the decision was final.³¹⁶ In December, 1935, the Montreal locals of the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers (IUNTW) followed the example of Toronto and applied for charters with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU).³¹⁷ The Vancouver longshore workers strike was called off on the advice of the CPC leadership, and the striking workers were instructed to affiliate with the International Longshoremen's Association.³¹⁸ On December 29, the Lumber Workers Industrial Union (LWIU) held its annual conference and in the presence of observers from the AFL, voted to join the

³¹⁴ Jack Scott, eds. Bryan Palmer, *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988), 26-27; Rick Salutin, *Kent Rowley: The Organizer: A Canadian Union Life* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1980), 24; Mercedes Steedman, "The Promise: Communist Organizing in the Needle Trades, The Dressmakers Campaign, 1928 to 1937," *Labour/Le Travail*, 34 (Fall 1994), 69.

³¹⁵ John Manley, "'Communists Love Canada!': The Communist Party of Canada, the 'People' and the Popular Front, 1933-1939," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 36 (Winter 2002), 66. Interestingly, in Tom Ewen's autobiography titled *The Forge Glows Red*, there is virtually no mention of his time in Vancouver.

³¹⁶ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 46-47.

³¹⁷ In Toronto, the relative strength of the IUNTW compared to the ILGWU allowed the IUNTW to negotiate its terms of unification. In Montreal this was not the case. Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #785", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 631; Mercedes Steedman, "The Promise: Communist Organizing in the Needle Trades, The Dressmakers Campaign, 1928 to 1937," *Labour/Le Travail*, 34 (Fall 1994), 67-68.

³¹⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, "Bulletin #786", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 634; Andrew Parnaby, *Citizen Docker: Making a New Deal on the Vancouver Waterfront, 1919-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 155.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (UBJCA).³¹⁹ At a Toronto “unity” rally in mid-January, 1936, J.B. Salsberg recognized that while certain individuals were reluctant to amalgamate the WUL with the AFL, the process was already underway; the CPC was not going to disrupt the unity process, but would help.³²⁰ Shortly after, Tom Ewen embarked on a speaking tour to popularize the new line.

At the end of 1935, two other significant events occurred. First, the 1935 civic elections were held in cities across Canada. The CPC did relatively well. In Regina, the Civic Labour League, a Popular Front organization consisting of the CPC, CCF, and other left-wing organizations, won six out of ten seats in Regina including the mayoral seat.³²¹ Tim Buck and other CPC members in Toronto more than doubled their vote-count from the previous year.³²² United front candidates were elected Reeve in East York and Fir Mountain, Saskatchewan.³²³ Communists and united front candidates also had favourable showings in Brandon, and Ericksdale, Manitoba, and Lethbridge, Alberta.³²⁴

³¹⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #789”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 35; “B.C. Lumber Workers Head For Unity With A.F.L.,” *The Worker*, January 14, 1936; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 112; Andrew Parnaby, “What’s Law Got To Do With It? The IWA and the Politics of State Power in British Columbia, 1935-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 44 (Fall 1999), 13.

³²⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #790”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 48.

³²¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #784”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 614; J. William Brennan, “‘The common people have spoken with a mighty voice’: Regina’s Labour City Councils, 1936-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 60.

³²² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #788”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 27,

³²³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #789”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 27.

³²⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #786”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 634-635.

Second, between December 6 and 8, the CLAWF held its second congress in Toronto.³²⁵ Despite some internal controversy over the involvement of the CPC in the CLAWF,³²⁶ the Congress was a success. Membership was now at over 500 000,³²⁷ Toronto mayor James Simpson gave the opening remarks, and both church and Social Credit groups were represented at the Congress. Tim Buck and Sam Carr addressed the Congress and promoted a plan of action in line with the CPC's political priorities.³²⁸ The Congress allegedly looked upon their position favourably. The resolutions included a laundry-list of causes dear to the CPC including: repealing Section 98 of the Criminal Code, solidarity with German anti-fascists including the now-imprisoned KPD, greetings to the Scotsboro boys in the US, and solidarity with those arrested during the On-to-Ottawa Trek.³²⁹

Through the final months of 1935 and into the first half of 1936, the CPC continued to move forward in implementing the new Popular Front approach. In order to popularize the new line among the CPC's rank-and-file, Stewart Smith embarked on a multi-city speaking tour of Western Canada. There was, however, opposition to the new line. On November 25, at a meeting in Montreal, CPC organizer Sidney Sarkin had to reassure the assembled CPC members that the CPC was not becoming a "pink" organization; the line had changed, but the CPC was still going to carry on its struggle for

³²⁵ "World Committee Against War Greets Congress," *The Worker*, December 7, 1935; "Call for People's Front Against War, Fascism," *The Worker*, December 10, 1935.

³²⁶ TFL, KC, *The People versus War and Fascism: Proceedings, Second National Congress Against War and Fascism, Toronto, Ontario, December 6th, 7th, 8th, 6-8.*

³²⁷ TFL, KC, *The People versus War and Fascism: Proceedings, Second National Congress Against War and Fascism, Toronto, Ontario, December 6th, 7th, 8th, 40.*

³²⁸ TFL, KC, *The People versus War and Fascism: Proceedings, Second National Congress Against War and Fascism, Toronto, Ontario, December 6th, 7th, 8th, 19.*

³²⁹ TFL, KC, *The People versus War and Fascism: Proceedings, Second National Congress Against War and Fascism, Toronto, Ontario, December 6th, 7th, 8th, 37.*

a Soviet Canada.³³⁰ Just over a month later, a group of dissident Ukrainian communists broke from the CPC in Regina and announced plans to launch their own newspaper, in order to deal with working-class problems in a true working-class manner.³³¹ On December 27, Sam Carr reassured members of the Scandanavian Workers Club that the CPC had not abandoned revolution. Repeating the practiced argument, Carr reiterated that the Popular Front was only “necessary to educate the masses so that they may become class-conscious. Once they have attained the stage of class consciousness revolutionary action will automatically follow.”³³²

Particularly worrying for the CPC leadership was that not only was resistance to the Popular Front growing in new locations, but the issues in the old problem areas –BC and Nova Scotia – seemed to be worsening. In a March 9, 1936 report from Nova Scotia, the local organizer (at this time probably William Findlay)³³³ indicated that “disruptive elements, inside and out, organizational and financial looseness, extremely sectarian mistakes, low political level and lack of understanding of the party by the members, have all operated to discredit it.”³³⁴ In BC, the growing split in the CPC was even worse: there

³³⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #784”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 620.

³³¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part II, 1935*, “Bulletin #787”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 648-649.

These Ukrainian communists were not only upset at the new Popular Frontline. They were also followers of a dissident Ukrainian communist named Lobay, who had left the ULFTA over concerns about the nature of Soviet Ukraine.

For more information on Lobay, see: John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizatons in Canada*, (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979).

³³² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #788”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 30.

³³³ Michael J. Earle, “The Coalminers and Their “Red” Union: The Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, 1932-1936,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 22 (Fall 1988), 131.

³³⁴ LAC, CF, K-291, File 185, *Copy of Report From Nova Scotia*.

was a “storm of protest and criticism coming from the units” with regards to the new line, and members “simply refuse[d] to sell the pamphlets.”³³⁵

In the absence of any coordinated opposition to the Popular Front line, the CPC central leadership continued to push for its implementation. At this time, specific emphasis was placed on the importance of unity with the CCF. When Stewart Smith returned from his tour of the west in mid-February, he reported that unity work with the CCF was progressing. Many formerly reactionary sections of the CCF were now eager to work with the CPC.³³⁶ Specifically, he pointed to progress in BC and upheld Regina as a model example of the united front: there was a local Labour Party, composed of CCF and CPC members, and CPC members had been hired by the city since the December 1935 municipal election victory.³³⁷ Shortly after his return, a spokesperson of the CCF in Edmonton openly urged unity between the CCF and the CPC, in line with the CPC’s priorities of unifying with the CCF and United Farmers of Alberta (UFA).³³⁸

In Ontario, the united front grew even more substantially. In mid-March, the CPC in Ontario formally applied to join the CCF.³³⁹ Shortly after, a joint May Day Committee

³³⁵ LAC, CF, K-291, File 185, *Copy of Report from BC*.

The “pamphlets” mentioned in the report are likely either *Unity is the Workers’ Lifeline* by Tom Ewen, about the WUL merger, or *Towards a Canadian People’s Front*, based on the Ninth Central Committee Plenum.

³³⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #795”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 100-101.

³³⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #795”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 101.

³³⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #797”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 123.

³³⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #798”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 131; “Ontario C.C.F. Convention Meets In Toronto,” *The Worker*, April 10, 1936.

was struck in Toronto at the behest of the CCF.³⁴⁰ The CPC hoped to use this work to strengthen the position of its unity proposal. Unfortunately for the CPC, at the April 10 Ontario convention of the CCF, despite the CPC organizing a left-wing bloc consisting of CPC dual-members and sympathizers,³⁴¹ the CCF rejected the CPC's unity overtures with a vote of 75% against.³⁴² While the CPC was disappointed, it did not yet admit defeat: *The Worker* was explicit that unity was still the desired goal.³⁴³ For the CCF leadership, however, 75% was not high enough. In mid-April, after the convention, the CCF sections in Toronto were ordered to withdraw from the Toronto May Day Committee.³⁴⁴ On April 20, they refused.³⁴⁵

In the midst of unity manoeuvres with the CCF, the CPC was forced to confront its working-class oriented past. Many of its elected officials were too poor to hold office. In early April two aldermen –one, TG McManus, was a CPC member – in Regina were

³⁴⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #800", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 150.

³⁴¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #801", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 152-153.

It is worth noting at this time that there were many CPC members who were also members of the CCF. Labour-Progressive Party MP, Dorise Nielson, is a perfect example: she had joined the CPC in 1932, but joined the CCF later to help with the formation of a united front.

See: Faith Johnston, *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 46.

³⁴² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #802", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 163; "Labor Unity is Lost After Fight in C.C.F. Meeting," *The Worker*, April 14, 1936.

³⁴³ *The Worker*, April 16, 1936, quote in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #803", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 170.

³⁴⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #803", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 174.

³⁴⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #804", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 178.

unseated for being in debt.³⁴⁶ The CPC did not work to have them reelected, nor did it campaign around the anti-poor and anti-democratic ramifications of their unseating. Instead, after the unseating was upheld by the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, the CPC ran Reverend S.B. East for one of the positions.³⁴⁷ This reality effectively prevented the CPC's working-class core from holding public office: they would either often be removed by the state and then replaced with members of the middle classes by the CPC, or the CPC would simply run middle-class members in the first place. It is worth noting that it was not only CPC members who were removed from office; in East York, Arthur Williams, a CCF member and organizer with the East York Workers Association, had his position of Reeve overturned because he owed 3 months back-rent.³⁴⁸ A few weeks later he was returned to his position.³⁴⁹

Meanwhile the Popular Front was developing in other areas. The WUL continued to liquidate itself into the TLC unions.³⁵⁰ However, as a result of the push for unity without any political preconditions, the Relief Camp Workers Union (RCWU), one of the largest and most militant sections of the WUL, was left in an awkward position: the TLC did not allow for the affiliation of unemployed workers. On April 25 and 26, 1936, the RCWU in BC held a conference to discuss affiliation with the Railway Maintenance and

³⁴⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #802", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 159; "McManus, Mikkelson Unseated," *The Worker*, April 10, 1936; J. William Brennan, "'The common people have spoken with a mighty voice': Regina's Labour City Councils, 1936-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 66.

³⁴⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #805", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 188; "Rev. Sam East Is Nominated," *The Daily Clarion*, May 1, 1936.

³⁴⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #793", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 81.

³⁴⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #796", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 113

³⁵⁰ "B.C. Vote for Unity," *The Worker*, April 10, 1936.

Way Employees Union. The railway workers were not interested, and so the RCWU and CPC decided to push for admittance of the RCWU into the TLC.³⁵¹ The Popular Front focus on unity at all costs meant in practice the CPC downplaying the importance of the unemployed workers it had spent so much of the 1930s organizing.

A shift in the CPC's approach to unemployed workers extended beyond just those organized into the RCWU. Throughout the first half of 1936 frequent meetings of the various unemployed associations took place, and plans were underway for mass marches to both Ottawa³⁵² and Toronto.³⁵³ However, the CPC endeavoured to channel the militancy to be more in-line with the priorities and tactics of the Popular Front. In February, the local CPC leadership criticized organizers of the unemployed in Saskatchewan for prematurely calling a strike, and even declared that the Relief Camp paper's name, *The Agitator*, was too sectarian.³⁵⁴ Provincial conferences for the unemployed were held in a number of provinces, organized by CPC leaders. At these conferences, where the CPC central leadership had more influence than in the day-to-day activities at the local levels, the CPC endeavoured to have the unemployed agree on lists of demands – usually reforms, and usually in line with what the CPC was already calling for – rather than plan united action to force relief authorities to act.³⁵⁵ The CPC was more

³⁵¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #807", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 206.

³⁵² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #791", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 60; Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #794", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 94.

³⁵³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #804", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 184.

³⁵⁴ LAC, CF, K-291, File 185, *Copy of Org. Resolution by District of Saskatchewan: Control Tasks: To Be Accomplished by July 1, 1936*.

³⁵⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #800", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 143; Gregory S. Kealey

favourable to sending delegations to speak with politicians, than with organizing mass action.³⁵⁶ The CPC leadership took advantage of the Liberal government's announcement that it would close the relief camps,³⁵⁷ and used the opportunity to cancel the planned trek to Ottawa.³⁵⁸

A good example of the CPC's new approach to unemployed organizing can be seen in how Arthur Evans was sidelined in the aftermath of the On-to-Ottawa Trek. After the Regina Riot, Evans began a tour of Canada in order to drum up support for the strikers. However, in mid-February, Evans came into conflict with Beckie Buhay, who was now leading the defence of the strikers from Regina. According to Buhay, Evans had been acting of his own accord and had issued statements, resulting in a split in the Regina Citizens Defence Committee.³⁵⁹ In the meantime, Evans and ten other arrested strikers had their charges dropped; the defence work had been partially successful.³⁶⁰ In late April when Evans had finished his tour, as a result of his disagreement with Buhay, and in payment for his initial disobedience over the question of the On-to-Ottawa Trek itself,

and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #801", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 155.

³⁵⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #804", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 184; John Manley, "'Starve, Be Damned!' Communists and Canada's Urban Unemployed, 1929-39," *Canadian Historical Review*, 79 (September 1998), 487-488.

³⁵⁷ James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 145-146.

³⁵⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #799", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 136.

³⁵⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #794", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 89-90; "Letter from Geo. Black to Arthur Evans, February 3, 1936," in Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *"Work and Wages!" Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 243; "Letter from Arthur Evans to George Black, February 3, 1936," Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *"Work and Wages!" Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 243.

³⁶⁰ Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *"Work and Wages!" Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 245.

Evans was given a new job. Instead of organizing the unemployed, he was now in charge of fundraising for *The Clarion* and *B.C. Workers News* in BC.³⁶¹ Evans eventually was moved to Spanish Aid work in 1937,³⁶² and it was only in 1938 that he was given an organizing task again: this time amongst miners in Trail, BC.³⁶³ In order to avoid the danger of militancy, the CPC temporarily sidelined one of its best and most well-known organizers.

The Popular Front line was also further emphasized in the defence work carried out by the CLDL. In mid-February, the CPC received a directive from the Comintern on the state of the CLDL. The directive stated that while the objective conditions in Canada existed for the CLDL to become the basis of a broad defence front, the CLDL was “impeded by the hidebound sectarianism” with which it operated. The problem was that the CLDL appeared to be “a reputed communist organization”, its “very structure was based on that of the Party”, and that the CLDL was so inculcated with “‘old’ Party forms and ideology, that it [could not] by itself grow into a broad people’s defense

³⁶¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #805”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 190.

Further proof that this was a political demotion can be found in “Bulletin #808”. Here the RCMP reports that as Evans was touring in northern BC, he reported that there was a strike situation developing in Wells among the miners. However, Evans left the city quickly because he did not want to be perceived by the leadership as having created a strike situation.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #808”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 223.

³⁶² Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 255; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 207.

³⁶³ Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, *“Work and Wages!” Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans* (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 267; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 207.

movement.”³⁶⁴ The CLDL was instructed to emphasize winning middle-class, professional, and church members in its recruitment efforts by “making its methods of approach palatable to all of these strata”, namely by ceasing any sort of discipline or demands on its membership, and allowing other organizations to hold political leadership over the CLDL. The CLDL was instructed to build a broad defence campaign, modeled after the Regina Citizens Defense Committee.³⁶⁵

The National Executive of the CLDL, at a meeting on February 22, 1936 in Toronto, agreed with the directive and resolved to liquidate the CLDL, starting with the sections in Montreal.³⁶⁶ The fact that in late February the On-to-Ottawa Trek leaders had their Section 98 charges dropped gave support to the utility of the new and decentralized approach to legal defence.³⁶⁷ Just a few weeks later, on March 7, Beckie Buhay announced the new position arguing that the decision had been reached at the Seventh Comintern Congress. The new defence committees were to have no dues or branches, but rather would be a loose network existing in every city that could be called into action in an ad-hoc manner.³⁶⁸ CLDL branches in Winnipeg and Montreal were the first to put into practice the new directives; the CLDL branch in Vancouver instead used the opportunity to begin an intensive training period for its organizers.³⁶⁹ Further signifying a shift in

³⁶⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #794”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 85-86.

³⁶⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #794”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 87.

³⁶⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #797”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 126.

³⁶⁷ “Gov’t compelled to Drop Regina Sec. 98 Charges,” *The Worker*, March 3, 1936.

³⁶⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #798”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 130.

³⁶⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #796”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 116.

approach to the CLDL, A. E. Smith, former leader of the CLDL, left on March 14 for Moscow.³⁷⁰

Despite the difficulty in implementing the new line, in many ways May Day 1936 was the realization of the CPC's Popular Front goals. The demonstrations were the biggest in the CPC's history.³⁷¹ In opposition to the CCF leadership, the left-wing of the CCF cooperated with the CPC in Toronto, Montreal, Hamilton, Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver.³⁷² The "Soviet Canada" slogan was virtually invisible, replaced by banners which read "People's Unity". In Toronto, the numbers were staggering: 20 000 marched from three different locations, and there was a mass meeting –at which Tim Buck spoke- of 28 000 at Queen's Park.³⁷³ Again the CPC leadership seemed to be vindicated in its new approach.

Building the Popular Front

At the beginning of May 1936, those CCF clubs which had collaborated with the CPC were expelled from the CCF. Among those expelled were Ben Spence, chair of the Toronto regional council, and the famed East York Workers Association.³⁷⁴ The expelled CCF members retorted that "if Woodsworth can co-operate with the Liberals and Conservatives when it suits his purpose, how much more so is it our right to band

³⁷⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #798", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 127.

³⁷¹ "Nation's May Day Sees Record Parades," *The Daily Clarion*, May 2, 1936.

³⁷² "Late News Promise Huge Unity Parades," *The Daily Clarion*, May 1, 1936.

³⁷³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #806", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 194-200.

³⁷⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #806", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 201.

together with other labour parties.³⁷⁵ The *Daily Clarion*, the CPC's new newspaper which had replaced *The Worker* on May 1, 1936,³⁷⁶ backed the expelled CCF members against the right-wing leadership.³⁷⁷ The CPC went as far as to help the CCF in Toronto organize an emergency convention in order to protest the expulsions.³⁷⁸ As a result of the CPC's efforts, and the protests of other CCF clubs, the expelled clubs were eventually re-admitted.³⁷⁹

In the aftermath of the CPC's success in Ontario, unity efforts with the CCF reached their height. Unity efforts were likely aided by the repeal of Section 98 of the Criminal Code on July 1, 1936;³⁸⁰ the CCF and the CPC had worked together on this campaign, and unity now produced results.³⁸¹ The CPC was successful in securing electoral agreements for the upcoming municipal elections in some western cities, such as Edmonton and Regina. The provincial sections of the CCF in Saskatchewan and Alberta passed resolutions indicating that they were in favour of organizational unity, and the

³⁷⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #807", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 205.

³⁷⁶ "Tim Buck Appeals In Name of Party for Aid to Daily," *The Daily Clarion*, May 1, 1936; *The Daily Clarion*, July 1, 1936.

³⁷⁷ "CCF Regional Council Repudiates Expulsion Edict," *The Daily Clarion*, May 12, 1936.

³⁷⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #808", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 221-222.

³⁷⁹ To get an idea of the mindset behind the right-wing of the CCF, it is useful to look at David Lewis' autobiography. Lewis writes that while the CPC spent a lot of time in the 1930s trying to form a united front with the CCF, the CCF was correct in rebuking unity attempts due to the potential political liabilities in working with the CPC.

David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1981), 107.

³⁸⁰ "Tim Buck Calls for Wide Celebrations of Section 98 Repeal: Signalize Triumph By Building Party of Social Progress," *The Daily Clarion*, July 1, 1936; Stewart Smith, *Comrades and Komsomolkas: My Years in the Communist Party of Canada* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1993), 171; J. Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: The Origins and Activities of the Canadian Labour Defense League, 1925-1940," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 10 (Autumn 1982), 61.

³⁸¹ "Unity Desire Is Expressed: C.C.F. Organ Reflects Current Trend of Membership," *The Daily Clarion*, July 2, 1936.

provincial section in BC took a position in favour of united action on specific issues.³⁸²

The success was, however, short-lived. At the CCF's national convention in Toronto, held August 3-5, 1936, the CCF voted overwhelmingly against allowing the CPC to federate.³⁸³ The pro-unity forces were able to exact a concession in the form of a CCF resolution which saw the CCF agree to work with other organizations on specific issues. The *Clarion* greeted this concession as a step forward, but the results were clear: the main goal of the CPC's united front strategy had failed, at least temporarily.³⁸⁴

The failure of the CCF unity overtures must have come as a relief to the sections of the CPC which still did not accept the shift towards the Popular Front. In early May, the problem of "sectarianism" was apparently serious enough that the CPC's political bureau issued a circular condemning the problem. Specifically, the circular mentioned a group of miners in Nova Scotia, who had adopted a "leftist stand".³⁸⁵ On May 17 in Vancouver, at a mass meeting attended by over 2 000 people, Malcolm Bruce attacked the CCF leadership and blamed social-democrats for the rise of fascism in Germany.³⁸⁶ Tim Buck also attacked "sectarianism" in a July 1 pamphlet titled *What We Propose*, in which he specifically mentioned: leftist approaches to the question of trade union unity, mechanical copying of the Popular Front in France, and an abstract (i.e. on the level of

³⁸² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #816", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 298; "C.C.F. Meet in B.C. Favors Unity Conference on Vital Issues," *The Daily Clarion*, July 15, 1936.

³⁸³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #819", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 30; "Lively Debate Features First Day of C.C.F. Meet," *The Daily Clarion*, August 4, 1936; "C.P. Calls to C.C.F. for Farmer-Labor Party," *The Daily Clarion*, August 4, 1936; "J.S. Woodsworth's President Address to Third National Convention of C.C.F.," *The Daily Clarion*, August 5, 1936.

³⁸⁴ "C.C.F. Decides to Cooperate With Other Groups," *The Daily Clarion*, August 6, 1936.

³⁸⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #807", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 205-206.

³⁸⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #808", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 223.

slogans and, importantly, not action) approach to unity.³⁸⁷ This latter point indicated that even when some CPC members agreed with unity proposals at conventions, it was either not translating into the CPC rank-and-file, or that CPC members did not feel compelled to act on the unity resolutions. Buck's criticisms were vague; the most concrete example Buck gave was in Alberta, where Buck said that the CPC's initial hostility towards, and then subsequent support for, the Social Credit government was a mistake.³⁸⁸ While the CPC was now decidedly operating along the lines of the Popular Front, it was clear that there were still large sections of the membership that resisted the shift.

Indications that the rank-and-file of the CPC was less than convinced about the new line can be seen by looking at how *The Clarion* was received. The first fundraising drive for *The Clarion*, which ended mid-June, 1936, achieved only 68.8% of its fundraising target. Alberta, Quebec, and Southern Ontario (regions where the Popular Front was most successfully implemented) all either met or came close to their quotas; the Maritimes, Western Ontario, BC, Saskatchewan, Central Ontario, Northern Ontario, were all under 50% of their targets.³⁸⁹ At the Manitoba district convention, which opened on June 12, it was revealed that the circulation of *The Clarion* was only two-thirds that of *The Worker*.³⁹⁰ The second *Clarion* fundraising drive, in November 1936, fared much better: 93% of the funds were raised, with: Alberta, Western Ontario, BC, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Southern Ontario meeting quotas. However, Quebec, Central Ontario, the Maritimes, and Northern Ontario were all below their quotas. Much of the funds

³⁸⁷ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *What We Propose*, 62-64.

³⁸⁸ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *What We Propose*, 63.

³⁸⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #811", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 253.

³⁹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #812", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 262.

raised came from lump-sum contributions of non-CPC organizations such as unions.

While this indicated that the CPC was building a broader base than just its members, it also suggests that the success of the fundraiser was not indicative of the opinions of rank-and-file members towards the new publication.³⁹¹

One sector in which there was virtually no opposition to the Popular Front line was among youth. The YCL was eager to implement the decisions of the Seventh Comintern Congress. Indications in early 1936 were that the YCL was in the process of transforming itself into a “broad, non-party cultural and educational organization.”³⁹² In this spirit the YCL worked closely with the CCYM, and ultimately liquidated its newspaper, *The Young Worker*, in April, after approaching other left-wing youth organizations to collaborate on a new publication.³⁹³ In the lead up to the First CYC, the YCL was able to get the League of Nations Society to sign-on by agreeing to not criticize the Liberal government.³⁹⁴ If anything, the YCL was too eagerly implanting the Popular Front line: in May the political bureau of the CPC urged the YCL to restrain itself, criticizing the “liquidationist tendency” within the YCL’s leadership.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #835”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 521.

³⁹² LAC, CF, K-291, File 185, *Copy of Org. Resolution by District of Saskatchewan: Control Tasks: To Be Accomplished by July 1, 1936*.

³⁹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #803”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 171.

³⁹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #797”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 122.

³⁹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #807”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 206.

Dave Kashtan would later write that the YCL became a non-party organization at a November 1935 conference in Toronto. What is interesting is that Kashtan seems to remember what the YCL was criticized for. In fact, the YCL never became a non-party mass organization despite suggestions to that end. It is likely that Kashtan remembers the Ninth Central Committee Plenum of the CPC, which had made the suggestion that the YCL become more open.

The First CYC was a massive success for the YCL. Opening on May 23, 1936, over 456 delegates gathered in Ottawa from all across Canada.³⁹⁶ The delegates represented 330 organizations, with a total membership of 343 666 members. These organizations included the Young Liberals, the Young Conservatives, the YMCA-affiliated organizations, various church groups and most importantly, French-Canadians.³⁹⁷ A reporter from *Saturday Night* commented:

Delegates from all over Canada came to this Congress, representing religious, political, occupational, cultural and recreational organizations ... the United Church delegation was the largest group representing any single organization. ...The two main political parties had delegates there, though a larger representation came from the Canadian Cooperative Youth Movement and the Young Communist League. ...³⁹⁸

The YCL was able to get two important documents passed. First, there was the Bill of Youth Rights. Contextualizing itself in the tradition of the British Bill of Rights, the document was an appeal for a series of social-democratic welfare reforms targeting: workers, farmers, professionals, and small business owners. Generally speaking the demands included work, economic security, youth-related issues, defence of so-called British liberties, and peace.³⁹⁹ The second document was the Canada Youth Act, which called on the government to create a Youth Commission to ensure that the Bill of Youth

Kirk Niergarth, "Fight for Life': Dave Kashtan's Memories of Depression-Era Communist Youth Work," *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (Fall 2005), 233.

³⁹⁶ "Canada's Youth Plans Future At Nation's Capital," *The Daily Clarion*, May 23, 1936; Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 30-38.

³⁹⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #811", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 247-248.

³⁹⁸ Violet Anderson, "Youth of Canada Examines its World," *Saturday Night*, June 6, 1936.

³⁹⁹ "Bill of Rights Passed At Ottawa Youth Congress," *The Daily Clarion*, May 26, 1936.

Rights was carried out.⁴⁰⁰ Neither of the documents emphasized class struggle, nor were they particularly communist. Both William Kashtan of the YCL and Kenneth Woodsworth of the CCYM were elected to the Continuations Committee. In the aftermath of the Congress –between May 25 and the first meeting of the Continuations Committee on October 11 – the number of active youth councils increased from 3 to 26.⁴⁰¹

The Popular Front also progressed in the trade union movement. The last of the WUL unions, the Mine Workers Union of Canada (MWUC), voted to enter the UMWA in early May, effectively ensuring that the WUL was completely liquidated.⁴⁰² The CPC also saw other gains from its new strategy when the Toronto District Trades and Labour Council voted on May 21, 1936 to not only support industrial unionism and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), but also removed a clause which prevented CPC members from sitting on the council.⁴⁰³ The CPC appeared to be in the clear as far as trade union unity was concerned until, on August 5, 1936, the AFL expelled ten of the twelve CIO unions.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #808", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 214-220; Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 39-40.

⁴⁰¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #830", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 462; Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 26.

⁴⁰² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #807", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 206, 211.

⁴⁰³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #809", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 229-230; "Toronto TLC Vote Favors Industrial Form of Unionism," *The Daily Clarion*, May 22, 1936; "Communist Ban Dropped by TLC," *The Daily Clarion*, May 22, 1936.

⁴⁰⁴ "Green May Decide CIO Is "Guilty"," *The Daily Clarion*, August 5, 1936; "Ten Unions in C.I.O. Are Declared Guilty," *The Daily Clarion*, August 6, 1936; Stuart Marshall Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973), 44; Desmond Morton, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 154.

The CPC was quick to respond. Two days later, on August 7, the *Daily Clarion* editorial condemned the AFL in no uncertain terms. “Such a policy on the part of the A.F. of L. reactionary leaders if allowed to go unchecked will spell disaster.”⁴⁰⁵ The CIO, which represented over 1 000 000 workers across Canada and the United States, was to be defended. The *Daily Clarion* editorial urged the “weight of the Canadian international unions” to be thrown “behind John L. Lewis [CIO leader] and against William Green [AFL leader].”⁴⁰⁶ In the leadup to the 1936 TLC Congress, CPC sections were instructed to push for trade union unity, Canadian autonomy, and the line of one union per industry, the latter of which effectively meant endorsing the CIO.⁴⁰⁷ Support for the CIO, despite the CIO’s lack of interest in Canada,⁴⁰⁸ while struggling against the AFL-CIO split manifesting in the TLC was to form the mainstay of the CPC’s trade union strategy for the next four years.⁴⁰⁹

The TLC Congress, held in September 1936,⁴¹⁰ was another success for the CPC’s Popular Front trade union strategy. The RCMP reported that despite the CPC’s presence being small, the influence of the CPC had swung the TLC significantly to the left.⁴¹¹ The motion considering the CIO was declared out of order,⁴¹² which, given how contentious

⁴⁰⁵ *The Daily Clarion*, August 7, 1936 quoted in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #819”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 333.

⁴⁰⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #819”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 335.

⁴⁰⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #818”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 323.

⁴⁰⁸ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 94.

⁴⁰⁹ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 48.

⁴¹⁰ “Trade Congress Opens in Montreal Today,” *The Daily Clarion*, September 8, 1936.

⁴¹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #825”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 399.

⁴¹² “Congress Locked Industrial Unions,” *The Daily Clarion*, September 11, 1936; “Congress Demands Freedom for Jobless Leaders: T.L.C. Convention Protests Hepburn Reign of Terror,” *The Daily Clarion*, September 14, 1936; “Chair Rules Against Discussion of C.I.O.,” *The Daily Clarion*, September 15, 1936.

the issue still was, was considered a victory for the CPC's unity line. The CPC was successful in getting a number of political motions passed on issues such as a boycott of Germany and a condemnation of war and fascism.⁴¹³ The CPC however was not successful on more substantial issues: the CPC delegates were not able to get the TLC to set up an Organizational Department for organizing the unorganized, they failed at having the TLC affiliate to the CLAWF, they were not successful in establishing a TLC-wide strike fund, they did not get the TLC to endorse the campaign for non-contributory unemployment insurance, they were unable to have the RCWU affiliate to the TLC, and they did not get the TLC to pass a motion in favour of unity with the ACCL and the Catholic unions.⁴¹⁴

1936 also saw the first attempts to organize CIO unions in Canada. Bill Walsh began organizing rubber workers in Kitchener, Ontario.⁴¹⁵ In September, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) opened an office in Hamilton.⁴¹⁶ The most significant of the CIO organizing drives was at the Kelsey-Hayes Wheel Company in Windsor, where the first sit-down strike in Canada began on December 23, 1936.⁴¹⁷ This strike was largely organized by non-affiliated militants; Jim Napier, who would later join the CPC, said that at the time they knew they could not count on CCF members to

⁴¹³ "Labor Declares War on Railway Amalgamation," *The Daily Clarion*, September 10, 1936; "Canadian Labor Pledges Full Support of Spain: T.L.C. Convention Calls for World Trade Union Unity," *The Daily Clarion*, September 11, 1936.

⁴¹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #825", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 400-402.

⁴¹⁵ Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2001), 96.

⁴¹⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #824", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 392.

⁴¹⁷ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 6; John Manley, "Communists and Autoworkers: The Struggle for Industrial Unionism in the Canadian Automobile Industry, 1925-1936," *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (Spring 1986), 130-131; Sam Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1995), 56.

support the strike movement.⁴¹⁸ At the time, the only exposure that the workers in the Kelsey-Hayes factory had to Communism was through the CPUSA's connections to the United Auto Workers (UAW) leadership.

While the CPC was successful at ingratiating itself, to a limited extent, with the TLC bureaucracy, during this time its record in leading on-the-ground struggles was less positive. Most of the strikes in which it was influential were failures. On August 27, textile workers went on strike in Cornwall, Ontario.⁴¹⁹ The CPC intervened in order to provide logistical support and guidance to the strikers.⁴²⁰ Just over a week later the strike was over, and the striking textile workers had not won union recognition.⁴²¹ Manley suggests that the speed with which the CPC pushed to settle the dispute was likely to distance itself from a group of striking workers, largely women, as a means of bolstering its appearance going into the TLC congress.⁴²² Another example of the weakness of the Popular Front line in trade union work can be seen in the experience of the Beet Workers Industrial Union (BWIU) in western Canada. The CPC organizers, in line with the Popular Front ethos, took the position that the pickers (proletarians) and farmers (petty-

⁴¹⁸ James Napier, *Memories of Building the UAW*, 12; John Manley, "Communists and Autoworkers: The Struggle for Industrial Unionism in the Canadian Automobile Industry, 1925-1936," *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (Spring 1986), 128.

⁴¹⁹ "Cornwall To Become Union Town," *The Daily Clarion*, August 6, 1936; Desmond Morton, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 158.

⁴²⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #822", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 372-373.

⁴²¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #823", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 379; "Nine Pickets Arrested in Cornwall Rayon Strike," *The Daily Clarion*, September 1, 1936; "Police Terror Unleashed on Cornwall Strikers," *The Daily Clarion*, September 2, 1936; "Courtaulds Co. Opens Negotiations With Union," *The Daily Clarion*, September 4, 1936; "Strike Over as Courtauld's Co. Meets Demands: Cornwall Workers Rejoice in Victory," *The Daily Clarion*, September 7, 1936.

⁴²² John Manley, "From United Front to Popular Front: The CPC in 1936", in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins, Part III, 1936* (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 13.

bourgeoisie) had common cause against the sugar refinery owners (monopoly capitalists). As a result, the BWIU consistently attempted to stop the class instincts of the beet pickers from being directed at their immediate bosses; it advanced the slogan “FOR A UNITY OF GROWERS AND LABOURERS TO MAKE THE SUGAR COMPANY PAY!”⁴²³ Unsurprisingly, this was unsuccessful; the beet farmers identified their interests to be closer in line with the sugar companies than with the beet pickers, and the BWIU continued to try and force unity where no basis for such a unity existed.⁴²⁴ Somewhat ironically, the BWIU had only limited success until 1942, when most of the CPC organizers were underground or had been driven from the union.⁴²⁵

The enthusiasm of the former-WUL rank-and-file for the “unity at all costs” approach also seems to have waned in the latter half of 1936.⁴²⁶ In late June, the former leader of the LWIU, Mark McKinnon, resigned from both the LWIU and the CPC.⁴²⁷ A week later, on July 2-3, organizers were disappointed with the lack of enthusiasm shown at the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union: one of the unions to which the LWIU had affiliated.⁴²⁸ This was unsurprising; LWIU members were not treated as full members of the UBCJ,⁴²⁹ largely due to craft prejudice.⁴³⁰ The situation was bad enough that in July

⁴²³ John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, “Workers, Growers and Monopolists: The “Labour Problem” in the Alberta Beet Sugar Industry during the 1930s,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 3 (1978), 165.

⁴²⁴ John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, “Workers, Growers and Monopolists: The “Labour Problem” in the Alberta Beet Sugar Industry during the 1930s,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 3 (1978), 166-167; “Alta. Beet Men Strike,” *The Daily Clarion*, May 12, 1936.

⁴²⁵ John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, “Workers, Growers and Monopolists: The “Labour Problem” in the Alberta Beet Sugar Industry during the 1930s,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol 3 (1978), 167.

⁴²⁶ Stephen L. Endicott, *Raising the Workers’ Flag: The Workers’ Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 317.

⁴²⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #812”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 263.

⁴²⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #816”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 303-304;

⁴²⁹ In practice, this meant that former LWIU members paid dues to the UBCJ, but received no benefits and were not entitled to vote at conventions.

1937, the lumberworkers split from the UBCJ and formed their own CIO union: the International Woodworkers of America.⁴³¹ In December, 1936, the waterfront workers in Vancouver attempted another strike: after the failure of the previous year, the strike ended unsuccessfully.⁴³²

The most infamous example of dissatisfaction with trade union unity, however, is the resignation of J.B. McLachlan from the CPC.⁴³³ For some time, McLachlan had been sidelined locally in favour of the new district secretary, William Findlay. While McLachlan agreed in general terms with the united front line,⁴³⁴ he could not accept that specific manifestation of trade union unity in the Cape Breton coal fields: John L Lewis, who was now the leader of both the UMWA and the CIO, had previously shown himself to be an untrustworthy anti-communist.⁴³⁵ Thus, McLachlan argued that in liquidating the AMW into the UMWA without any preconditions, the CPC had gone far to the right, a pattern which had also played out, he argued, within the Truckman's union in Toronto. Specifically, McLachlan pointed to the CPC's support for the MWUC's new position that

Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 112.

⁴³⁰ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 112-113.

⁴³¹ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 113; Andrew Parnaby, "What's Law Got To Do With It? The IWA and the Politics of State Power in British Columbia, 1935-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 44 (Fall 1999), 15.

⁴³² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #836", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 538-539.

⁴³³ Stephen L. Endicott, *Raising the Workers' Flag: The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 317.

⁴³⁴ David Frank and John Manley, "The Sad March to the Right: J.B. McLachlan's Resignation from the Communist Party of Canada, 1936," *Labour/Le Travail*, 30 (Fall, 1992), 116.

For a more in-depth account of McLachlan's resignation, see: David Frank, *J.B. McLachlan: A Biography: The Story of a Legendary Labour Leader and the Cape Breton Coal Miners*, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1999).

⁴³⁵ Michael J. Earle, "The Coalminers and Their "Red" Union: The Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, 1932-1936," *Labour/Le Travail*, 22 (Fall 1988), 130.

older miners could be fired because they were not capable of producing enough coal, an indication that the CPC identified more with the boss' need to have a highly efficient work-force than the need of workers to survive.⁴³⁶ The conflict came to a head in early September. At a speaking event of a touring British Communist on September 10, 1936, many in the audience asked about McLachlan during the question period. Bob Stewart replied that McLachlan had left the CPC, but that he was thrown-out by underhanded methods.⁴³⁷ McLachlan stepped in to clarify: he had left because he could not support men such as John L. Lewis, who had betrayed the miners of Cape Breton repeatedly in the past. While he loved the CPC, he could not bring himself around to the new line, and so he left.⁴³⁸ Given the amount of support McLachlan still had on Cape Breton Island, it is not surprising that the CPC moved its Maritime headquarters to Halifax after McLachlan's resignation.⁴³⁹

After May 1, 1936, there was an upsurge in the militancy of unemployed workers throughout central and western Canada: the CPC leadership's containment strategy had failed. Relief worker strikes began in Guelph, East York, and North York in early June.⁴⁴⁰ At the same time, the Single Unemployed Men's Association (SMUA) in Winnipeg –one of the strongest CPC-affiliated unemployed organizations- underwent a process of

⁴³⁶ David Frank and John Manley, "The Sad March to the Right: J.B. McLachlan's Resignation from the Communist Party of Canada, 1936," *Labour/Le Travail*, 30 (Fall, 1992), 132-133.

⁴³⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #825", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 408.

⁴³⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #825", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 409.

⁴³⁹ Michael J. Earle, "The Coalminers and Their "Red" Union: The Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, 1932-1936," *Labour/Le Travail*, 22 (Fall 1988), 133.

⁴⁴⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #810", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 243.

reorganization, which allowed it to increase its membership six-fold by mid-June.⁴⁴¹ On June 17, 1936, the SMUA put pickets up in front of the provincial legislature⁴⁴², and on June 22, 1936, SMUA members burned an effigy of the Liberal premier.⁴⁴³ After the initial push, it seems the organizers were called into line by the local CPC leadership: demonstrations continued throughout the summer, but diminished in size. In early August, the SMUA announced that it would no longer picket the Manitoba legislature.⁴⁴⁴ By October however, the CPC had lost control of the situation: Sago, a leader of the SMUA and a member of the CPC in Winnipeg, threatened that if the province didn't meet their demands the unemployed would go to Spain, be trained to fight, and then bring the fight home.⁴⁴⁵ Another leader, George Drayton, said that while the workers weren't armed yet, they were prepared to fight: "Demonstrations and sending resolutions are alright in their way but fighting is the only method The Government takes any notice of."⁴⁴⁶ James Litterick, who as of July 27 had become the CPC's first elected official to a provincial legislature,⁴⁴⁷ warned Sago not to escalate the situation and attack the local dining hall. However the situation was already out of the CPC's hands: on October 15, 1936, the SMUA attempted to break into the Princes and Ross Dining Hall, its leaders

⁴⁴¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #810", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 241; Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #812", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 266.

⁴⁴² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #812", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 266.

⁴⁴³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #813", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 277.

⁴⁴⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #819", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 341.

⁴⁴⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #829", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 448.

⁴⁴⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #829", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 449.

⁴⁴⁷ "LITTERICK LEADING IN 'PEG: Seat Almost Sure for CP Candidate; Stubb's Huge Vote," *The Daily Clarion*, July 27, 1936; "Communist Wins Seat in Manitoba Legislature," *The Daily Clarion*, July 30, 1936.

were arrested, and the membership demobilized and began registering for provincial relief camps.⁴⁴⁸ Shortly thereafter the CPC opted to dissolve the Manitoba Conference of the Unemployed and reorganize it.⁴⁴⁹

Similar radicalism was displayed among the unemployed in Southern Ontario. On July 6, 1936, relief strikers in York stormed the relief offices, battled with police, and held the relief administrator hostage for six hours. Two days later a similar action took place in Etobicoke.⁴⁵⁰ 30 were arrested; among them, despite having very little to do with these specific actions, were Ewart Humphries and Harvey Murphy. The CPC attempted to channel the militancy of Ontario's unemployed towards electoral demands; at the September convention of the Ontario Federation on Unemployment, a program of immediate needs of the unemployed was drafted.⁴⁵¹ West of Manitoba the unemployed struggles were largely directed against the various provincial governments' plans to use unemployed workers as cheap farm labour.⁴⁵² As part of this struggle, relief workers went on strike in Alberta and Saskatchewan in July.⁴⁵³ In October the struggle came to a head: there were frequent pickets in Regina, Calgary,⁴⁵⁴ and Edmonton, and in Vancouver,

⁴⁴⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #830", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 466.

⁴⁴⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #832", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 492.

⁴⁵⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #815", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 289-291.

⁴⁵¹ "City Welcome To Be Given Jobless Convention," *The Daily Clarion*, September 23, 1936; "Ont. Unemployed Demand New Deal From Gov't," *The Daily Clarion*, September 26, 1936; "Ontario Unemployed Convention Draws Up Program of Needs," *The Daily Clarion*, September 26, 1936; "Ont. Unemployed Unanimously Vote Murphy President," *The Daily Clarion*, September 28, 1936.

⁴⁵² James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 159.

⁴⁵³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #816", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 305-306.

⁴⁵⁴ James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 161.

unemployed workers occupied and barricaded relief offices on October 13, 1936.⁴⁵⁵ At this point, with winter coming and a CPC leadership that was unwilling to escalate tactically, many of the unemployed organizations capitulated: in Regina, Winnipeg,⁴⁵⁶ and Saskatoon⁴⁵⁷ unemployed workers began registering for camps and farm jobs. In Edmonton and Calgary, the unemployed workers were granted temporary relief by the cities and the struggles were kept in stasis.⁴⁵⁸ In Vancouver, the city officials threatened to cut off relief for all unemployed workers who didn't leave: the unemployed resisted and continued to hold public meetings as late as November 20 in defence of those arrested during the relief office occupation.⁴⁵⁹

The latter half of 1936 marked the beginning of a cyclical pattern to the unemployed movement that would continue throughout the Popular Front era. In the first half of the year, the CPC would attempt to channel the unemployment movement towards various reformist efforts. Eventually these would prove unsuccessful, and the unemployed would explode in a flash of militancy throughout the summer. Sometimes these efforts were successful, but in the absence of a coordinated movement, they were often ineffective. As the fall began, the CPC would again seek to organize the unemployed into more traditional structures so as to maintain contact with organizers as

⁴⁵⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #829", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 450-452.

⁴⁵⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #830", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 466-467.

⁴⁵⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #833", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 504-505.

⁴⁵⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #830", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 467-468.

⁴⁵⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #835", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 526.

they returned to the camps during the winter months. In turn, the various struggles were kept in stasis over the winter, for the cycle to begin anew the next year.

In August, 1936, the CPC also began efforts towards what would become one of the mainstays of the Popular Front era: solidarity work with Spain. In mid-August, the World League Against War and Fascism issued an appeal for aid to Spain.⁴⁶⁰ The Ontario district of the CPC began fundraising shortly after, reaching out to the CCF and the unions for assistance.⁴⁶¹ On September 23, 1936, the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy (CASD) had its inaugural meeting in Toronto, gathering 35 delegates from a number of left-wing organizations, including the CCF.⁴⁶² The CASD agreed to fundraise, but still debated on the type of aid to be sent; indications were, however, that the aid would take the form of a field hospital unit through the Red Cross.⁴⁶³ Around this time a number of prominent CPC members, including: A.A. McLeod, A.E. Smith, Roy Davis, and William Kashtan visited Spain.⁴⁶⁴ Upon their return in early October, organizing began in earnest: A.A. McLeod embarked on a speaking tour across Canada, forming

⁴⁶⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #819", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 337.

⁴⁶¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #820", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 353.

⁴⁶² David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1981), 105; Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 158-159; William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 4; Mark Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Toronto: Wiley, 2007), 30.

⁴⁶³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #826", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 412; *The Daily Clarion*, September 22, 1936.

⁴⁶⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #826", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 412; Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #828", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 441.

sections of the CASD at each of his stops.⁴⁶⁵ A Spanish government delegation arrived in Toronto on October 20,⁴⁶⁶ and before embarking on a tour similar to A.A. McLeod, spoke to an audience of 6000 in Toronto on October 21: here it was announced that Norman Bethune, as a doctor a symbol of the Popular Front's emphasis on winning over the progressive middle classes, would soon depart for Spain with medical supplies.⁴⁶⁷

The work of the CPC and the CASD in solidarity with Spain in the latter half of 1936 primarily took the form of raising awareness, with some fundraising. The numbers across the country attending the speaking engagements on the subject continued to be impressive: 1500 in Regina on October 30, 1600 in Edmonton on November 5, and 2900 in a packed venue in Vancouver on November 9.⁴⁶⁸ Even in Toronto, where the CASD had now operated for almost two months, Buck was able to attract a crowd of 7500 on November 11, when he gave a talk about his recent trip to Spain.⁴⁶⁹ According to the RCMP, the CPC had, by the end of 1936, given two donations of \$5000 to Spain: the first

⁴⁶⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #829", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 445.

⁴⁶⁶ William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 9.

⁴⁶⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #830", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 464; "Famous Canadian Doctor Reaches Madrid Today," *The Daily Clarion*, November 3, 1936.

⁴⁶⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #833", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 499.

⁴⁶⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #832", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 493; "Tim Buck's Great Meeting," *The Daily Clarion*, November 10, 1936; "Tim Buck Arrives in Toronto Direct From Madrid Front With Message for Canadians," *The Daily Clarion*, November 11, 1936; "Torontonians Pack Arena to Hear Tim Buck: Twelve Thousand Citizens Cheer Demand that Ottawa Cease Embargo on Spain," *The Daily Clarion*, November 12, 1936.

If we are to believe Buck's account, it was on this trip that he first agreed to form the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.

Tim Buck eds. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, *Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1977), 266; William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 2-3; Mark Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Toronto: Wiley, 2007), 41.

was given to aid the Spanish Republic⁴⁷⁰ and the second, sent in November, was given directly to Bethune's medical unit.⁴⁷¹

As was evident in the propaganda material issued by the CPC and the CASD, Spain was to be the *cause celebre* of the Popular Front. The CPC sought to frame the Spanish conflict as a conflict between democracy (with no distinction made between Soviet and bourgeois democracy) and tyranny. *An Open Letter on Spain*, issued October 20, 1936 by the Montreal Committee for Medical Aid to the Spanish Republic, made the case for the importance of defending "British Liberty" which was now under attack in Spain. Insofar as Canadians enjoyed "British Liberty", won due to the 1837-1838 rebellions in Canada, how could any "loyal Canadians" not support the Spanish Republic?⁴⁷² In *War in Spain*, written by Roy Davis and William Kashtan after their exploratory trip to Spain, they reassured readers that "small property owners were not disturbed, that industrial enterprises belonging to loyal citizens were not taken over, and that foreign-owned factories were being controlled by the workers only "for the duration of the war".⁴⁷³ In a pamphlet issued by the CLAWF containing an interview with the Spanish government delegation, communist and left-wing reforms were constantly downplayed. The former Spanish Minister alleged that the People's Front "attacked neither the church, the army nor the capitalists. It was more moderate than the Right Republicans in 1931 when the Republic began."⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #826", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 412-413.

⁴⁷¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #834", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 507.

⁴⁷² TFL, KC, *An Open Letter on Spain*.

⁴⁷³ TFL, KC, *War in Spain*, 4-7.

⁴⁷⁴ TFL, KC, *Spain's Democracy Talks to Canada*.

Another significant shift in the CPC's work occurred in November, 1936. A.E. Smith had been sent to Europe in March 1936, likely as a result of conflict with the CPC leadership, and particularly with Becky Buhay, over the implementation of the Popular Front. While in Europe, Smith met with Dimitrov on June 14, 1936,⁴⁷⁵ before returning to Canada in August.⁴⁷⁶ While the reasons for his delay are unclear, in November the RCMP reported that Smith had put forward a proposal to revive the CLDL.⁴⁷⁷ Smith reported that the International Red Aid, the international body which coordinated the defence of class-war prisoners on a global scale, and of which the CLDL was a member, disagreed with the decision to liquidate the CLDL. He cited a cable from the International Red Aid which stated:

YOU CAN ONLY PLAY THE ROLE NECESSARY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS UNITED FRONT BY THE FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF YOUR OWN WORK AND APPARATUS. THE DEEPENING OF YOUR PRESTIGE AND INFLUENCE, THE BUILDING OF YOUR OWN ORGANIZATION.⁴⁷⁸

Thus, according to the International Red Aid, the only way to strengthen the building of the Popular Front (what was meant in this case by "UNITED FRONT") in legal defence work was to build and expand the CLDL. The Vancouver section of the CLDL, BC being the only province in which the CLDL did not liquidate, immediately put forward a proposal to rebuild the CLDL. Shortly after, A.E. Smith embarked on a tour of Canada to announce the change in position.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁵ A. E. Smith, *All My Life* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1977), 186.

⁴⁷⁶ "A.E. Smith Returns," *The Daily Clarion*, August 29, 1936.

⁴⁷⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #831", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 479.

⁴⁷⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #831", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 480.

⁴⁷⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #832", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 487.

The reason for the change in position is unclear. Quite clearly, earlier in 1936, Becky Buhay was under the impression that the Comintern was in favour of the CLDL's liquidation. During Smith's meeting with Dimitrov in July 1936 he may have convinced the Comintern of the incorrectness of the position, but there is no report of their conversation, nor of any of the disagreements internal to the CPC over the question of the CLDL. For now, however, the order was clear: the CLDL was to be revived, and would take an active role in the defence of the arrested relief strikers.

The Civic Elections were the final priority for the CPC in 1936. In this the CPC did fairly well. In Toronto Tim Buck received one third of the votes cast (increasing his vote by over 10 000 from the previous year) in his run for a Board of Control position, Stewart Smith was elected alderman, and John Weir won his race for a position on the Board of Education. In York Ewart Humphreys was elected, and there were successes in Mimico, and Scarborough. In Winnipeg and Brandon, Manitoba, the CPC also saw its first local victories. In fact, the only setback was in East York, where the East York Workers Association lost almost every candidate it put forward.⁴⁸⁰ Despite the successes, cracks were beginning to appear in the Popular Front. While the CPC mainly supported Popular Front candidates (the East York Workers Association, for instance, was predominantly CCF) it ran candidates as the CPC in Toronto, indicating that the CCF had begun to pull away from united-front attempts. The electoral victories at the end of 1936, however, positioned the CPC and the Popular Front for future successes in the new-year.

Regina presents an interesting case-study in the limitations of the Popular Front approach to civic elections. Despite having run on a progressive platform in the 1935

⁴⁸⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #836", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 531-537.

civic elections, the Civic Labour League in Regina was unable to actualize many of its promises. While the new civic administration abolished the much-hated Civic Relief Board and instituted limited public works projects for wages, they were unable to abolish relief debts, and they were only able to replace food vouchers with cash due to provincial monetary support.⁴⁸¹ Most notably, the Civic Labor League did not fire any of the officials that had held positions within the civic bureaucracy under the previous administration; the Popular Front organ administered the bourgeois state in much the same way that the previous candidates had. This latter issue led to angry citizens questioning a progressive member of the city council at a public meeting; the councillor could only meekly promise that maybe they would consider getting rid of the old officials in the future.⁴⁸² In any case, the failure of the Popular Front program in Regina led to conflicts between the CPC and other leftists when it came to choosing candidates;⁴⁸³ Ellison, the incumbent mayor and a member of the Civic Labor League wound up running on an anti-Communist platform, and not on a Popular Front ticket. In the end Civic Labor League candidates won five seats, and Ellison was re-elected as mayor.⁴⁸⁴

At the beginning of 1937, the CPC began recruiting volunteers to fight in Spain under the auspices of the International Brigades.⁴⁸⁵ Ed Jardas, the leader of Yugo-Slavian

⁴⁸¹ J. William Brennan, "The common people have spoken with a mighty voice': Regina's Labour City Councils, 1936-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 66-68.

⁴⁸² J. William Brennan, "The common people have spoken with a mighty voice': Regina's Labour City Councils, 1936-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 69.

⁴⁸³ J. William Brennan, "The common people have spoken with a mighty voice': Regina's Labour City Councils, 1936-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 69.

⁴⁸⁴ J. William Brennan, "The common people have spoken with a mighty voice': Regina's Labour City Councils, 1936-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 70; "Lessons From Regina," *The Daily Clarion*, December 19, 1936.

⁴⁸⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #839", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 34; "How Can We

Workers Education Clubs (the CPC's language organization among Yugoslavs), had initially approached Sam Carr in August 1936 about allowing Yugoslavs to volunteer for Spain. Carr criticized Jardas for adventurism, but was forced to change his position after the Comintern sanctioned the creation of International Brigades.⁴⁸⁶ The first recorded instance of fighters leaving Canada was on January 20, 1937, when 20 volunteers left Montreal for New York City.⁴⁸⁷ Recruitment increased after this point and became a major focus for the CPC. Generally speaking, volunteers would be recruited through existing mass organizations,⁴⁸⁸ and in many cases, book stores and mass organization offices were turned into recruitment centres.⁴⁸⁹ Volunteers came overwhelmingly from proletarian backgrounds, and 76% were CPC members.⁴⁹⁰ Recruits would leave Canada in small groups for New York City. When in New York City, the recruits were to go to a specific address and ask to speak to "Frank", who would in turn make arrangements for them to proceed to France and eventually Spain.⁴⁹¹ While the CPC was relatively secret about its recruitment efforts, the RCMP had some idea of what was going on: the RCMP

Volunteer For Spain?' Many Ask," *The Daily Clarion*, December 30, 1936; "CCF'er Will Oppose Ban on Volunteers," *The Daily Clarion*, January 18, 1937.

⁴⁸⁶ Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 39.

⁴⁸⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #841", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 54; Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 52-53.

⁴⁸⁸ The most important mass organization for recruitment to Spain was the RCWU.

Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 18.

⁴⁸⁹ For instance, in Winnipeg the SMUA offices were used as the recruitment centre. In Hamilton, the recruitment office was the Workers' Book Store.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #840", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 43; Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #862", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 274.

⁴⁹⁰ Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 14-16, 24.

⁴⁹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #844", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 88; William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 18-19.

certainly did not report on every group leaving Canada, but at the very least knew the channels and methods by which Canadians were sent to Spain.

Initially, Canadians fought in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. However, in early March, clearly misreporting the name, the RCMP reported that a “Lyon-Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion” was being organized in Spain under Canadian leadership.⁴⁹² In late May, the CASD called for a Spanish Aid Week to take place in June; as part of the preparations for that week, the CPC distributed 150 000 copies of a pamphlet which called for aid to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.⁴⁹³ This was the first public reference to a specific Canadian battalion. Shortly after, the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (FMPB) was formed as a sub-committee of the CASD.⁴⁹⁴ Its first public event was a May 30, 1937 rally in Massey Hall, which was attended by 1000 people, intended to commemorate the deaths of eight Canadian volunteers.⁴⁹⁵ At this meeting, Sam Carr stated that there were now 500 Canadians serving in Spain. Somewhat strangely, and despite assertions to the contrary,⁴⁹⁶ the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion didn’t actually

⁴⁹² While the bulletin is unclear, it seems that the RCMP attributes this information to Norman Bethune. Regardless, given that every other account stresses the formation of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in July, it seems unlikely that the RCMP was reporting or had received accurate information in early March.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #846”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 114.

⁴⁹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #858”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 227.

⁴⁹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #859”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 238; William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 4.

⁴⁹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #859”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 241.

⁴⁹⁶ In the summer of 1937, the CASD published a pamphlet titled *Hello Canada: Canada’s Mackenzie Papineau Battalion*. In this pamphlet, the account of the creation of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion is:

I happened to be present in a dugout when the boys first thought of the name for their battalion. Many names were suggested. There were heated discussions. One of them beckoned for silence and said, “If we know why we are here, if we know that fighting for democracy, really fighting for

come into existence until July, 1937, after A.A. McLeod convinced the leaders of the American battalions to allow the already-planned third battalion of North American fighters to be formed under Canadian command.⁴⁹⁷ Recruiting for the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion carried on more-or-less openly until an order-in-council, passed in April, made the Foreign Enlistment Act apply to the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁹⁸

Spanish solidarity and aid work formed the bulk of the CPC's activity in 1937. With the arrival of Canadian fighters in Spain, the CPC's Spanish solidarity work took on a three-pronged approach. First, aid was collected by the CASD in defence of the Spanish Republic. This formed the majority of the CPC's propaganda work around Spain, with frequent tours being made by prominent CLAWF, CPC, and CASD members in order to raise the profile of Spanish aid work. As a result of this work, and the funds raised during Spanish Aid Week, the CPC was able to send two ambulances to Spain to help with

democracy, is only carrying on the traditions of our country and our forefathers, then I say we must name our battalion after those two men who fought to bring democracy to Canada – Louis Alexandre Papineau and William Lyon Mackenzie.”

There was no more discussion. It was settled. From that day on they called themselves the Mac-Pap boys.

Aside from this pamphlet, there is no evidence that this was the case. Tim Buck's testimony and the RCMP's records indicate different stories. All of the secondary literature on the subject accords with the RCMP's observations: the RCMP is, in this case, a more reliable source than Tim Buck or FMPB propaganda pamphlets.

TFL, KC, *Hello Canada: Canada's Mackenzie Papineau Battalion*, 4-5; Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 69; William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 56.

⁴⁹⁷ Victor Hoar, *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: Canadian Participation in the Spanish Civil War*, (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969), 107; Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 70; William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 57-58; Mark Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Toronto: Wiley, 2007), 156-158.

⁴⁹⁸ Mark Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Toronto: Wiley, 2007), 121.

Norman Bethune's medical unit.⁴⁹⁹ Solidarity work and fundraising took on a fever-pitch after the fall of Bilbao in June. Second, for those more interested in anti-fascist work rather than the defence of bourgeois democracy, the FMPB engaged in numerous fundraising activities to support the work of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Finally, those interested in directly fighting fascism could join the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and go to Spain themselves.

While Spanish aid work was the most successful manifestation of the Popular Front in 1937, there was also resistance to the Popular Front line in the Spanish solidarity work. A. E. Smith continued to be a nuisance to the other CPC leaders. On March 7, 1937 at a CLDL rally in Brandon, Manitoba, Smith explicitly said that Canada would be better-off under a Soviet form of government.⁵⁰⁰ This flew directly against the CPC leadership's instructions to downplay socialism so as to not scare-off moderates. On the same speaking tour, this time in Edmonton, Smith said that a defeat for Franco in Spain would mean "a Soviet Union in Spain and later on a Soviet France and eventually a Soviet in Great Britain... it won't be very long before the workers are in power in Canada."⁵⁰¹ Here too, A.E. Smith was against the general political orientation of Spanish solidarity work, which had hitherto not emphasized communist politics. Unsurprisingly, Smith was

⁴⁹⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #861", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 266; "May 30 to June 9 Dedicated to Spain," *The Daily Clarion*, May 29, 1937; "Aid to Spain Week Starts Tomorrow," *The Daily Clarion*, May 29, 1937.

⁵⁰⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #848", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 135.

⁵⁰¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #849", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 145.

again sent overseas, this time accompanying a shipment of gifts for the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in late June, as a means of undermining his influence in Canada.⁵⁰²

Another challenge to the CPC's Spanish aid work occurred in September. Henry Beattie, a CPC member and Spanish veteran, had returned to Canada wounded. According to Beattie, he had been brought back to Canada for propaganda purposes but had become disillusioned in the process. In an interview given to a Toronto daily newspaper, Beattie argued that the CPC in Canada and in Spain were not fighting for the working class, but rather were aiding reformists; the proof, according to Beattie, was in the Spanish government's persecution of anarchists, left-socialists, and the POUM. Furthermore, the international brigades, according to Beattie, were not a workers' militia but organized along bourgeois lines: leaders, for instance, were appointed by the various Communist Parties rather than being elected. Upon his return Beattie was told not to speak from a Communist or anti-fascist standpoint, but rather to present himself as a liberal humanist.⁵⁰³ On September 14, *The Clarion* dismissed Beattie's accusations, saying that he seemed to be shell-shocked.

The Popular Front in Decline

While the Popular Front was being actualized in the Spanish aid work undertaken by the CPC—and including members of the CCF—it was beginning to slow down in other areas. In early 1937 there were signs that the CPC's Popular Front strategy had

⁵⁰² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #862", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 270.

⁵⁰³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #871", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 381-383.

reached the end of its rope. In late February, the CCF in BC officially rejected cooperation with the CPC.⁵⁰⁴ This caused considerable dissent in the ranks of the local CCF which resulted in the expulsion of A. M. Stephen, chair of the local CLAWF, from the CCF.⁵⁰⁵ Reverend Baker, a prominent CCF member from New Westminster, also resigned from the CCF and joined the CPC.⁵⁰⁶ Malcolm Bruce seized on the opportunity and denounced the CCF at a March 19 meeting in Vancouver, saying that the leadership was using splitting tactics.⁵⁰⁷ The tensions spilled over into the CPC's election strategy in the 1937 provincial elections, held in May. Both Baker and Stephens were run as CPC candidates, and both lost. The CPC central leadership simultaneously accused the CCF of sabotaging Stephens' election campaign, while also attacking the CPC in BC for the tactical mistake of criticizing the CCF in *The People's Advocate* (formerly *BC Workers' News*).⁵⁰⁸ The door to unity was finally closed in BC when, on July 2, at the CCF provincial convention, the CCF voted against united front proposals, refused to reinstate A.M. Stephen, and said that any members who talked publicly about the Popular Front, Stalinism, or Trotskyism would be suspended.⁵⁰⁹

Problems with the Popular Front approach existed in other regions, albeit not to the same extent as in BC. May Day 1937 saw virtually no cooperation between the CPC

⁵⁰⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #846", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 118.

⁵⁰⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #850", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 152.

⁵⁰⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #847", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 126; "Trotskyist Influence in C.C.F. Scored," *The Daily Clarion*, March 3, 1937.

⁵⁰⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #850", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 153.

⁵⁰⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #859", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 244.

⁵⁰⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #863", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 281.

and CCF in key cities such as Toronto, Winnipeg, Sudbury, and unsurprisingly, Vancouver. The CCF and CPC held joint May Day events in Montreal, Hamilton, Windsor, Regina, and Edmonton, but in each case the rallies were smaller than they had been in previous years.⁵¹⁰ There were however successes on May Day: in Toronto, for instance, increased participation from the TLC led to the largest May Day demonstration in Toronto's history, and foreshadowed the shift of the Popular Front approach from the CCF to the trade unions that was to come in the following months.⁵¹¹ At the meeting of the provincial CCF in Ontario in late May, there was no progress on the united front.⁵¹² The CCF openly refused cooperation with the CPC in the Ontario provincial elections.⁵¹³ Criticisms of the CCF's leadership began to appear again in the pages of *The Clarion*.⁵¹⁴ Despite some successes –parts of the CCF in Saskatchewan upheld unity with the CPC until 1939, and in Calgary there was still support for the united front as late as June⁵¹⁵– gone were the days of cooperation between the CPC and the CCF being the rule rather than the exception.

As a result of the lack of success in building a united front with the CCF, at the Twelfth Central Committee Plenum of the CPC, on June 5, 1937, the CPC first indicated that it would officially abandon its goal of a united front with the CCF. The CCF was

⁵¹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #855", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 200-205; "March Today for Peace, Democracy!," *The Daily Clarion*, May 1, 1937.

⁵¹¹ "100,000 Canadians Marched on May Day," *The Daily Clarion*, May 2, 1937; "Toronto Views Largest Labor Parade in History," *The Daily Clarion*, May 2, 1937; "40,000 in Queen's Park Cheer Support for CIO," *The Daily Clarion*, May 2, 1937.

⁵¹² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #857", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 216.

⁵¹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #872", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 392-393.

⁵¹⁴ "An Open Letter to Graham Spry," *The Daily Clarion*, April 2, 1937.

⁵¹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #858", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 234.

criticized for having an entrenched reactionary leadership, and for being overly parliamentary.⁵¹⁶ Buck made the argument that while a united front with the CCF was still ideal, the CPC “cannot wait for the C.C.F. as in the past.”⁵¹⁷ Local efforts to build the united front were to continue, in the hopes that the individual branches of the CCF could be won over. A resolution from the Comintern, received by the CPC in August, also agreed with this position: the CPC was no longer to focus on organizational unity with the CCF, but rather unity in action was declared more important. This could take the form of work with CCF members, rather than the CCF organizationally, on specific initiatives such as Spanish aid work.⁵¹⁸

With the collapse of the relationship between the CPC and the CCF, it is not surprising that the CPC—now fully committed to building “unity at any cost” against fascism—began to look elsewhere. In February, there was signs that the CPC was warming up to the Liberal Party. In mid-February a demonstration of the Winnipeg unemployed, which was to take place upon the opening of the provincial legislature on February 24, was called off because it was the position of the local CPC that it was better to have the Liberals in power provincially than any other plausible party.⁵¹⁹ Shortly thereafter, in his contribution to the debate on the speech from the throne, James Litterick said that in order to not help the Conservatives, he would vote in favour of Manitoba

⁵¹⁶ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The Communist Party and the Maturing Situation in Canada*, 15-16.

⁵¹⁷ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The Communist Party and the Maturing Situation in Canada*, 17.

⁵¹⁸ LAC, CF, K-291, File 188, *Resolution of CI on Work of C.P.C. (Draft)*.

⁵¹⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #845”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 110.

premier Bracken's speech, despite the premier attacking the right to strike in his speech.⁵²⁰ Litterick explained the position of the CPC by arguing that:

It is necessary that we draw a line of distinction, that we should differentiate between the Liberals and the Conservatives. The main danger to the people of this province, as well as of Canada as a whole, comes from the extremely reactionary section of the capitalist class, that section which has for its representative and mouthpiece of its policies the Conservative Party.⁵²¹

In April, there was a further indication that the CPC was changing the orientation of the Popular Front towards the Liberal Party. In a pamphlet by Stewart Smith attacking Ontario Liberal premier Hepburn's anti-CIO statements, Smith argued that the anti-working class stance was causing a shift in the Liberal Party.⁵²² As a result, Smith considered that "it is not impossible that from the Liberal party may come powerful forces to help in the people's fight to gain economic improvement and to save Canada from fascism."⁵²³ This position was reiterated at the Twelfth Central Committee Plenum of the CPC by Tim Buck⁵²⁴, and again on July 10, 1937 by Stewart Smith at the district conference of the Southern and Eastern Ontario districts.⁵²⁵ Here Smith went a step further and argued that not only was a shift in the Liberal Party possible, but that the CPC was to do everything in its power to assist the Liberals in breaking with Hepburn. Branches were to contract Liberal constituency leaders, the membership of Liberal organizations, and Liberal MPPs as a means of winning them over to an anti-Hepburn

⁵²⁰ LAC, CPC, H-1627, J Litterick, MLA, *Whither Manitoba?*, 3, 23; "Break with Tories, Litterick Urges Bracken," *The Daily Clarion*, February 26, 1937.

⁵²¹ LAC, CPC, H-1627, J Litterick, MLA, *Whither Manitoba?*, 13.

⁵²² LAC, CPC, H-1627, Alderman Stewart Smith, *Hepburn's Betrayal... What now?*, 14.

⁵²³ LAC, CPC, H-1627, Alderman Stewart Smith, *Hepburn's Betrayal... What now?*, 16.

⁵²⁴ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The Communist Party and the Maturing Situation in Canada*, 10-11.

⁵²⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #865", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 312.

policy.⁵²⁶ In September, Stewart Smith went as far as to withdraw from the Provincial Elections to support the candidacy of Arthur Roebuck, the former Liberal Attorney General of Ontario.⁵²⁷

In the absence of the possibility of unity with the CCF, the CPC also turned towards the Social Credit movement. At a provincial executive committee meeting in Alberta in February, the CPC decided that insofar as Albertans were not yet ready to accept communism, the CPC should endeavour to show that it and the Social Credit movement were working for the same immediate ends; Pat Lenihan, a CPC leader in Alberta, went as far as to say that the Social Credit movement was “a lever with which capitalism can be eventually overthrown.”⁵²⁸ On February 21, 1937, Leslie Morris reiterated this position and said that the CPC was ready to work with the Social Credit government as a means of undermining the reactionary People’s League. In a circular distributed to all CPC branches in Alberta in early March, CPC branches were told to rally in support of progressive legislation and to stop the attempts of reactionaries to split the Social Credit government.⁵²⁹ The CPC even went as far as to adopt the slogans of the Social Credit Party, calling for unity to ensure “increased purchasing power”.⁵³⁰

The orientation of the CPC appears to have had short-term success. On May 23, at a rally in Calgary on the topic of “Who are the enemies of the people?”, A.C. Rowe of

⁵²⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #865”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 312.

⁵²⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #871”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 380.

⁵²⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #845”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 108-109.

⁵²⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #846”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 119-120.

⁵³⁰ LAC, CF, K-291, File 185, *Unite for Higher Living Standards – More Purchasing Power!*

the Social Credit Party announced “I am not a Communist yet, but I like your platform and your party.”⁵³¹ In September the RCMP reported that not only were Social Credit officials in Alberta in frequent contact with the CPC, but that the CPC was confident enough that it had enough sway within the local CCF and Social Credit Party that if an election were called, it would be able to enact the majority of its policies. Indeed, the CPC thought its approach to be so successful that it was worried that reactionaries would manufacture a crisis in Alberta, the Canadian government would move against the government of Alberta, and that the Canadian government would make the CPC illegal again. The CPC leadership was worried enough that the CPC removed all of its important records and documents from its Alberta HQ, and sent them to secret locations.⁵³²

Much like in the previous year, there seems to have been some level of discontent from rank and file CPC members about the Popular Front approach. On January 13, the CPC leadership issued an educational letter to the branches in Saskatoon intended to quell notions that the CPC had moved to the right, had become “just another political party”, and had abandoned its revolutionary character. “Many comrades see in our defense of bourgeois-democracy a sort of a ‘going over to the right’.”⁵³³ The CPC leadership stated that this was not the case: while the tactics of the Third Period had been correct, conditions had changed. Because fascism attacked bourgeois democracy, it was the duty of the CPC to defend bourgeois democracy. Bourgeois democracy had not

⁵³¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #858”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 234.

⁵³² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #869”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 356-360.

⁵³³ “Educational Letter” quoted in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #842”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 68-69.

become better, but rather bourgeois democracy allowed “a certain freedom of organization and right of assembly.” Thus, any change in the CPC’s tactics was a result of a change in the situation, not a result of a change in the CPC.⁵³⁴ Nevertheless Buck noted at the Twelfth Central Committee Plenum that many members in BC had left the CPC for the CCF, as they were unclear on the role of the CPC.⁵³⁵ For these members, in the face of an increasingly moderate CPC, it seems the CPC was “just another political party.”

Work among the unemployed also suffered in 1937. Much of the early part of the year was spent trying to gather and consolidate the disparate contacts that the CPC and its unemployed organizers had across Canada. Regional conferences were held, organizations were reconfigured, and demands were created, but it was difficult for the CPC to concretely mobilize anyone. For instance, despite strike votes of relief recipients in Edmonton and Calgary in mid-March, organizers were unable to put the votes into effect.⁵³⁶ In Moose Jaw, a planned sit-down strike on March 19 was called off after only three of the fifteen people showed up.⁵³⁷ The majority of what little activity existed was confined to Western Canada, and either took the form of sporadic agitation against the

⁵³⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #842”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 69-70.

⁵³⁵ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The Communist Party and the Maturing Situation in Canada*, 21.

Jack Scott talks about a similar problem existing in Ontario, where people had a hard time understanding the importance of the Party in light of its moderation.

Jack Scott, eds. Bryan Palmer, *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988), 38.

⁵³⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #849”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 144.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #850”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 155.

⁵³⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #851”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 167.

farm placement scheme,⁵³⁸ or the building of the Relief Project Workers' Union (RPWU) in BC. The CPC was forced to conclude that its efforts had largely been in vain: a pamphlet released by the CPC in BC in March lamented that "Unemployed organization is now at a low ebb, lower than it has ever been since the strike of 1930."⁵³⁹ At the twelfth Central Committee Plenum of the CPC, Buck admitted that unemployed work was not being dealt with properly by the CPC.⁵⁴⁰

Despite the general failure of the CPC's unemployment work in 1937, the CPC's work among the unemployed during this time is significant because it marks the beginning of tensions between CPC unemployed organizers and the CPC leadership. As has already been mentioned, a planned demonstration of the unemployed at the Manitoba legislature in February was cancelled after the Winnipeg CPC leadership opted not to antagonize the Liberal Bracken government.⁵⁴¹ Tensions also arose in mid-April in Regina when the Saskatchewan Union of Unemployed organized a rally to protest the municipal government's dismissal of the official grievance committee of unemployed workers.⁵⁴² While none of the elected officials in Regina were CPC members, Popular Front candidates supported by the CPC had a majority on the city council; Regina was

⁵³⁸ The farm placement scheme effectively forced unemployed workers to work for next to nothing on farms in order to receive relief. It placed the CPC in an awkward position: whereas the CPC had campaigned for years to close the camps, unemployed workers by-and-large preferred the camps to the farm placement scheme.

James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 159.

⁵³⁹ LAC, CPC, H-1627, William Bennett, *Builders of British Columbia*, 106.

⁵⁴⁰ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The Communist Party and the Maturing Situation in Canada*, 18.

⁵⁴¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #845", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 110.

⁵⁴² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #852", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 176.

considered to be an example of the success of the Popular Front.⁵⁴³ On June 20, 1937, unemployed in Calgary held a mass meeting to criticize the “work for wages” program drafted by an alderman from the Canadian Labour Party.⁵⁴⁴ The CPC had endorsed the Canadian Labour Party in the 1936 municipal elections; the Canadian Labour Party was part of the local united front, and had run on a platform of increased relief rates.⁵⁴⁵ While each of these were isolated incidents, and neither the CPC leadership nor its rank-and-file seems to have detected a pattern, the existence of these conflicts across Western Canada in 1937 indicates that the bourgeois line within the CPC was winning out: CPC and CPC-supported politicians were thrust into conflict with the unemployed over relief policies.

The Popular Front among youth also suffered setbacks in 1937. The YCL’s new non-party paper, *The Advance*,⁵⁴⁶ was criticized in January by the Young Communist International (YCI) for its low quality.⁵⁴⁷ By all accounts *The Advance* was not the only area of the YCL’s work which did not meet Party standards: in March it was reported that the Winnipeg Youth Council had a meeting attendance of 10 percent of what it had been when it first started, that meetings lacked enthusiasm, and that the Toronto office of the CYC had been disconnected from others.⁵⁴⁸ YCL work among the unions in Montreal

⁵⁴³ J. William Brennan, “‘The common people have spoken with a mighty voice’: Regina’s Labour City Councils, 1936-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 70.

⁵⁴⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #862”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 278

⁵⁴⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, “Bulletin #830”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 469.

⁵⁴⁶ Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP’s Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 53.

⁵⁴⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #839”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 34.

⁵⁴⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #847”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 127.

was criticized for being weak.⁵⁴⁹ In general the gusto with which the YCL had approached work the year before seemed to have been lost.

The weakened position of the YCL emboldened reactionary youth organizations in the lead up to the Second CYC. The French Canadian delegates, who had dropped out of the CYC shortly after the second Congress, put forward a series of preconditions to their participation which included: acknowledgement of freedom of creed, that the aim of the Congress should be internal peace as well as world peace, that the Congress uphold democracy, the right of individuals to private property, the necessity of co-operation between social classes, and that the Congress would condemn subversive doctrines.⁵⁵⁰ The preconditions were clearly designed to isolate the YCL, but the French Canadian delegates underestimated the extent to which the YCL was willing to abandon its own politics in favour of unity. Roy Davis agreed to the preconditions on behalf of the YCL.⁵⁵¹ Shortly after the CYC, at the 1937 YCL convention, Peter Hunter acknowledged that “many people” found the YCL’s acceptance of the points confusing, and that “many people... are afraid that the Young Communist League is forgetting its socialist principles.”⁵⁵² Hunter reassured the YCL delegates that this was not the case; he engaged in mental gymnastics to state that the YCL was not a subversive organization, was not

⁵⁴⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #854”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 196.

⁵⁵⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #864”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 297; Paul Axelrod, “Spying on the Young in Depression and War: Students, Youth Groups, and the RCP, 1935-1942,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 35 (Spring 1995), 55; Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 57.

⁵⁵¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #864”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 298; Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 58.

⁵⁵² “Youth Unity Policy is Outlined: National Conference of Young Communists hears of ‘7 Points’,” *The Daily Clarion*, May 31, 1937; Paul Axelrod, “Spying on the Young in Depression and War: Students, Youth Groups, and the RCP, 1935-1942,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 35 (Spring 1995), 55.

opposed to increased private property under capitalism, in fact going as far as to say that the YCL wanted the “smaller fellow” to have more private property.

As a result of the YCL’s capitulation, the Second CYC opened on May 22, 1937.⁵⁵³ The CCYM and the YCL worked together; the latter had 200 representatives at the Congress.⁵⁵⁴ The Congress agreed to a series of non-committal positions on world peace, as well as for a royal commission on dominion-provincial relations as a means of ensuring more welfare, increased protection for workers, and more social programming.⁵⁵⁵ While the YCL considered the Congress to be a success, it was clear that the CYC was divided on very basic issues: the YCL’s activity in the aftermath of the Congress was not undertaken at the head of a broad mass of non-party youth, but rather consisted of small actions of only YCL members. The Second CYC marked the beginning of the failure of the YCL’s Popular Front approach; despite abandoning its communist politics in order to appeal to a broader section of the masses on a political basis which was not anti-capitalist, the YCL still found itself isolated from the mass movement it was attempting to create.

Despite difficulties in advancing the united front with the CCF, building the Popular Front among youth, and in unemployment work, the Popular Front was not all losses for the CPC in 1937. The CPC saw considerable victories in its work within the unions. In early 1937 the CPC led or was active in a number of organizing drives and strikes within the mass production industries and CIO unions. The CPC’s efforts in this

⁵⁵³ Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 55-62.

⁵⁵⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #864”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 303.

⁵⁵⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #864”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 301-303.

regard were part of a broader strike wave that swept across Canada in 1937.⁵⁵⁶ In Welland, a strike at a textile mill ended after seven weeks on February 9, 1937, with the company agreeing to the demands and recognizing the United Textile Workers of America (UTWA).⁵⁵⁷ Shortly after the RCMP lamented that sit-down strikes had arrived in Canada.⁵⁵⁸ Similar results were achieved during the Sarnia foundry strike,⁵⁵⁹ a strike of 1100 Ontario furniture workers between March 1 and March 8,⁵⁶⁰ and the Dominion Woolens strike in Peterborough in June,⁵⁶¹ to name just a few examples. Not only was the CPC active in the 1937 strike-wave, but it was also successful in consolidating new unions and integrating itself into existing labour bureaucracies: in Montreal, the CPC alleged that it had contacts in every major factory and had a sizable voting bloc in the

⁵⁵⁶ Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959* (Toronto: NC Press, 1978), 259; Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History Second Edition* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1996), 64.

⁵⁵⁷ There were simultaneous strikes in Peterborough and Cornwall.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #843", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 78; "Over 800 Walk Out in Welland Textile Strike," *The Daily Clarion*, December 23, 1936; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 26; Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959* (Toronto: NC Press, 1978), 260.

⁵⁵⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #844", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 92.

⁵⁵⁹ Jack Scott, eds. Bryan Palmer, *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988), 43; "Company Gangsters Terrorize Strike Area: Injure Twenty, Three Seriously in Mob Attack," *The Daily Clarion*, March 4, 1937; "SWOC Rallies to Sarnia Aid," *The Daily Clarion*, March 4, 1937; "Sarnia Homes Barred As New Attacks Feared," *The Daily Clarion*, March 5, 1937; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 6-7; Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 98; Desmond Morton, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 159.

⁵⁶⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #847", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 123; "Kitchener Furniture Rally Tonight," *The Daily Clarion*, March 4, 1937.

⁵⁶¹ Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 136; Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, *Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1870-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 128-129; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 26; "Peterboro Workers Fight \$11 Wages: Textile Strikers Demand Raise of 25 Percent," *The Daily Clarion*, June 30, 1937.

local TLC.⁵⁶² In large part due to the efforts of CPC organizers⁵⁶³ the CIO had risen from 1 500 members the year before to 12 000 members in June, 1937.⁵⁶⁴

By far the most significant strike of 1937 was the Oshawa General Motors strike. The CPC had previously attempted to organize the Oshawa GM plant, but its work had proven ineffective.⁵⁶⁵ However, at the beginning of 1937 a series of events created a better context in which to organize. On February 15, 1937, GM announced plans to enforce a speed-up in its Oshawa factory.⁵⁶⁶ This resulted in a somewhat spontaneous sit-down strike of some 250 workers on February 19, 1937.⁵⁶⁷ Some of the factory workers, as well as Joe Salsberg who had been caught off-guard by the strike,⁵⁶⁸ phoned the UAW to let them know about the action; the following day, local 222 of the UAW was formed.⁵⁶⁹ Within a month, over 4 000 members had signed union cards.⁵⁷⁰ On March 21, the Coulter Manufacturing Company attempted to lay-off its night shift and UAW 222

⁵⁶² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #844", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 97.

The CPC was also active in the 1937 ILGWU strike in Montreal.

Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, *Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1870-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 132-133.

⁵⁶³ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 5.

⁵⁶⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #858", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 229.

⁵⁶⁵ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 8.

⁵⁶⁶ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 95.

⁵⁶⁷ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 96.

⁵⁶⁸ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 95; Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 50-51.

⁵⁶⁹ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 96; "Establish Union in Oshawa GM," *The Daily Clarion*, February 24, 1937; "Union Brings Hope to GM Town of Oshawa," *The Daily Clarion*, February 25, 1937.

⁵⁷⁰ "Oshawa Union is Growing," *The Daily Clarion*, March 11, 1937.

struck and won.⁵⁷¹ This proved to the other members of UAW 222 that collective action could be successful. It was in this context that the UAW presented its demands to GM Oshawa at the end of March.⁵⁷²

Negotiations did not go smoothly. GM refused to recognize the UAW appointed negotiator, and negotiations broke down almost immediately.⁵⁷³ Preparing for a strike, GM also began shipping cars out of the GM Oshawa plant at the beginning of April.⁵⁷⁴ Finally, after mediation, GM agreed with UAW 222's demands on April 6, 1937.⁵⁷⁵ However, Premier Hepburn, who had made it his declared mission to crush the CIO in Ontario,⁵⁷⁶ intervened and convinced GM to go back on the agreed upon deal.⁵⁷⁷ As a result, on April 8, 1937, the UAW struck the GM plant.⁵⁷⁸ The strike was taxing on both

⁵⁷¹ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 9.

⁵⁷² Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 11; "4,000 May Strike in Oshawa Auto Plant," *The Daily Clarion*, April 1, 1937.

⁵⁷³ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 10-11.

⁵⁷⁴ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 11.

⁵⁷⁵ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 102; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 12; Desmond Morton, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 159.

⁵⁷⁶ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 99; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 13; Sam Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1995), 61.

⁵⁷⁷ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 102-104; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 12-13.

⁵⁷⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #851", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 162; Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 102; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 12; "G.M. Violates Agreement with Union; Homer Martin Arriving From Lansing," *The Daily Clarion*, April 9, 1937; Sam Gindin, *The*

sides. On the side of the company, Premier Hepburn's support for GM caused a rift within the Liberals, chiefly between Hepburn and Mackenzie King,⁵⁷⁹ which ultimately resulted in Hepburn forcing the resignation of two of his ministers: Arthur Roebuck and David Croll.⁵⁸⁰ On the side of the UAW, the strike virtually bankrupted Local 222; after the surrender of the UAW in Detroit, also on strike, on April 16, the UAW was forced to cut financial assistance to Local 222.⁵⁸¹ As a result, Local 222 pretended to deposit money into its strike fund in order to make a public show of being able to carry on the strike.⁵⁸² However, in the meantime, negotiations had resumed,⁵⁸³ and ultimately Local 222 of the UAW voted to end the strike on April 23, without securing union recognition, and with the main negotiators of the UAW –JL Cohen and Homer Martin- being forced to admit that they were not representative of the GM Oshawa workers.⁵⁸⁴ Despite the ambiguous resolution, the CPC declared the GM workers victorious: *The Daily Clarion* ecstatically wrote that "Oshawa marks the victorious beginning of a new era in Ontario, the era of unionized, progressive, indomitable labor."⁵⁸⁵

Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1995), 60.

⁵⁷⁹ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 111-112.

⁵⁸⁰ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 113; Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959* (Toronto: NC Press, 1978), 260.

⁵⁸¹ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 114; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 19-21.

⁵⁸² Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 117.

⁵⁸³ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 115.

⁵⁸⁴ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 119; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 21; Sam Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1995), 64; Desmond Morton, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 160.

⁵⁸⁵ "Bravo Oshawa! Your Victory Inspires Labor Everywhere!," *The Daily Clarion*, April 24, 1937.

The CPC attached great importance to the Oshawa strike because it was the first mass strike of the CIO in Canada.⁵⁸⁶ The CPC however had difficulty in directly supporting the strike: insofar as the CPC did not want conflict with local authorities, it was not able to offer a substantively different strategy than the local UAW organizers. However, the local organizers were wary of accepting CPC help openly, and endeavored to prevent CPC members from achieving local leadership positions. The CPC in turn accused the strike leadership of being undemocratic, and sought to build external structures, like a broad strike committee, to support the strike. The CPC also tried to launch a solidarity committee through the Toronto TLC in order to get around the UAW organizers in Oshawa, but was unable to.⁵⁸⁷

In the aftermath of the Oshawa strike, Hepburn found himself isolated from the federal Liberals, as well as a substantial portion of the provincial Liberal Party in Ontario. Proving correct the worst fears of the CPC, Hepburn, at the behest of media-mogul George McCullagh, approached the Ontario Conservatives with a proposal to form a united government in order to crush the CIO.⁵⁸⁸ Hepburn was even willing to abdicate the Premier's position if it ensured unity. However, Hepburn had overplayed his hand; the Conservatives turned down the proposal, and subsequently leaked it to the media.⁵⁸⁹

The difficulties faced by the CPC during the Oshawa strike foreshadowed developments that were to follow soon. In late April a delegation of CIO organizers,

⁵⁸⁶ "Oshawa GM Strikers! You Will Win!," *The Daily Clarion*, April 9, 1937.

⁵⁸⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #852", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 172.

⁵⁸⁸ "Big Shots In Move to Capture Government: Hepburn Preparing Further Betrayals of Ontario People," *The Daily Clarion*, May 3, 1937.

⁵⁸⁹ Irving Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1974), 122-123.

including CPC members, travelled to Buffalo to talk to the leader of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC). Payne, the SWOC leader, refused to meet with communists, and said that the SWOC could not send money to Canada, had no interest in organizing Canadian steel workers, and advised against any strikes in the steel industry.⁵⁹⁰ On May 20, 1937, this position was echoed by the CIO organizing director for Ontario. In a meeting with delegates from the CPC, YCL, and CCYM, the CIO stated that Canadian locals would not receive any strike funds from the American unions.⁵⁹¹

The intransigence of the CIO forced the CPC to change its approach to the union movement.⁵⁹² Previously the CPC had made its priority support for the CIO while fighting against the AFL-CIO split from coming to Canada. Now, the CPC stated that it:

must eradicate the tendency which we permitted to develop of waiting upon the CIO to initiate and carry thru organisational drives in the unorganised industries, without sufficiently exerting our efforts to help ourselves.⁵⁹³

Instead of simply defaulting to the CIO, the CPC was to form committees for every industry, focus on organizing the unorganized, and educate new cadres for trade union work.⁵⁹⁴ Within a month the CPC had launched an organizing drive among textile workers, with the hope of forming a new textile workers union in Canada through the

⁵⁹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #854", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 195.

For more on the SWOC's anti-communism, see: Ron Cowley, "What Kind of Unionism: Struggles Among Sydney Steel Workers in the SWOC Years, 1936-1942," *Labour/Le Travail*, 39 (Spring 1997), 99-123.

⁵⁹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #857", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 219.

⁵⁹² Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 27.

⁵⁹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #861", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 260.

⁵⁹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #861", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 264.

TLC.⁵⁹⁵ The drive was, however, a failure: in Montreal the textile workers were unhappy with how their strike for recognition was settled, and in the absence of the CPC openly making any criticism of the CIO or the Textile Workers Organizing Committee, the textile workers wanted to join an international union.⁵⁹⁶ By all accounts the strike surge of early 1937 was over: the CIO was on the retreat.⁵⁹⁷

The orientation of the CPC's trade union work during 1937 was fraught with opportunism. For instance, in a directive in May, CPC organizers were instructed to hide their politics and to "[n]ever mention the Party."⁵⁹⁸ Despite having spent the better part of the last two decades arguing for Canadian trade union autonomy, and despite significant differences with the CIO after the CIO leadership opted to not organize in Canada, the CPC instructed its organizers to not advance the slogan of Canadian autonomy or for a Canadian CIO without the CIO's consent.⁵⁹⁹ Tim Buck went even further, and stated that any mention of Canadian autonomy "would play right into the hands of Hepburn."⁶⁰⁰ In later years, UAW organizer James Napier harshly criticized the CPC for not combatting anti-communism in its organizing drives during 1937: for Napier, this was one of the reasons why the CPC's union presence was decimated in the post-war years.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #863", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 283; "1,500 Cornwall Textile Workers Strike," *The Daily Clarion*, July 22, 1937.

⁵⁹⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #870", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 376.

⁵⁹⁷ Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2001), 114.

⁵⁹⁸ *C.P. of C. Directive on C.I.O.* quoted in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #856", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 210.

⁵⁹⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #861", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 261.

⁶⁰⁰ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The Communist Party and the Maturing Situation in Canada*, 20.

⁶⁰¹ James Napier, *Memories of Building the UAW*, 24.

There is also evidence that the CPC leadership purposely sought to restrain the militancy of its organizers. In a circular issued in June, the CPC trade union department headed by JB Salsberg⁶⁰² cautioned against the use of sit-down strikes.⁶⁰³ Bill Walsh in Kitchener, known for both his militancy and his disregard for the CPC leadership, was never pushed by the CPC to move into a union leadership position, and instead was kept in a support role.⁶⁰⁴ The CPC also may have sabotaged-through-inaction a strike of steel workers in Montreal in July, in order to save face in the eyes of the CPUSA leadership within the CIO; a Montreal CPC union official stated that “should further demands for funds be made the C.P. (U.S.A.) trade union leaders will lose all respect for the Canadian trade union section of the C.P. and may take the matter up with the higher bodies.”⁶⁰⁵ In any case, it is clear that the CPC’s trade union strategy during 1937 was first and foremost concerned with protection of the CIO, and only secondarily concerned with the organization or radicalization of the working class.

Despite whatever difficulties the CPC faced due to the CIO’s lack of enthusiasm, or its own opportunism, it was in a favourable position leading into the 1937 TLC

⁶⁰² It is interesting to note that Salsberg was a “casualty” of the Third Period. He only rejoined the CPC after the decision had been made to liquidate the WUL into the TLC. Salsberg’s more conservative approach is further corroborated in Gerald Tulchinsky’s biography of Salsberg, in which Tulchinsky writes that Salsberg led the move away from a class-struggle orientation in the CPC’s trade union work.

Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 47.

⁶⁰³ *CPC Trade Union Directives* quoted in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #861”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 263.

⁶⁰⁴ Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2001), 114.

⁶⁰⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #863”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 291-292.

The “higher bodies” likely allude to the Comintern.

Congress. The 1937 Congress began on September 13, 1937.⁶⁰⁶ At the Congress, the CPC led a block of 140 progressive votes, of which 69 were CPC members.⁶⁰⁷ The CPC trade union commission had, prior to the Congress, instructed members to downplay the CIO, and to support positions mirroring the CPC's own priorities at the time: solidarity with Spain, organizing the unorganized, against the Hepburn and Duplessis governments, support for the USSR, against fascism and war, and support for the youth movement, among others.⁶⁰⁸ While the TLC voted against the proposal to form a Farmer-Labour Party, the TLC also voted to endorse the CPC's motions on anti-fascism, and its positions on the split in the AFL-CIO.⁶⁰⁹ The CPC leadership was satisfied with the results.⁶¹⁰

The Height of the Popular Front In Review

The height of the Popular Front in Canada lasted from November 1935, after the Ninth Central Committee Plenum of the CPC, to October 1937, when the CPC held its Eighth Dominion Convention. This period saw profound shifts in the CPC's organization,

⁶⁰⁶ "Congress Delegates Converge on Capital: Most Important Convention in Labor History," *The Daily Clarion*, September 13, 1937; "Hearty Greetings Labor's Parliament," *The Daily Clarion*, September 13, 1937.

⁶⁰⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #873", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 402.

⁶⁰⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #869", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 360.

⁶⁰⁹ "Delegates Ask Government to Lift Spain Ban," *The Daily Clarion*, September 13, 1937; "Labor's Lawful Rights Inviolable – Draper: Trades Congress Head Urges Unity of Labor At Ottawa Convention," *The Daily Clarion*, September 14, 1937; "Labor Launches Move to Revise B.N.A.," *The Daily Clarion*, September 15, 1937; "No Canadian Nickel For War," *The Daily Clarion*, September 16, 1937; "Labour Demands Law Legalizing Its Rights," *The Daily Clarion*, September 17, 1937; "CIO and Craft Unions Will Stand United," *The Daily Clarion*, September 18, 1937; "Trades Congress Meet Discusses Independent Labor Political Action," *The Daily Clarion*, September 18, 1937; Rick Salutin, *Kent Rowley: The Organizer: A Canadian Union Life* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1980), 19; Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959* (Toronto: NC Press, 1978), 261.

⁶¹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #873", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 402.

politics, and popularity. During these two years the CPC liquidated the WUL, reintegrated back into the TLC, continued to build the CLAWF and the anti-war movement, launched solidarity work with the Spanish Republic, formed the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, continued to build the CYC, helped the CIO spread to Canada, became a major force in civic politics in many municipalities across Canada, and saw James Litterick become the first Communist in North America elected to a provincial-level legislature. CPC membership increased from 9000 in November of 1935 to over 15000 in October of 1937. On the surface, looking at this period, it appears as though the Popular Front was an unqualified success.

In reality, the results were more mixed. Despite initial successes in building the united front with the CCF, by 1937 the united front policy had imploded. The CPC began focusing on the Liberal Party and other smaller parties like Social Credit. The CPC spent the better part of 1936 and early 1937 building a relationship with the TLC bureaucracy and supporting the CIO, only to have the CIO reject organizing drives in Canada. Work among the unemployed continued to decline in the wake of the Trek. And despite the formal successes of the CYC, especially the First CYC in 1936, there was a lack of enthusiasm and concrete action in the work of the YCL. Going into the Eighth Dominion Convention the CPC could point to successes on paper, but the reality was that its work and influence was in decline.

The period between November 1935 and October 1937 also saw the CPC's politics move to the right. The liberalization of the CPC's approach to the state, first begun in the aftermath of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, was consolidated: the CPC no longer questioned its ability to reform capitalism, and based its

work around the struggle for reforms. The CPC in turn openly began advocating for a defence of bourgeois democracy. The CPC turned away from the rhetoric of class as it liquidated many of its publications and mass organizations, and turned towards the rhetoric of “democracy,” “liberty,” and “progress.” The CPC no longer thought that socialism or revolution was an immediately achievable goal, and instead sought to unite the masses around what was essentially a social-democratic program.

On an organizational level the CPC no longer criticized reactionary union bureaucrats. Indeed, many CPC members took up positions within the TLC unions. Within both the labour and unemployed movements the CPC often moved to undermine militancy.⁶¹¹ The CPC’s role in administering the bourgeois state at the municipal level for the first time put it into conflict with its own membership. And indeed, the CPC’s only provincial legislator, James Litterick, had gone as far as to vote for a throne speech which attacked the right to strike: a largely symbolic act, but an important one none-the-less. Politically and organizationally, the bourgeois political line was consolidated within the CPC during the period between November 1935 and October 1937.

In the period after the Ninth Central Committee Plenum in November 1935, there were many instances of resistance to the line of the Popular Front. While some CPC members spoken out openly against the new line, though never in an organized or consolidated way, most resistance was less ostentatious. The CPC central leadership frequently issued statements “clarifying” the new position. There was essentially an open revolt of the CPC in both Nova Scotia and BC in 1936. Many of the initiatives of the CPC’s central leadership were met without much enthusiasm: both the *Clarion* and trade

⁶¹¹ Michael J. Earle, “The Coalminers and Their “Red” Union: The Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, 1932-1936,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 22 (Fall 1988), 133.

union unity were viewed skeptically in 1936. The situation was serious enough that the Eighth Dominion Convention, initially to be held in 1936, was indefinitely postponed while Tim Buck met with the ECCI to revise the CPC's line.⁶¹²

And yet, in 1937 much of this resistance had ended. The reasons why this is the case are not immediately clear. In many cases, the CPC central leadership had manoeuvred to either oust (in the case of J. B. McLachlan) or reign-in (in the case of Malcolm Bruce and Arthur Evans) problematic local leadership. Others, like A. E. Smith, were simply sent overseas to remove them from the picture. Insofar as the CPC had also grown by 6000 members during this period, the balance of forces within the CPC was likely also shifting against the Party's working-class core; those attracted to the CPC during the Popular Front would also likely have been adherents to Popular Front politics. Indeed, insofar as the CPC was successful in reaching out to other classes through the CASD and FMPB, the CPC leadership could in many cases simply ignore the demands of the CPC's proletarian base: it is no surprise then that work in traditionally proletarian sectors suffered during this period when left to the CPC leadership. However, it may have also have been the case that by 1937 it appeared as though the Popular Front line had won: despite resistance, the CPC central leadership had not budged.

To what extent does the resistance against the Popular Front line constitute a class struggle within the CPC? Similar to the resistance against the CPC central leadership during the first period of the Popular Front era, when the CPC sought to build a united front with the CCF, it was the case that resistance against the Popular Front line came largely from the rank-and-file membership. Much of the resistance stemmed from

⁶¹² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937, "Bulletin #827"*, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 426.

opposition to the liquidation of the WUL, or the CLDL. There was also disagreement with the CPC's more conciliatory policies in the labour and unemployed movements. Insofar as those that resisted the Popular Front were defending a militant, proletarian politics against a conciliatory and increasingly bourgeois politics, the struggle over the Popular Front was a class struggle within the CPC on the level of ideology. However, as became clear in 1937 with the CPC openly building relations with bourgeois political parties, and the beginnings of conflict between CPC leaders and unemployed organizers, and CPC union bureaucrats and workers, the class struggle also extended into more traditional realms, except this time within the Communist Party itself.

IV. The Eighth Dominion Convention: October 1937

The Eighth Dominion Convention of the CPC was held in Toronto from October 8 to October 13, 1937. With over 450 delegates present,⁶¹³ it was the largest congress or convention ever held by the CPC. Over 5000 people attended the opening ceremonies, at which the CPC leadership and representatives from foreign Communist Parties spoke.⁶¹⁴ Months beforehand, the CPC began issuing a special pre-convention bulletin, titled *Discussion*, so as to facilitate conversation on the issues to be decided at the convention. The convention itself featured a number of reports from leading CPC members, as well as numerous resolutions intended to guide the CPC's work in the next period.

The convention took place mainly in the Masonic Temple in Toronto. Portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and La Passionara adorned the stage, and on the podium was a portrait of Tim Buck and two busts of Lenin. At the front of the room there was a large banner depicting a stereotypical "Canadian" family standing in front of a green maple leaf, alongside lumber, wheat, factories, and mines: the symbols of Canadian wealth. On the top of the banner was the phrase "Our Country Is Rich Enough to Make Our People Happy."⁶¹⁵ According to the RCMP, it was "an atmosphere... created... to convey the impression that the movement is truly Canadian inspired."⁶¹⁶ And indeed, the coverage given to the convention in *The Clarion* confirmed this: headlines included "Canadians

⁶¹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #874", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 411.

⁶¹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #873", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 400.

⁶¹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #873", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 411-413

⁶¹⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #873", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 411.

Join Party,”⁶¹⁷ “Communism Good News Grandson of 1837 Rebel Declares At Convention,”⁶¹⁸ “Delegates Proven Capable Canadians.”⁶¹⁹

Tim Buck gave the opening report, titled *The Road Ahead*. In his speech, Buck argued that the CPC’s:

central task is clear: to do everything possible to organize and strengthen the forces of the workers and common people, to achieve unity in action for the burning economic and social needs of the people, to throw every ounce of our energies and resources into the creation of broad peoples’ mass movements, to build up the trade union movement, the farmers’ movements, the youth movement, the unemployed movement, the peace movement, to strive to speed up the developments towards a broad farmer-labor party. Without such work it is futile to imagine that any genuine struggle can be waged against the ultra-reactionary circles of Canadian finance capital.⁶²⁰

While Buck argued that the CCF was still the best way to build a federated farmer-labour party⁶²¹, it was clear that the CCF was no longer central in Buck’s conception of the Popular Front. The CPC was not to focus its attacks on the Liberals as it would embolden the “50 “big-shots”” (the CPC’s new term for the Canadian monopoly capitalists), and weaken the ability to force the Liberals to pass progressive legislation.⁶²² Indeed, insofar as Mackenzie King repealed Section 98 of the Criminal Code, and engaged in parliamentary debates, Buck argued that Mackenzie King was fundamentally different than Bennett had been.⁶²³

Buck’s speech marked the first time that the CPC had come out so firmly in favour of the Liberal Party. As has been already mentioned, the CPC began warming up

⁶¹⁷ LAC, CPC, H-1585, *Daily Clarion*, October 9, 1937.

⁶¹⁸ LAC, CPC, H-1585, *Daily Clarion*, October 11, 1937.

⁶¹⁹ LAC, CPC, H-1585, *Daily Clarion*, October 12, 1937.

⁶²⁰ LAC, CPC, H-1627, Tim Buck, *The Road Ahead*, 15.

⁶²¹ LAC, CPC, H-1627, Tim Buck, *The Road Ahead*, 26.

⁶²² LAC, CPC, H-1627, Tim Buck, *The Road Ahead*, 16.

⁶²³ LAC, CPC, H-1627, Tim Buck, *The Road Ahead*, 19.

to the Liberal Party as early as February 1937, essentially as soon as the CPC had its first provincial electoral victory. However, in the CPC's pre-convention discussion, the conversation had already been ongoing for some months. In the first issue of *Discussion*, an article by Earl Browder of the CPUSA stated that in situations where the CIO was able to influence the Democratic Party, it would be foolish for the CPUSA to try and split the CIO from the Democrats to form a new farmer-labour party. The situation in Canada, he argued, was similar with regards to the Liberal Party.⁶²⁴ In the same issue Stewart Smith agreed with Browder, arguing that there was a split in the Liberals and that the CPC needed to orient its work against the Hepburn-Duplessis Axis, rather than against the bourgeoisie as a whole.⁶²⁵ In the following issue of *Discussion*, Buck endorsed the new understanding, arguing that "thousands of genuine Liberals and those energetic and sincere young Conservatives... now, for the first time, realize that life demands loyalty to principles...".⁶²⁶

The Comintern agreed with the new perspectives. During the fourth session of the Congress, Norman Freed, recently returned from Moscow, read a pre-written statement, which was likely a Comintern directive. He said:

The task facing the Canadian labour movement... is to find a basis of unity with the reform liberals, the C.C.F., and all the consciously anti-old-line party groups with the object of gaining the support of the middle-of-the-way sections and isolate the reactionaries.⁶²⁷

Nobody questioned how building unity with the Liberal Party represented a conscious rejection of the old-line party groups.

⁶²⁴ TFL, KC, Earl Browder, "Political Realignment in the U.S.A.," in *Discussion #1*.

⁶²⁵ TFL, KC, Stewart Smith, "The Path to a People's Front in Ontario," in *Discussion #1*.

⁶²⁶ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, "Towards a People's Program for Canada," in *Discussion #2*.

⁶²⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #874", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 416-417.

The next major speech, Sam Carr's organizational report, was less ground breaking. Carr outlined the progress the CPC had seen between its convention in 1934 and the current convention. He referenced increased membership growth, the defeat of Section 98 of the Criminal Code, the united trade union movement, the On-to-Ottawa Trek, the electoral defeat of Bennett in 1935, progress in municipal elections, the CYC, and Spanish Aid work; essentially a laundry-list of the CPC's priorities during the Popular Front period.⁶²⁸ Not everything was positive: Carr pointed out that recruitment rates were low⁶²⁹, membership fluctuation was high, and that branch work was weak.⁶³⁰ Carr agreed with the shifting focus of the Popular Front. He concluded that:

Today the potential forces of the coming people's front in Canada are not only the C.C.F., trades unions, the social credit movement, the co-operatives and the Communist Party but also sections of the Liberal Party and even some groups of workers, farmers, and middle class people who have as yet not broken away from the sway of the Tories.⁶³¹

Tim Buck also presented the main political report, which after the convention was widely distributed as a pamphlet. Buck stated that the fundamental conflict in Canada was between "reactionary monopoly capital and the people... between the people's rights and monopolistic interests... between people and entrenched privilege."⁶³² Thus, the "defense of democracy, is today, the central task confronting progressive people. The decisive issue being fought out in the capitalist countries today is not fascism versus communism but fascism versus democracy."⁶³³ Buck argued that the danger of fascism in Canada was real, and thus it was necessary for a unity of progressive forces to defeat

⁶²⁸ TFL, KC, Sam Carr, *Communists at Work*.

⁶²⁹ TFL, KC, Sam Carr, *Communists at Work*, 23.

⁶³⁰ TFL, KC, Sam Carr, *Communists at Work*, 26.

⁶³¹ TFL, KC, Sam Carr, *Communists at Work*, 45.

⁶³² TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The People VS Monopoly*, 11.

⁶³³ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The People VS Monopoly*, 39.

fascism.⁶³⁴ In this fight unity between the CPC and the CCF was important but no longer decisive: the King government, caught between the currents of fascism and democracy, was also an important factor in building the Popular Front.⁶³⁵ In Alberta the forces included the CCF, the social credit movement, the United Farmers of Alberta, and the trade unions; in Quebec even possibly some elements of the separatist and nationalist movements, particularly the Action liberale nationale, which hitherto the CPC had opposed.⁶³⁶

In practical terms, Buck advocated for a “people’s program” which included: social security, aid for agriculture, democratic fiscal policy and a nationalized banking system, support for the CYC proposals, a democratic constitution for Canada, abolition of the Senate and Privy Council, and a foreign policy for peace.⁶³⁷ In order to achieve this program, Buck rejected violence: the CPC was to look “to the utilization of every possibility for constitutional advance while, as an integral part of the same process, building and preparing the movement to block reaction... .”⁶³⁸

Buck ended his report with an appeal, which is worth quoting in full insofar as it set the political tone for the remainder of the Popular Front era in Canada:

Build and unite the trade union movement; unite the forces of progress and direct the main blow against reaction. Unite the farmers and workers in joint struggle for higher purchasing power. Stop the imperialist schemers from involving Canada in war by insisting upon a positive Peace Policy. Organize the progressive women, defend the interests of the youth. Fight fascism at home and abroad and eliminate its Trotskyist agents from the labor movement. Spare no effort to ensure that the

⁶³⁴ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The People VS Monopoly*, 12.

⁶³⁵ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The People VS Monopoly*, 34.

⁶³⁶ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The People VS Monopoly*, 31-32; Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, trans. by Margaret Heap, *Communists in Quebec 1936-1956: The Communist Party of Canada, Labour-Progressive Party* (Montreal: Presses de l'Unité, 1982), 4-6.

⁶³⁷ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The People VS Monopoly*, 25-28.

⁶³⁸ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The People VS Monopoly*, 41-42.

name of Canada stands high and unsullied in the struggle for defense of Spanish Democracy and the interests of the great Chinese people.

MAKE CANADA HAPPY, PROSPEROUS AND FREE.

Against the Tory policy of reactionary coalition, repression, fascism and war, we raise the banner of People's Unity, Civil Liberties, Democracy, Progress, Peace and Socialism. Our country is rich, our people are skilled, our possibilities are tremendous. We call upon all progressive people to join hands with us now in a mighty crusade to defeat reaction and make our country, our people and the children of our people, happy, prosperous and free.⁶³⁹

The actual resolutions of the Congress were less important than the political content of the speeches. Nothing was particularly new, but rather the resolutions endorsed work that was already occurring. The CPC came out in favour of a united trade union movement, for peace, for a presence in municipal politics, for building a united front with the social credit movement in Alberta, in favour of the Soviet Union, and issued a new legislative program.⁶⁴⁰ The one area of interest was that the CPC seems to have recognized that the YCL's work was not progressing well: the CPC opted to send more CPC members into the YCL, give special attention to YCL members in CPC schools, support the YCL membership drive, circulate *The Advance*, and help popularize the needs of young people.⁶⁴¹

Organizationally, the changes were more interesting. The Eighth Dominion Convention marked the beginning of what John Manley refers to as "De-Bolshevization", or rather a move away from the organizational stipulations imposed by the early Comintern on all member sections. Individual membership cards were to be renewed, and

⁶³⁹ TFL, KC, Tim Buck, *The People VS Monopoly*, 55.

⁶⁴⁰ TFL, KC, *We Propose... Resolutions: The 8th Dominion Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, October 8th to 10th, 1937.*

⁶⁴¹ TFL, KC, *We Propose... Resolutions: The 8th Dominion Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, October 8th to 10th, 1937*, 51-54.

dues would now be collected monthly rather than at every meeting.⁶⁴² The CPC also endeavoured to begin experimenting with so-called closed branches, intended to shelter middle-class CPC members from the dangers of public exposure. The CPC would also experiment with women's-only branches (a proposal first voiced in *Discussion*), would focus on organizing professional women, and would send women organizers into non-communist women's organizations.⁶⁴³ The CPC opted to create a department on Press, Education, and Publicity with the goal of organizing regular education in all branches, provincial and national schools, the establishment of labour colleges, and to increase the circulation of *The Daily Clarion*.⁶⁴⁴

Aside from the pomp and circumstance, the Convention itself was rather uneventful. It was a carefully choreographed affair which left little room for disagreement or criticism. The planning, increased support for the Popular Front policies among the CPC's membership, combined with the growing cult-of-personality around Tim Buck, meant that the delegates did not openly argue against the resolutions as they had at earlier Central Committee Plenums. The only note of discontent occurred around the Central Committee elections: only some of the delegates were allowed to vote, and they were instructed to vote for a singular slate proposed by the outgoing CPC leadership. According to the RCMP it "gave rise to some caustic remarks and caused considerable resentment among some of the delegates."⁶⁴⁵ In the absence of any resistance to the

⁶⁴² TFL, KC, *We Propose... Resolutions: The 8th Dominion Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, October 8th to 10th, 1937*, 9.

⁶⁴³ TFL, KC, *We Propose... Resolutions: The 8th Dominion Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, October 8th to 10th, 1937*, 57-59.

⁶⁴⁴ TFL, KC, *We Propose... Resolutions: The 8th Dominion Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, October 8th to 10th, 1937*, 60-65.

⁶⁴⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937, "Bulletin #874"*, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 426.

resolutions or reports, it was clear that the Popular Front line was consolidated within the CPC.

V. From Popular Front to Democratic Front: November 1937- June 1938

In many ways the Eighth Dominion Convention marked the high-point for the CPC, not only during the Popular Front era, but for its entire history. In the immediate aftermath of the Convention –the eight months between the Convention and the Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum in June 1938 – the CPC’s work stayed more or less the same, albeit with less pull among the masses and less success than in the period prior. There were no significant changes in the CPC’s work among the unemployed, among youth, in the labour movement, and only minor changes in the movement for peace. The exception to this was in Quebec.

Less than a month after the end of the Eighth Dominion Convention, on November 9, 1937, *Clarté*, the CPC’s French-language newspaper in Quebec, was “padlocked”.⁶⁴⁶ The so-called “Padlock Law”, more properly known as the Act to Protect the Province Against Communistic Propaganda, had been passed by Maurice Duplessis’s Union Nationale government on March 24, 1937.⁶⁴⁷ The Act made it illegal to use any building to promote communism, either through holding events, or through other activities such as printing materials and even writing. In the event that the law was broken, the building would be closed –padlocked – indefinitely. Padlocking *Clarté*

⁶⁴⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #876”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 458; “Ask Ottawa Disallow Que. ‘Padlock Law’: Tim Buck Declares Banning of “Clarte” Threat to All Labor,” *The Daily Clarion*, November 10, 1937.

⁶⁴⁷ Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, trans. by Margaret Heap, *Communists in Quebec 1936-1956: The Communist Party of Canada, Labour-Progressive Party* (Montreal: Presses de l’Unité, 1982), 4.

effectively meant the end to CPC publishing initiatives in the province of Quebec. Buck, commenting on the events in *The Daily Clarion*, remarked that:

The action of Duplessis is obviously a direct threat to the labor movement. First of all the *Clarite* is not an official organ of the Communist Party; secondly, it is recognized as the semi-official mouthpiece of a large section of the trade union movement in Quebec.⁶⁴⁸

The situation was made even more dire the following day when another printing company was padlocked, the Modern Book Shop was raided, and the house of Jean Perron – leader of the Association Humanitaire, a Popular Front mass organization – was also shuttered.⁶⁴⁹

The CPC jumped into action. Within a week Jean Perron had relocated to Toronto, where the CPC was in the process of printing 25 000 copies of *Clarté*: a significant increase from the normal circulation of 3 500. The CPC, with the help of a liberal by the name of R. L. Calder,⁶⁵⁰ and his Civil Liberties Union (CLU), also launched a Canada-wide campaign against the Padlock Law.⁶⁵¹ In late November a request was given to various Toronto organizations to raise funds for the fight against the

⁶⁴⁸ “Ask Ottawa Disallow Que. ‘Padlock Law’: Tim Buck Declares Banning of “Clarte” Threat to All Labor,” *The Daily Clarion*, November 10, 1937.

⁶⁴⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #876”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 458.

⁶⁵⁰ Interestingly, the RCMP noted that Calder was simply “playing politics”, and sought to position himself to lead a potential Popular Front government in Canada. This perhaps holds water, as despite the CPC’s focus on recruiting him, Calder eventually opted to run for the CCF during the 1939 Federal Elections. What is most interesting though is that if this is true, it shows that someone who was not ideologically committed to Communism was able to use the Popular Front for their own social advancement.

Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, “Bulletin #878”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 476.

⁶⁵¹ “Unite Quebec Against Duplessis,” *The Daily Clarion*, January 3, 1938; “Quebec Liberal Flays Padlock Law,” *The Daily Clarion*, January 11, 1938; “Act - - and Act Quickly!’ Montreal Democrats Sound Call: Appeal is Sent to Thousands of Citizens, Civil Liberties Union Dissects Padlock Law in Circular,” *The Daily Clarion*, January 11, 1938.

Padlock Law⁶⁵², meetings were held denouncing the Padlock Law, a petition against both Duplessis and the Padlock Law was circulated across Canada,⁶⁵³ and the CPC printed 10 000 copies of a leaflet titled *For Social Progress* against the Padlock Law.⁶⁵⁴

Political repression continued into December. The police shut down a meeting of the CPC's local trade union commission on December 30, and on December 31 the library of the Canadian Workman's Circle was seized. Around this time the homes of Stanley Ryerson, the CPC's provincial secretary, and Evariste Dubé, the CPC's provincial chair, were also raided and padlocked.⁶⁵⁵ In mid-January the Ukrainian Labour Temple on St Lawrence Boulevard was raided⁶⁵⁶ and in February, Maxim Gorky Hall of the Russian Workers' Clubs was also padlocked.⁶⁵⁷ Numerous other homes were padlocked; one CPC member was even sentenced to two years in prison for having the audacity to break back into his own home after it had been padlocked.⁶⁵⁸

The Padlock Law was predominantly directed at the CPC and its affiliated mass organizations. Insofar as the CCF was not a significant force in Quebec, the development of the Popular Front had been different in the province of Quebec. The CPC spent far less time building electoral alliances with other political parties, and instead worked with

⁶⁵² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #877", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 475.

⁶⁵³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #879", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 494.

⁶⁵⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #880", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 39.

⁶⁵⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #880", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 38.

⁶⁵⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #882", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 51.

⁶⁵⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #883", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 61.

⁶⁵⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #906", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 358.

local organizations, like the Montreal branch of the Canadian Labour Party, often under the aegis of a formal organization known as the Front Populaire. However, by 1938, most of the other organizations had either left the Front Populaire or had been subsumed by the CPC and its mass organizations.⁶⁵⁹ As such, the CPC was the main organization to take the brunt of Duplessis's legislation.

The Padlock Law was disruptive, but did not crush the CPC in Quebec. In January, the CPC decided that both the Party and other mass organizations would hold small meetings in order to avoid repression.⁶⁶⁰ An elaborate network was established in order to continue the distribution of *Clarté*, whose sales actually increased in the short-term.⁶⁶¹ A CPC organizational meeting in March stated that there was not a feeling of general panic among the CPC membership. Some, especially those from the middle-classes, were insulated by virtue of being in the "closed" branch called Section 13.⁶⁶² While the situation was particularly bad for members of the language federations, in some ways they were able to cope better than the newer Canadian born members. Used to organizing under conditions of repression, the Ukrainians had split their membership into small units and were meeting in private homes.⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁹ An example here is Jean Perron and the Association Humanitaire. Jean Perron had been expelled from the CCF for working with the CPC, and joined the CPC soon after.

⁶⁶⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #881", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 50.

⁶⁶¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #880", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 38.

⁶⁶² Marilyn Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, The Spy Trials, and the Cold War* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1994), 91.

⁶⁶³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #884", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 80.

As repression continued, so too did the campaign against it. On April 10, 1938, an anti-Padlock Law conference was held in Toronto.⁶⁶⁴ Co-sponsored by the CLU and the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy (CLPD), the new name for the Canadian League Against War and Fascism, the conference brought together 348 delegates from unions, churches, and cultural organizations, representing a total membership of 74 745. A formal campaign, with a permanent leadership committee, was launched, and the delegates agreed to lobby the federal government to intervene and increase awareness of the Padlock Law.⁶⁶⁵ The campaign was decidedly non-combative: there was hope that, insofar as Mackenzie King had overturned Section 98, he would act against Duplessis. The hope, based in a fundamentally bourgeois understanding of the state, was misplaced.

What is perhaps most interesting about the campaign against the Padlock Law is that in the course of the effort, the CLDL was effectively abandoned in favour of work with the CLU. In late January it was announced that both the CLDL and the Citizens Defence Committee in Toronto had been liquidated, and that the legal defence work they were involved in would be delegated to the CLU.⁶⁶⁶ As of February, all work surrounding legal defence in Montreal was being done through the CLU rather than the CLDL. There was discontent with this decision: an anonymous CPC member complained that the CPC had not yet sufficiently addressed the padlock law, and that the CLU lawyers were taking a “wait and see” approach, ultimately resting on the decision of the Minister of Justice in

⁶⁶⁴ “Unions Rally Behind Padlock Conference,” *The Daily Clarion*, April 8, 1938; “Toronto meet Denounces Padlock Law,” *The Daily Clarion*, April 11, 1938.

⁶⁶⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #889”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 128-129.

⁶⁶⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #882”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 59.

Ottawa.⁶⁶⁷ This was a departure from the CPC's previous approach to legal aid work which was much more proactive. In April, the decision was made to liquidate the CLDL in BC: its assets were sold and the CPC claimed the money.⁶⁶⁸ Not everyone was happy with this decision either: a CPC member present argued that the CLDL would be necessary to defend the unemployed in the coming months. Such pleas were ignored. Other sections of the CLDL were seemingly left to fade away. What is perhaps most interesting, is that during this time, there seems to have been very little protest from A. E. Smith. This is perhaps because Smith had largely been relegated to working on Spanish solidarity efforts, but his apparent silence is still surprising given his earlier opposition to the CLDL's liquidation.

Meanwhile, the CPC continued to advance its electoral work. In late 1937 it enjoyed significant victories in Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw, with Popular Front candidates winning mayoral seats in each city and a council majority in Saskatoon.⁶⁶⁹ In Regina, the Civic Labor Association, replacing the Civic Labor League, won four seats after another year of failed initiatives and broken promises.⁶⁷⁰ In Winnipeg the CPC was able to re-elect both Jacob Penner and Andrew Billecki, and its other candidates increased their vote count. The CPC also helped the ILP mayor win his race.⁶⁷¹ In Toronto Tim Buck

⁶⁶⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #884", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 80.

⁶⁶⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #888", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 123.

⁶⁶⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #877", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 470-472.

⁶⁷⁰ Specifically, the Civic Labor Association was unable to get the province to take on more relief, and it was not able to secure loans for a housing project.

J. William Brennan, "The common people have spoken with a mighty voice': Regina's Labour City Councils, 1936-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 72-74.

⁶⁷¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #877", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 470-472.

nearly won a seat on the Board of Control, the incumbent CPC-members were re-elected, and J.B. Salsberg was elected Alderman.⁶⁷² All the CPC members ran under the auspices of the Labour Representative Association, which also included the CCF.⁶⁷³ There were also victories in Scarborough, Long Branch, Windsor, and Hamilton.

Organizationally, the CPC was also undergoing changes. In early 1938 the CPC established a Central Control Commission to investigate the morality of CPC members, especially CPC leaders.⁶⁷⁴ This indicates that as the CPC began to organizationally resemble other bourgeois political parties, the CPC leadership became increasingly concerned with its public appearance, and more specifically, with the ostentatious adherence of its leadership to contemporary bourgeois ideas of respectability and morality. The CPC began a process of reorganization away from shop nuclei and towards neighbourhood based branches, often organized along electoral districts, and intended to engage in work in their immediate areas. Branches were to be 20-30 people in size; mass branches, which were “becoming increasingly popular”, were not given size limits. Branches were to meet in clean locations, and weekly meetings were to last two hours.⁶⁷⁵ The transition away from traditional Leninist styles of organizing, which emphasized the importance of shop nuclei and closed branches, was both a process of de-Bolshevization and Canadianization. While this process was incomplete even at the outbreak of the Second World War, it marked the CPC’s transition towards organizationally modeling other bourgeois political parties.

⁶⁷² Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 58-59; David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1981), 107.

⁶⁷³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937, “Bulletin #878”,* (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 477-480.

⁶⁷⁴ John Manley, ““Communists Love Canada!”: The Communist Party of Canada, the “People” and the Popular Front, 1933-1939,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 36 (Winter 2002), 64.

⁶⁷⁵ McMaster Special Collections (MSC), Stewart Smith, *A Manual on Party Branch Work*, 6-11.

While the CPC began to resemble a bourgeois party politically and organizationally, there was still some resistance to the abandonment of revolutionary politics. At a mass meeting in Moose Jaw on January 8, 1938, A.E. Smith alluded that the combat skills the Mac-Paps were now learning in Spain would be useful upon their return to Canada.⁶⁷⁶ Smith's comments, in line with his general "leftist" tilt during the Popular Front era, ran contrary to the general positions of the CPC at that time. In mid-January, a CPC member was put in charge of the CLPD in Regina: he was told to suppress all tendencies which would give the impression that the CLPD was a revolutionary or radical organization, indicating that this was at the time an issue.⁶⁷⁷ And in early May, Buck spoke at a meeting of the National Language Bureau –the body composed of the CPC's myriad language organizations – and criticized all the language organizations for having work that was too narrow and sectarian. Buck specifically pointed to the Germans and the Ukrainians, arguing that all the language organizations needed to become "foremost proponents and champions for the culture and rights of these various nationals in Canada."⁶⁷⁸ However, on the whole, resistance to the Popular Front was more sporadic and isolated than it had been in previous years.

Despite the consolidation of the bourgeois political line within the CPC, there were indications that the Popular Front in Western Canada was breaking down. At the

⁶⁷⁶ A.E. Smith's comments on January 8, 1938, are the only recorded acknowledgement on the part of the CPC that the CPC now had, effectively, an armed wing. This oversight on the part of the majority of the CPC's leadership strongly indicates that the CPC was sincere in its abandonment of revolutionary politics. Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #880", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 35-36; Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 40-41.

⁶⁷⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #882", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 58.

⁶⁷⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #891", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 160.

Saskatchewan Provincial Conference at the end of January, Leslie Morris announced that the Social Credit Party and the CPC were now working together, and that the next election would result in a united front government.⁶⁷⁹ However, in February, the Social Credit Party opted to run its own candidate in the Edmonton-East by-election, a candidate far to the right of what would have passed through the Civic Progressive Association. Ultimately the CPC, CCF, and ILP ended up endorsing the Social Credit candidate⁶⁸⁰, but it was clear that unity was less of a priority for the Social Credit Party than it was for the CPC.

In the aftermath of the Eighth Dominion Convention, the CPC's main efforts towards building the Popular Front, aside from the campaign against the Padlock Law, were its efforts in the peace and anti-fascist movements, largely under the auspices of the CLPD. On November 19-21, 1937, the CLPD held its National Congress in Toronto.⁶⁸¹ The Congress, which gathered delegates from 114 organizations, but this time only represented 300 000 members, was something of a disappointment. Leading up to the conference, there was a rumour in Vancouver that the FMPB was going to be liquidated. Tom Ewen clarified the misunderstanding saying that the CLPD and FMPB had different mandates, and that the latter was not going to be liquidated into the CLPD.⁶⁸² However, the fact that such a rumour existed indicated that there was a lack of clarity on precisely what the CLPD and FMPB were to do. At the Congress itself membership was down, and participation from the unions was declining: the president of the TLC was absent. The

⁶⁷⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #883", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 68.

⁶⁸⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #885", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 81.

⁶⁸¹ "Toronto Is Site of Historic Peace Parley," *The Daily Clarion*, November 20, 1937.

⁶⁸² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #872", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 390.

Congress heard reports from China and Spain, but noted that despite a large membership, organizational weakness had prevented the CLPD from engaging in major campaigns.⁶⁸³

The main thrust of the CLPD during this period was anti-fascist work. This took the form of calls to boycott Fascist countries –chiefly Japan – as well as solidarity against fascism in Canada –chiefly against the Padlock Law.⁶⁸⁴ The CLPD heavily emphasized the Japanese boycott and Chinese solidarity work, sponsoring speaking tours by Chinese officials⁶⁸⁵, and holding mass meetings which sought to raise awareness about Japan's occupation of China.⁶⁸⁶ On February 7, Norman Bethune's medical unit, sponsored by the CPC and the CLPD, arrived in China.⁶⁸⁷

Despite the focus on China, Spanish solidarity work did not suffer. Recruitment for the Mac-Paps continued until early March, when for reasons which were at the time unknown, the CPC was instructed by the CPUSA to stop.⁶⁸⁸ Fundraising through the FMPB transitioned from gathering gifts for the Mac-Paps in late 1937⁶⁸⁹ to rehabilitation for wounded Mac-Pap veterans in 1938.⁶⁹⁰ Rehabilitation was a primary focus for the

⁶⁸³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #877", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 466-469; "Ottawa Urged to Place Embargo on Japan: Peace Congress Asks Canadians to Boycott Goods," *The Daily Clarion*, November 22, 1937.

⁶⁸⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #888", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 118.

⁶⁸⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #879", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 490; "Dr Tao Welcome in Canadian Cities," *The Daily Clarion*, January 13, 1938.

⁶⁸⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #885", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 84.

⁶⁸⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #885", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 84.

⁶⁸⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #886", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 94.

⁶⁸⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #878", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 481-482.

⁶⁹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #885", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 91.

FMPB national committee towards mid-1938; on May 25, the FMPB leadership set a goal of raising \$1 500 per month for rehabilitation.⁶⁹¹ At the time the FMPB expected that over 100 wounded Canadians would be returning from Spain in the coming months. As the situation in Spain became more desperate, focus shifted to pressuring the British to abandon their policy of non-intervention. As victory in Spain seemed increasingly unlikely, cracks formed in the CASD; at the CASD's annual conference in Toronto, May 7-8, 1937,⁶⁹² there was some controversy over how the money collected had been spent, and Ben Spence of the CCF resigned from the executive.⁶⁹³ Despite the setbacks the CASD opted to hold another Spanish Aid Week in June,⁶⁹⁴ and wanted to have the Canadian government recognize the CASD as an official Canadian relief agency.

In response to the growing threat of domestic fascism,⁶⁹⁵ the CPC and CLPD increased their anti-fascist activities.⁶⁹⁶ In March, the CLU was successful in getting Quebec to put a fascist leader on trial.⁶⁹⁷ At the beginning of April, the CPC held anti-fascist rallies in both Toronto and Montreal. The police attacked both rallies, and in Montreal 5 CPC members, including Evariste Dubé, were arrested.⁶⁹⁸ The CPC also attacked fascism propagandistically. In March, the CPC published a pamphlet by Fred

⁶⁹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #893", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 184-185; "Conference in Aid of Spain Maps Drive to Increase Contributions: Canadian Organizations Agree to Cable \$1,500 To Spain Every Month," *The Daily Clarion*, May 9, 1938.

⁶⁹² "Canada Will Answer Spain's Call for Aid At Week-End Parley," *The Daily Clarion*, May 7, 1938.

⁶⁹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #892", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 169-171.

⁶⁹⁴ "Launch Spain Aid Campaign," *The Daily Clarion*, May 23, 1938.

⁶⁹⁵ In 1938 the RCMP began including the activities of fascist organizations in its Security Bulletins.

⁶⁹⁶ "Mounties Launch Probe Into Arms Smuggling By Fascists in Quebec," *The Daily Clarion*, April 18, 1938; "Ottawa Probes Arms Smuggling by Quebec Fascists," *The Daily Clarion*, May 3, 1938; "Fascists Call National Meet For Kingston," *The Daily Clarion*, May 9, 1938.

⁶⁹⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #884", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 79.

⁶⁹⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #888", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 118.

Rose titled *Fascism Over Canada: An Expose*. The pamphlet was explicitly anti-fascist and mentioned a number of Canadian fascists by name, including Adrien Arcand.⁶⁹⁹

However, in the spirit of the Democratic Front, the pamphlet did not make the case that fascism was anti-working class, but rather that fascism was anti-Canadian. Rose argued that

Fascism is anti-Canadian and Canadians hate it. But this hate must find expression in a powerful democratic front demanding a public investigation of all forms of fascist activity and its Canadian and foreign backers.⁷⁰⁰

While the CPC's work in the peace and anti-fascist movements advanced in the period following the Eighth Dominion Convention, its work in the more traditional realms of the Popular Front –the labour movement, the youth movement, and the unemployed movement – stagnated. In large part this was due to a shift in focus: insofar as the Popular Front priorities switched from the CCF to the Liberals, the CPC was now focusing on drawing middle-class anti-fascists into the Popular Front. Thus, the more traditional working-class oriented activities of the early years of the Popular Front fell by the wayside.

In the labour movement, the relationship between the AFL and the CIO continued to deteriorate. After failed unity talks in late 1937, the CIO opted to form its own independent federation in April, 1938. The CPC was, however, successful in stopping the split from crossing the border for the time being. In 1938 the CPC consolidated its position within local labour councils and union leaderships in Montreal,⁷⁰¹ Winnipeg,⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁹ MSC, Fred Rose, *Fascism Over Canada: An Expose*, 12.

⁷⁰⁰ MSC, Fred Rose, *Fascism Over Canada: An Expose*, 47.

⁷⁰¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #882", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 56.

Toronto,⁷⁰³ Regina,⁷⁰⁴ and Vancouver. There were also a few minor strikes and organizing drives: plans were made to organize the General Motors plant in Regina,⁷⁰⁵ there was a strike of artists in Toronto,⁷⁰⁶ and the Canadian Seamen's Union, led by CPC member Pat Sullivan, struck on the Great Lakes in April.⁷⁰⁷ The level of activity was, however, comparatively low: it seems that despite the CPC's intentions to engage in organizing drives independent from the CIO, its plans did not come to fruition. In turn, the CIO faced tremendous difficulties after the strike wave of 1937; for instance, by the end of 1938 the SWOC in Canada had been reduced to 16% of its former size.⁷⁰⁸ Indeed, as the CPC's focus shifted away from industrial work, the CPC even stopped actively recruiting from some unions: in April the CPC opted to specifically not recruit from the Canadian Seamen's Union, so as to avoid incurring accusations that the union was run by Communists.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #892", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 181.

⁷⁰³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #880", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 33.

⁷⁰⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #881", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 48.

⁷⁰⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #881", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 47-48.

⁷⁰⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #888", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 119.

⁷⁰⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #889", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 127; "4,800 Union Seamen Look to Future on Lakes with Confidence," *The Daily Clarion*, February 15, 1938; "Seamen's Union Ties Up 50 Lake Ships," *The Daily Clarion*, April 18, 1938.

For more information on the CSU, see: Jim Green, *Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1986); Patrick Sullivan, *Red Sails on the Great Lakes* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955).

⁷⁰⁸ Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 29.

⁷⁰⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #889", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 127.

Among the unemployed, the situation was similar to the period preceding the Eighth Dominion Convention. The CPC made numerous attempts to hold conferences and initiate organization, but with little success. There were sporadic strikes and actions – on February 15, 200 men in Port Arthur occupied a grocery store⁷¹⁰, and on April 6, 2000 relief recipients in Calgary went on strike against reduced food allowances – but it is unclear to what extent the CPC was involved in these. In BC the situation was different, in that the CPC actively sought to undermine the organizing efforts of the unemployed and channel their activities in less militant directions. In February, at the behest of the CPC’s central leadership, the BC section of the CPC sent out invitations to hold a conference towards enacting a bill on unemployment insurance.⁷¹¹ The invitations elicited little interest. In late March, a trek to Ottawa was proposed by the single unemployed in Vancouver: leading CPC members voiced their disagreement with the proposal.⁷¹² Despite the protests of the CPC, agitation around the idea of a trek continued until May.⁷¹³

However, on May 20, 1938, the single unemployed in Vancouver occupied the Central Post Office, the Georgia Hotel, and the Vancouver Art Gallery, largely in response to the closure of the relief camps, effectively ending the possibility of another trek.⁷¹⁴ The occupiers were supported by the CPC, CCF, CLPD, and local unions:

⁷¹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #885”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 87-88.

⁷¹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #884”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 78.

⁷¹² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #888”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 119.

⁷¹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #891”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 161.

⁷¹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #892”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 176; John Manley,

women's auxiliaries prepared food. The following day, the occupiers in the Georgia Hotel were convinced to leave after being paid \$500. However, the occupations in the Central Post Office and Vancouver Art Gallery continued until June 19, when they were forcibly ended by the police with tear gas.⁷¹⁵ The resulting riot caused \$1 500 in damage in the post office, \$10 000 in damage outside of the post office, and resulted in 22 arrests. Later in the day, 15 000 people gathered at the Powell Street grounds to protest the treatment of the unemployed workers. 3 000 of the demonstrators formed a break-away march and marched to the police station and demanded the release of the 22 arrested occupiers.⁷¹⁶ Tensions increased and demonstrators began pelting the police station with rocks. It was only after the intervention of local CCF politician, Harold Winch, that the crowd dispersed.⁷¹⁷

In the period following the Eighth Dominion Convention, the youth movement was the weakest area of the Popular Front. Despite the concessions made to the French-Canadian and Catholic youth groups at the previous CYC, in late March 1938, the Catholic youth organizations were ordered by the Catholic Church to withdraw from the

“‘Starve, Be Damned!’ Communists and Canada’s Urban Unemployed, 1929-39,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 79 (September 1998), 488; James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 192; Steve Brodie, *Bloody Sunday, Vancouver 1938* (Vancouver: Young Communist League, 1974), 12-14.

It is interesting to note that these occupations were not reported on in *The Daily Clarion*.

⁷¹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #894”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 200; “Tear Gas Used Against B.C. Unemployed,” *The Daily Clarion*, June 19, 1938; Steve Brodie, *Bloody Sunday, Vancouver 1938* (Vancouver: Young Communist League, 1974), 15-16.

⁷¹⁶ Steve Brodie, *Bloody Sunday, Vancouver 1938* (Vancouver: Young Communist League, 1974), 20-22.

⁷¹⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #894”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 201.

An account of the occupations can be found in Arthur Turner’s *Somewhere – a perfect place*. While Turner totally erases the role of the CPC in the occupations, he corroborates that Winch intervened to stop the demonstrations from escalating.

Arthur J Turner, *Somewhere – a perfect place* (Vancouver: The Boag Foundation, 1981), 43-44.

CYC due to the presence of the YCL.⁷¹⁸ The YCL responded by cutting down the number of YCL members represented in the leadership of the Montreal CYC, and appealed for non-communist youth organizations to pressure the Catholic youth organizations to remain within the CYC.⁷¹⁹ The YCL was unsuccessful.⁷²⁰ The YCL was initially denied use of the Toronto school board premises for the upcoming CYC,⁷²¹ a decision which was eventually reversed.⁷²² It was also revealed that both the United Church youth groups, as well as the YMCA, would seek a change in leadership at the CYC: both organizations wanted Norman Levy and Kenneth Woodsworth gone as they were suspected of being Communists.⁷²³

The Third Canadian Youth Congress, which opened May 21, 1938 in Toronto,⁷²⁴ was fairly uneventful. There were fewer delegates than in years previous; at the 1938 Congress, only 567 delegates from 469 organizations were represented⁷²⁵. The resolutions passed were straightforward, and there was little controversy at the Congress itself.⁷²⁶ The Congress passed a series of anti-war resolutions, called for a boycott of Japanese goods, argued in favour of a 40-hour work week. Resolutions were also passed

⁷¹⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #888", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 115-116.

⁷¹⁹ "Catholic Youth Announce Intention to Stay in Youth Congress Movement," *The Daily Clarion*, April 8, 1938.

Despite the title of the article in *The Daily Clarion*, the only Catholic Youth who opted to remain were members of secular organizations.

⁷²⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #889", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 135; Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 70.

⁷²¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #890", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 145.

⁷²² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #892", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 171.

⁷²³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #892", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 172.

⁷²⁴ "Against Reaction Canadian Youth Intervene For Democracy," *The Daily Clarion*, April 18, 1938.

⁷²⁵ Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 70-74.

⁷²⁶ "Unity Keynote of Third Youth Congress," *The Daily Clarion*, May 23, 1938.

for a minimum wage of 16 for industrial work, for unemployment insurance, for free education, and for public housing. Most notably, the Congress passed a resolution against the Padlock Law.⁷²⁷ However, insofar as the YCL had failed to transform the Youth Congress into an actual movement, the resolutions were essentially inconsequential: the Youth Congress was incapable of putting them into action.

The mixed results of CPC activities in the period following the Eighth Dominion Convention in many ways were reflected in May Day, 1938. In many locations, the Popular Front had all but collapsed. In Toronto, for instance, there was participation from the president of the TLC and Ben Spence of the CCF, but the demonstrations were smaller than in recent years, and most of the organizations present were affiliated to the CPC.⁷²⁸ Similar developments unfolded in Sudbury, Port Arthur, and Winnipeg.⁷²⁹ In Regina, the celebrations went as far as to condemn the CCF for running independent candidates.⁷³⁰ In Montreal due to police repression it was impossible to hold a rally.⁷³¹ However, there was cooperation between the CPC and CCF in Edmonton, where the main speeches talked about the necessity of unity in defence of Canadian democracy, and in Vancouver May Day celebrations saw cooperation between the CCF, the CPC, and

⁷²⁷ Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 72-73; "Youth Denounces King Foreign Policy," *The Daily Clarion*, May 26, 1938; "Special Youth Dep't Is Urged on Ottawa," *The Daily Clarion*, May 26, 1938.

⁷²⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #891", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 153-155; "Hundreds, Thousands Celebrate May Day Throughout Dominion," *The Daily Clarion*, May 3, 1938.

⁷²⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #891", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 156-157.

⁷³⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #891", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 157

⁷³¹ "Padlocked Montreal Celebrates May Day," *The Daily Clarion*, May 3, 1938.

various unions.⁷³² All across Canada, however, the political tone was different: O'Canada and God Save the Queen were sung at rallies alongside the Internationale, and the Union Jack headed the parades in Vancouver and Winnipeg.⁷³³ The CPC had moved away from revolutionary politics and a working-class orientation: it sought to openly advertise this change, the "Canadianization" of the CPC, publicly in their May Day demonstrations.

VI. The Democratic Front: May 1938 – September 1939

⁷³² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #891", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 159; "Hundreds, Thousands Celebrate May Day Throughout Dominion," *The Daily Clarion*, May 3, 1938.

⁷³³ "We Take Our Stand For Democracy – Carr," *The Daily Clarion*, April 30, 1938; "Millions March in May Day Parades," *The Daily Clarion*, May 1, 1938.

Attempting to Build the Democratic Front

It is difficult to say precisely when the Democratic Front period began. Insofar as the time after the Eighth Dominion Convention was a period of transition from the Popular Front to the Democratic Front, there were elements of both lines in the work of the CPC during this time. For instance, Fred Rose's March 1938 pamphlet *Fascism Over Canada: An Expose* called for a "powerful democratic front"⁷³⁴ to defeat fascism. However, it is possible to say that by May 1938, the Democratic Front line had become consolidated in both the practice and ideology of the CPC.⁷³⁵

The first definitive indication that the CPC had transitioned to the Democratic Front was a long article in the May 21, 1938 issue of *The Daily Clarion*. In "Communists Stand Four-Square For Democracy", Buck greeted the Federal Liberal convention and stated that:

The Communist Party reiterates that it stands four-square for democracy and that it is ready to cooperate not only with all forces in the labor movement, but also with Liberals and Conservatives, in the defense of Canadian democratic institutions.⁷³⁶

Instead of simply building an electoral coalition with the CCF, the CPC now openly appealed to Liberals and even progressive Conservatives, in the defence of the institutions of Canadian bourgeois democracy. This occurred alongside a further shift away from the CCF; in the May 14, 1938 issue of *The Daily Clarion*, Tim Buck attacked

⁷³⁴ MSC, Fred Rose, *Fascism Over Canada: An Expose*, 47.

⁷³⁵ "Defense of Democracy and the Class Struggle," *The Daily Clarion*, May 14, 1938.

⁷³⁶ "Communists Stand Four-Square For Democracy: Tim Buck," *The Daily Clarion*, May 21, 1938.

Woodsworth using arguments quoted from Stewart Smith's Third Period magnum-opus, *Socialism and the CCF*.⁷³⁷

The CPC's submission to the Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, also in May 1938, indicated the further consolidation of the Democratic Front perspective.⁷³⁸ The CPC argued that the problem of Dominion-Provincial relations was actually the problem of meeting the needs of the Canadian people.⁷³⁹ It claimed that the creation of Canada was a process of unity between two founding nations, the French-Canadian nation and the Anglo-Canadian nation, but that the unity was incomplete. In order for the Canadian government to fix the problems of meeting the people's needs there would need to be an increased centralization of responsibilities in the federal government.⁷⁴⁰ However, for there to be proper centralization, there needed to be complete national unification.⁷⁴¹ The CPC argued that true national unification would require a democratic progressive movement, and would: establish a Canadian Bill of Rights, provide equal rights for French-Canadians, freedom of trade union organization, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, universal franchise, proportional representation, and the abolition of the senate.⁷⁴² The CPC also called for amendments to the British North America Act, suggesting that while

⁷³⁷ "Defense of Democracy and the Class Struggle," *The Daily Clarion*, May 14, 1938.

⁷³⁸ "Rowell Commission To Hear C.P. Brief," *The Daily Clarion*, May 28, 1938.

⁷³⁹ TFL, KC, *Toward Democratic Unity for Canada: Submission of the Dominion Committee of the Communist Party to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations*, 5.

⁷⁴⁰ TFL, KC, *Toward Democratic Unity for Canada: Submission of the Dominion Committee of the Communist Party to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations*, 9.

⁷⁴¹ "Buck Outlines Path to National Unity," *The Daily Clarion*, June 1, 1938.

Interestingly enough, James Struthers also argues that poor dominion-provincial relations were one of the reasons that a "New Deal" was not implemented in Canada.

James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 162.

⁷⁴² TFL, KC, *Toward Democratic Unity for Canada: Submission of the Dominion Committee of the Communist Party to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations*, 13-14.

the British should be asked, it was ultimately the job of the Canadian people to take control of their own affairs.⁷⁴³ The submission ended with an appeal to the ostensibly democratic traditions of Canada:

On such a democratic foundation must national unification be established. The heroism and self-sacrifice of our forefathers, whose democratic struggle of one hundred years ago created Canada, places upon the Canadian people of today the solemn obligation to defeat the forces seeking to block the democratic unification of the nation. True to the great traditions of the past, we must go forward towards a fuller and more completely democratic unity of Canada. On this path will be found prosperity, freedom and happiness for the Canadian people.⁷⁴⁴

The political line contained in the Rowell-Sirois submission was rearticulated during the CPC's Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum, held from June 3-6, 1938. In his main speech, titled "A Democratic Front for Canada", Buck articulated that the possibility of another world war was at an all-time high.⁷⁴⁵ Earlier in May, Buck had told the CPC leadership that the USSR would be at war with Germany by the end of 1938, and that the CPC should be prepared for any possibilities.⁷⁴⁶ Fear of the possibility of another world war was the main driving force for the transition to the Democratic Front.

The focus of the CPC moved further away from class, and towards a criticism of the Hepburn-Duplessis axis.⁷⁴⁷ Buck argued that reactionary finance capital was attempting to build an alliance in Canada across party lines; Hepburn and Duplessis were

⁷⁴³ TFL, KC, *Toward Democratic Unity for Canada: Submission of the Dominion Committee of the Communist Party to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations*, 100.

⁷⁴⁴ TFL, KC, *Toward Democratic Unity for Canada: Submission of the Dominion Committee of the Communist Party to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations*, 110.

⁷⁴⁵ MSC, Tim Buck, "A Democratic Front for Canada" in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 8.

⁷⁴⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #891", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 137.

⁷⁴⁷ "Hepburn Flatly Opposes National Unity," *The Daily Clarion*, May 3, 1938.

examples of this.⁷⁴⁸ In opposition though was the democratic front, which was strengthened by the “process of differentiation within the two old-line parties.”⁷⁴⁹ Thus even dissident Conservatives, such as Herridge and the New Democracy movement, had a place within the CPC’s conception of “the people”. Buck articulated that the question of socialism was not being placed in the background, but rather was being put in its proper place relative to the other struggles of the day. Socialism in Canada would require national unification, national unification would require the Democratic Front, and the Democratic Front required unity with progressive-minded Liberals and dissident Conservatives.⁷⁵⁰

The organizational report, presented by Sam Carr, pointed to a series of problems the CPC faced at this time. First, there were too few industrial workers leading party work. Special emphasis was to be placed on the promotion of industrial workers to leading positions.⁷⁵¹ Second, there were far too many paid functionaries of the CPC: Carr noted that increasingly there was a conception of promotion within the CPC in which members believed that promotion would immediately lead to a full-time paid organizing position. Connected to this was the idea that certain members of the CPC leadership were entitled to have a staff: the example given by Carr was “having a girl in the office that

⁷⁴⁸ MSC, Tim Buck, “A Democratic Front for Canada” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 22.

⁷⁴⁹ MSC, Tim Buck, “A Democratic Front for Canada” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 23.

⁷⁵⁰ MSC, Tim Buck, “A Democratic Front for Canada” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 41.

⁷⁵¹ MSC, Sam Carr, “Building the Communist Party” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 56.

you could turn to every minute” for duties such as stenography.⁷⁵² This indicates that not only was there a reproduction of the gendered division of labour within the CPC, but that careerism was a defining feature of the CPC’s leadership. Combined with Carr’s criticisms of the CPC’s educational work, it is clear that the CPC’s leadership, in June 1938, was not putting working-class politics in command.

The CPC also rearticulated its desire to become a mass party. Carr stated that there “still persists in our ranks the much condemned attitude of snobbish selectiveness...” which resulted in workers not being recruited if CPC members felt they were not ready to become members.⁷⁵³ This was repeated by Stewart Smith, who added that the CPC must seek out “the enrolment of masses of non-Communist Canadian workers who desire to oppose fascism... .”⁷⁵⁴ In order to make CPC membership more appealing to every-day Canadians, members were instructed to abandon discipline and strict regimentation, especially for Anglo-Saxon workers who were not nationally predisposed to Communist styles of work.⁷⁵⁵ By opening up CPC membership to non-communists, the CPC abandoned the last vestiges of Leninist organizational principles.

There is some indication that there was pushback against the Democratic Front policies. Fergus McKean was criticized for arguing that the Liberal Pattullo government

⁷⁵² MSC, Sam Carr, “Building the Communist Party” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 47.

⁷⁵³ MSC, Sam Carr, “Building the Communist Party” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 45.

⁷⁵⁴ MSC, Stewart Smith, “The Party Recruiting Drive in Southern Ontario” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 73.

⁷⁵⁵ MSC, Sam Carr, “Building the Communist Party” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 48.

in BC was not progressive.⁷⁵⁶ Carr corrected McKean, saying that the Pattullo government was susceptible to pressure from below. Furthermore, any attacks on the Pattullo government could force them into the arms of the Hepburn-Duplessis Axis: the CPC should instead be trying to win them over to the Democratic Front.⁷⁵⁷ Given the history of the CPC in BC, it is not particularly surprising that once again, opposition to the shift to the right came from that province.

Throughout the summer of 1938 the CPC continued its mass work much in the same vein as it had during the time before the Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum. With the CLPD and its sub-organizations, the CPC initiated a fundraising drive in June for Spanish aid. Recruitment for the Mac-Paps picked up at the Thirteenth Plenum, but it was to be limited to fit, single men with previous military training and who were reliable anti-fascists.⁷⁵⁸ In response to a convention of Canadian fascists, an anti-fascist demonstration was organized by the CLPD on July 4 in Toronto at Massey Hall, which attracted over 10 000 people.⁷⁵⁹ In mid-August peace demonstrations were held throughout Canada, though the CLPD was disappointed in the turn-out. In Toronto a

⁷⁵⁶ What is particularly damning for the CPC is that as late as 1937, Pattullo had resisted passing any sort of labour legislation, in hopes of undermining the CIO. It was only after he was pushed by his Minister of Labour that legislation was passed.

Heather Jensen, "A History of Legal Exclusion: Labour Relations Laws and British Columbia's Agricultural Workers, 1937-1975," *Labour/Le Travail*, 73 (Spring 2014), 71.

⁷⁵⁷ MSC, Sam Carr, "Building the Communist Party" in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 58-59.

⁷⁵⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #893", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 184.

⁷⁵⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #896", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 234.

torchlight march attracted over 4 000 marchers, but in the end it was revealed that most came to simply see the spectacle and were not interested in the speakers.⁷⁶⁰

Work among the unemployed also picked up, as was common during summer months. In the aftermath of the occupations in Vancouver, unemployed in BC began flocking to Victoria demanding work.⁷⁶¹ On June 19, 1938, the CPC was able to leverage the occupations and formed a new unemployed organization: the BC Federation on Unemployment. At its inception it included 14 545 members from groups such as the CPC, CCF, YCL, unions, and the local Parent-Teacher Association.⁷⁶² As mentioned earlier, this was typical of the CPC's strategy towards the unemployed movement during the Popular Front era: the CPC constantly sought to reign-in militancy, and channel efforts towards electoral and "respectable" endeavors.⁷⁶³ Fearing a confrontation with a newly resurgent unemployed movement in BC, the provincial government capitulated and promised temporary relief, transportation, and jobs to the demonstrating unemployed on July 8, 1938.⁷⁶⁴

Throughout the rest of Canada the movement was less successful. While there was an increase in activity in Western Canada, this led more often than not to arrests rather than results. In Regina, the model-city of the Popular Front, the CPC agitated local

⁷⁶⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #898", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 248-249.

⁷⁶¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #895", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 214-216; Steve Brodie, *Bloody Sunday, Vancouver 1938* (Vancouver: Young Communist League, 1974), 22.

⁷⁶² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #895", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 217-218.

⁷⁶³ Steve Brodie, a leader of 1938 Vancouver occupations, would later write that CPC party discipline often came into conflict with what he described as an "adventurist spirit."

Steve Brodie, *Bloody Sunday, Vancouver 1938* (Vancouver: Young Communist League, 1974), 11.

⁷⁶⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #896", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 227.

unemployed workers and convinced them to occupy the Post Office on July 19.⁷⁶⁵ A local CPC member and city-councillor, Reverend S.B. East, promised relief for a limited time on behalf of the city: the unemployed, led by the CPC, had lost their struggle against a CPC-backed city council. In Winnipeg, the CPC launched a campaign primarily against the disenfranchisement of the unemployed.⁷⁶⁶ In Ontario the situation was worse: given that the Single Men's Unemployed Association in Toronto had been reduced to 80 active members out of a paper membership of 600, the CPC actively undermined any attempts by the Association to hold marches, demonstrations, sit-down strikes, or a trek to Ottawa. According to the RCMP, the CPC was concerned with embarrassing the federal government and emboldening Hepburn's provincial Liberals.⁷⁶⁷ Instead, in September the CPC sent agitators across Southern Ontario in order to encourage unemployed workers to congregate in Toronto, with the goal of making unemployment an issue in the upcoming municipal elections. The task of organizing the unemployed for action was subordinated to the CPC's electoral goals.

Beginning of the Long Decline

Towards the end of the summer, cracks began to appear in the Popular Front in the West. In Alberta, a united front proposal of the CPC was defeated at the provincial CCF convention in July; Elmer Roper stated that it was unworthy of consideration. The

⁷⁶⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #896", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 228.

⁷⁶⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #900", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 277.

⁷⁶⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #899", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 268.

CCF also voted down a motion to work with other groups, saying that the CCF was the only alternative to other parties.⁷⁶⁸ On August 1, 1938, the CPC in Alberta issued a circular clarifying the conception of the united front. Even though the CCF had rebuked the CPC, the CPC would still work towards unity. The CPC was also still sympathetic to the Social Credit Party. However, the CPC argued that the Social Credit movement was opening space for reactionaries insofar as it was not living up to its promises. The CPC was to sharpen its criticisms of the CCF and Social Credit leaders.⁷⁶⁹ Most significantly though, the circular stated that independent party work was the most important aspect of the CPC's work at that time.⁷⁷⁰ A similar problem arose in Saskatchewan, when in Regina the Civic Labor Association split during the provincial elections: the CPC and left-CCFers ran under the Labor-Progressive Association ticket, whereas right-social Democrats ran Mayor Elison in the provincial elections.⁷⁷¹ Both instances marked a sharp departure from the earlier Popular Front focus on unity.

The largest victory of the CPC in mid-1938 was the 1938 TLC Convention in Niagara Falls, held from September 12-17.⁷⁷² Of the 550 delegates, 102 were CPC members. In the lead-up to the convention, CPC members were instructed to have their local union organizations pass unity resolutions with regard to the split between the AFL

⁷⁶⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #897", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 239.

⁷⁶⁹ "Circular from Alberta Provincial Committee, Communist Party of Canada, August 1, 1938," quoted in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #898", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 251.

⁷⁷⁰ "Circular from Alberta Provincial Committee, Communist Party of Canada, August 1, 1938," quoted in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #898", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 252.

⁷⁷¹ J. William Brennan, "The common people have spoken with a mighty voice': Regina's Labour City Councils, 1936-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 76-77.

⁷⁷² "Labor 'Parliament' Gathers At Niagara," *The Daily Clarion*, September 12, 1938.

and CIO.⁷⁷³ Forty-six local labour bodies submitted unity motions. The CPC was given a considerable amount of latitude at the convention by Pat Draper, and had all of its major resolutions –on unity, Spain, and the peace movement, among other issues – passed.⁷⁷⁴ The CPC choice for AFL representative overwhelmingly won his election. And the request from the AFL to expel the CIO was defeated. The RCMP reported that the right-wing expressed annoyance at being unable to pass motions without the approval of the CPC.⁷⁷⁵

The success of the TLC convention was short-lived. On September 29, the British and French governments signed an agreement with Nazi Germany allowing Hitler to annex Czechoslovakia in exchange for peace.⁷⁷⁶ The Munich Agreement sounded the death knell for the Popular Front: the Communist Parties of the world had spent the past four years trying to build up an alliance between the Soviet Union and their respective governments to prevent the alignment of the bourgeois democracies with fascism. Their efforts were unsuccessful: it increasingly appeared as though Hitler, now with guarantees of peace to the west, would begin moving east.

⁷⁷³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #899", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 262-264; "Let Canadian Workers Decide Their Own Policy," *The Daily Clarion*, September 12, 1938; Patrick Sullivan, *Red Sails on the Great Lakes* (Toronto: Macmillan 1955), 57.

⁷⁷⁴ "Help Put an End to International Banditry Labor Congress Demands of Ottawa in Crisis," *The Daily Clarion*, September 13, 1938; "Labor Demands Its Rights," *The Daily Clarion*, September 13, 1938; "Labor Asks Ottawa Outlaw Company 'Unions'," *The Daily Clarion*, September 14, 1938; "Hearty Applause Plea For Unity At Trades Congress," *The Daily Clarion*, September 15, 1938; "Cheering 600 Delegates Vote for Labor Unity," *The Daily Clarion*, September 16, 1938; "Trade Congress Stress Need for Dominion-Wide Organizational Drive," *The Daily Clarion*, September 16, 1938; "Trades Congress Demands Parliament Meet," *The Daily Clarion*, September 17, 1938; Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959* (Toronto: NC Press, 1978), 265.

⁷⁷⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #901", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 284-287.

⁷⁷⁶ "Chamberlain Meets Dictators At Munich," *The Daily Clarion*, September 29, 1938.

The CPC almost immediately condemned the Munich Agreement.⁷⁷⁷ On October 3, 1938, the *Clarion* editorial stated that “Munich was a sign-post on the road which Chamberlain has plotted out to lead to fascism in Britain and France, to war against the Soviet Union.”⁷⁷⁸ The editorial also argued that Mackenzie King had betrayed Canadians by not allowing a parliamentary debate on war policy, and that parliament needed to be recalled to open the debate. Stewart Smith repeated the sentiments in a speech on October 9. He argued that by doing nothing, Mackenzie King had deprived Canada a voice on the world stage. If Canada kept up its policy, the forces of war would force Canada’s hand.⁷⁷⁹ He also attacked the CCF for agreeing with Chamberlain, and appealed for CCF members who wanted to work for peace to work with the CPC.⁷⁸⁰

Around this time Tim Buck, accompanied by Earl Browder, rushed to Europe, likely for an emergency meeting of the ECCI. In mid-October the ECCI released a statement which blamed the sectarianism of the social-democrats for the Munich Agreement. “The Munich betrayal could have been avoided if the numerous and pressing appeals by the Communist International for united action had not been rejected by the Labor and Socialist International”⁷⁸¹ Buck was one of the signatories of the statement. The statement marked the informal end of the Popular Front era internationally: Munich was a sign that the strategy had failed.

⁷⁷⁷ “Hitler Demands Colonies: Dictators Press To Carve Up Europe,” *The Daily Clarion*, September 30, 1938; “Protests Mount At Chamberlain Betrayal,” *The Daily Clarion*, October 1, 1938; “Munich Pact Leave ‘Powers’ Shorn of Power,” *The Daily Clarion*, October 1, 1938.

⁷⁷⁸ *The Daily Clarion*, October 3, 1938 quoted in: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #902”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 296.

⁷⁷⁹ MSC, Alderman Stewart Smith, *Has Chamberlain Saved Peace?*, 4-7.

⁷⁸⁰ MSC, Alderman Stewart Smith, *Has Chamberlain Saved Peace?*, 22.

⁷⁸¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #903”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 312.

In Canada, the Popular Front began to crumble. It is unclear if this was simply the continuation of a process that had begun mid-1938, or was a direct result of the new approach at the international level. Regardless, in late October the ILP in Winnipeg declined to work with the CPC on local election work.⁷⁸² Simultaneously in Winnipeg, CPC members, most of whom had been recruited during the Popular Front era, stopped showing up to meetings: attendance in Ward 2 was as low as 25%.⁷⁸³ While the CLPD still advanced the campaign for a boycott of goods from fascist countries, it had difficulty attracting crowds for its rallies against the Munich Agreement.⁷⁸⁴ The Munich Agreement also negatively impacted relations with the CCF.⁷⁸⁵

Around the same time as the Munich Agreement was signed, the FMPB received notice that the Mac-Paps were being demobilized and would return to Canada.⁷⁸⁶ At the time of demobilization, over 1 200 Canadians had gone overseas to fight. By October 1, 1938, 108 had returned to Canada.⁷⁸⁷ The FMPB shifted its focus towards fundraising for the returning soldiers, but even here it had problems: as the Popular Front crumbled, the FMPB lost access to many of the people from whom it normally would have raised funds. The funding situation was dire enough that A.A. McLeod was forced to do a special fundraising tour through Western Europe to simply get the Mac-Paps on boats back to

⁷⁸² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #904", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 321.

⁷⁸³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #904", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 332.

⁷⁸⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #905", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 338.

⁷⁸⁵ Tim Buck eds. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, *Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1977), 282.

⁷⁸⁶ Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 98; William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 187.

⁷⁸⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #902", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 301.

North America.⁷⁸⁸ The first group of returned Mac-Paps arrived in Halifax on February 9, 1939.⁷⁸⁹ By the end of February the majority of soldiers had returned, despite some trouble crossing borders.⁷⁹⁰ Of the over 1 200 who left for Spain, 566 were dead or missing, and 33 were taken prisoner. Upon their return the CPC organized massive welcoming celebrations: 10 000 in Toronto, and 5 000 in Vancouver.⁷⁹¹

In the aftermath of the Munich Agreement, the unemployed movement continued to deteriorate. Occupations of public buildings in Port Arthur and Edmonton in November ended in failure.⁷⁹² In Regina, at the behest of CPC organizers, the unemployed worked towards an increase in relief allowances. They were advised to embarrass civic and provincial authorities, in a city which was administered by CPC-backed politicians.⁷⁹³ This conflict constituted an example of class struggle internal to the Popular Front, between a bourgeoisified CPC leadership and civic administration on one side, and a proletarian rank-and-file on the other. The CPC's plans for the unemployed in Toronto –to use them as a talking point during the municipal elections- fell apart in

⁷⁸⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #904", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 328; Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 102; William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1990), 192.

⁷⁸⁹ Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 103.

⁷⁹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 377; "400 Mac-Paps Coming Home," *The Daily Clarion*, January 21, 1939; "Welcome Home, Mac-Paps!," *The Daily Clarion*, February 4, 1939; "51 Mac-Paps Arrive Today," *The Daily Clarion*, February 11, 1939.

⁷⁹¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 379; Mark Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Toronto: Wiley, 2007), 261.

⁷⁹² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #905", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 340. Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #906", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 354.

⁷⁹³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #906", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 355.

December. In a wonderful metaphor for the entire Popular Front era, the RCMP reported that:

The tactics of agitating the men to the point of where they were ready to take militant action and then restraining them from doing so, has caused the men to lose faith in the communist leadership. The C.P., realizing this, has placed one of its members who was active in the Vancouver disturbances this spring ... in charge of the work among the single unemployed...⁷⁹⁴

In line with the failures in other areas of work, the CPC did poorly in the 1938 civic elections. There were some small victories.⁷⁹⁵ The Party elected its first member to Calgary city council,⁷⁹⁶ and three councillors were elected in Winnipeg.⁷⁹⁷ In Ontario, Popular Front candidates won a majority in Windsor, and did well in Hamilton, Timmins, Kirkland Lake, Tisdale, Stratford, Brockville, Niagara, Cornwall, London, Kitchener, and the Lakehead.⁷⁹⁸ However, the CPC lost the elections in Brandon Manitoba,⁷⁹⁹ Sudbury, and progressives lost the majority on council and the mayoral position in Oshawa.⁸⁰⁰ In Regina, despite earlier problems during the provincial elections, the Independent Labor Party and the Civic Labor Association worked together and won nine seats on the city council. This victory, however, had more to do with the disorganization of the Liberals and Conservatives than it did with any pervasive feelings of Popular Front unity on the

⁷⁹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #907", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 369.

⁷⁹⁵ "Progressive Vote Increased," *The Daily Clarion*, January 4, 1939.

⁷⁹⁶ Gilbert Levine, *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 1998), 128.

⁷⁹⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #906", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 345.

⁷⁹⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #907", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 364-366.

⁷⁹⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #907", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 367.

⁸⁰⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 377.

left.⁸⁰¹ In Montreal, Fred Rose withdrew in order to encourage an electoral alliance with provincial Liberals.⁸⁰² The biggest losses, however, were in Toronto where the CPC faced a coordinated anti-Communist campaign run by the United Canada League, the Canadian Legion, the Board of Trade, and the Canadian Corps Association. Despite increasing their vote count, Tim Buck lost the election for Board of Control, and J.B. Salsberg and John Weir were unseated from their positions.⁸⁰³ The CPC blamed its poor performance on “sectarian mistakes in the past and remnants of sectarianism still present in our work today” which allowed the reactionaries “to present our Party to many sections of the middle class as a Moscow-controlled, sinister force, seeking to impose socialism on the people of Canada.” To correct the mistakes the CPC stated it would build closer relations with unions and CCF, and engage in propaganda among the middle classes.⁸⁰⁴

There is some evidence that towards the end of 1938 some CPC union organizers were disagreeing more openly with the CPC central leadership. At a meeting of the CPC’s trade union commission in Montreal on July 6, J.B. Salsberg, clearly responding to problems with the CPC’s earlier instructions for CPC members to hide their Party affiliation, stated that “our party members within the trade unions must not be afraid to admit that they are members and must bring in issues as open party members and not

⁸⁰¹ J. William Brennan, “‘The common people have spoken with a mighty voice’: Regina’s Labour City Councils, 1936-1939,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 78.

⁸⁰² Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, trans. by Margaret Heap, *Communists in Quebec 1936-1956: The Communist Party of Canada, Labour-Progressive Party* (Montreal: Presses de l’Unité, 1982), 5.

⁸⁰³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997, 374.

⁸⁰⁴ LAC, CPC, H-1646, *The Party Builder – February 1939*.

from behind as many are prone to do.”⁸⁰⁵ Within the UAW, both the CPC and the CPUSA leadership acted against the advice of Communist union militants by supporting a moderate union bureaucrat for the leadership of the union.⁸⁰⁶ In December, a strike of rubber workers in Kitchener was undercut by J.B. Salsberg’s advice for the union to concede. The local CPC organizer in the rubber industry, Bill Walsh, disregarded Salsberg’s advice, and the majority of the union members voted to continue the strike.⁸⁰⁷ The CPC even went as far as to support the affiliation of the UMWA in Nova Scotia to the CCF.⁸⁰⁸ While these examples were isolated, they indicate that the CPC leadership was increasingly disconnected from the more militant workers within the unions, and that the leadership was increasingly willing to concede in labour struggles.

To complicate matters, on January 18, 1939, the TLC expelled the CIO unions.⁸⁰⁹

While the split was amicable because it was driven by rivalries in the US rather than in

⁸⁰⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Bulletin #896”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 226.

⁸⁰⁶ James Napier, *Memories of Building the UAW*, 12; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 30.

⁸⁰⁷ Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2001), 118-120.

⁸⁰⁸ The example of the UMWA in Nova Scotia is particularly egregious, as the workers continued to be more militant than both the CCF or the CPC. For instance, the UMWA engaged in a number of wildcat strikes over the course of WWII, and continued to oppose the moderate leadership of Silby Barrett, a CCF union bureaucrat who was imposed on the UMWA by the CIO. This shows that the objective conditions for a radical labour movement existed on Cape Breton Island well after the Popular Front had ended; the CPC, due to its rightward shift, was not capable of capitalizing on the conditions.

Michael J. Earle, “The Coalminers and Their “Red” Union: The Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, 1932-1936,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 22 (Fall 1988), 134.

⁸⁰⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 385; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 35; Stuart Marshall Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973), 44; Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History Second Edition* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1996), 65.

Canada, it meant that the TLC would lose 30 000 members.⁸¹⁰ In turn, these were the unions that the CPC had spent the majority of its time working within. As a result, the CPC was now largely separated from the TLC, despite having enjoyed considerable support within the TLC bureaucracy as late as September 1938. The expulsion of the CIO rendered the CPC's union strategy a failure: not only was the CPC unable to stop the split, but it now found itself isolated from the mainstream of the trade union movement.

It was in the context of the failure of the Popular Front in the latter half of 1938 and the beginning of 1939 that the CPC began to further shift to the right. In November 1938 the CPC's internal publication announced the launching of a "Crusade for Security, Democracy, Peace", the purpose of which would "be to bring the main issues facing our country to the widest sections of the population, issues around which a democratic front [could] and must be achieved in our Dominion."⁸¹¹ Details were scant on precisely what this would entail, beyond a broad recruiting campaign combined with an increase in the frequency of propaganda.⁸¹² It seems as though the CPC leadership was not particularly invested in the campaign either: by April, 1939, the crusade had yet to start and was abruptly cancelled, likely to allow the CPC to focus on the 1939 federal elections.⁸¹³

In early 1939, the CPC also unveiled a new constitution, in line with the new moderate positions taken by the Party. Stewart Smith, speaking at an event in East Toronto, said that the new constitution was required because the CPC was entering a new

⁸¹⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 386; "CIO Expulsion Forced by Green, Tallon Declares; Urges Friendly Relations," *The Daily Clarion*, January 20, 1939; "Regret C.I.O. Ouster," *The Daily Clarion*, January 20, 1939; Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959* (Toronto: NC Press, 1978), 262.

⁸¹¹ LAC, CPC, H-1646, *The Party Builder – November 1938*.

⁸¹² LAC, CPC, H-1646, *The Party Builder – December 1938*.

⁸¹³ LAC, CPC, H-1646, *The Party Builder – April 1939*.

period which required the CPC to be made into a Canadian party. Thus, the CPC's tactics needed to be changed to prove a platform palatable to the Canadian people.⁸¹⁴ The new line produced contradictions even among its adherents. Buck, when asked if he would pledge allegiance to the King at a YMCA meeting in Toronto, stated that:

Yes I would because I believe that Communists are citizens of Canada and members of the democratic system as it exists here and we have to govern ourselves by the system. Members of the Communist Party would swear allegiance to the King without the act being contradictory.⁸¹⁵

However, when asked who he would support if Great Britain and the USSR were at war, he answered the USSR.⁸¹⁶

The new approach was articulated politically in two main ways. First, the CPC turned further away from class as the basis for its organization. In April 1939, in a pamphlet against Finance Minister Dunning's proposed budget, Tim Buck argued that the main problem facing Canada was "to achieve economic recovery and increased purchasing power."⁸¹⁷ Buck pointed to a silent revolt of Liberals against the budget, especially in Western Canada, as proof that there were progressive members of the old-line parties that could be united with against the "50 big shots". Second, the CPC also

⁸¹⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 380.

⁸¹⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 382.

⁸¹⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 1", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 383.

⁸¹⁷ MSC, Tim Buck, *Dunning's Budget – What Does It Mean to YOU*, 5.

embraced the New Democracy movement of Herridge,⁸¹⁸ who had split from the Conservatives. On April 25, Buck announced his support by saying:

I, along with many of you, welcome the proposals that Mr. Herridge has recently made. Mr. Herridge is clearly not a Communist, or a C.C.F.'er, or a Social Crediter. But he has broken with the Tory machine.⁸¹⁹

On June 17, *The Daily Clarion* further clarified the CPC's position by writing that "the New Democracy founder is a staunch supporter of labor as the bulwark of democracy."⁸²⁰

The CPC worked within New Democracy organizations in Eastern Canada. In Saskatchewan, where in January, 1939 the pro-unity elements of the CCF had been expelled,⁸²¹ both Dorise Nielson and provincial CPC leader T.G. McManus ran in the 1939 elections under the New Democracy ticket.⁸²²

The shift to the right was more an act of desperation than anything. With the failure of the Popular Front, and the failure of the mass work the CPC had engaged in during the Popular Front era, the CPC was grasping at straws. The CPC's recruitment drives were not working, with most falling far short of their goals. The few members who joined were not enough to keep up with the pace at which existing members were filtering out of the organization. Furthermore, the majority of members did not involve themselves in recruitment.⁸²³ In June it was revealed that the CPC had struggled even to

⁸¹⁸ "New Democracy Leader to Speak," *The Daily Clarion*, June 17, 1939; "Recovery, Jobs and Security Unity to Elect Free Parliament Main Herridge Platform Planks," *The Clarion*, July 1, 1939; "What Do Communists Think of New Democracy and the C.C.F.?", *The Clarion*, August 5, 1939.

⁸¹⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 2", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 404.

⁸²⁰ "New Democracy Leader to Speak," *The Daily Clarion*, June 17, 1939.

⁸²¹ Faith Johnston, *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 64.

⁸²² Faith Johnston, *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 70-71.

⁸²³ LAC, CPC, H-1646, *The Party Builder – March 1939*.

collect dues in the first three months of 1939.⁸²⁴ Indeed, the CPC's internal publications had to implore its members to not slack off during the summer months. On June 19, 1939, the CPC was forced to suspend the publication of the *Daily Clarion* in favour of a Central Canadian weekly (to be called *Clarion*), a Quebec/Maritime weekly (to be called the *Mid-West Clarion*), the *People's Advocate* in BC, and *Clarté* in Quebec.⁸²⁵ This was a massive failure of the CPC's propaganda apparatus.⁸²⁶

It is unsurprising then that May Day 1939 was something of a sad affair for the CPC. Demonstrations in Montreal, Vancouver, and Winnipeg saw poor attendance: in many cases less than half the people who had been involved in previous years.⁸²⁷ In Vancouver the parade started two and a half hours late because people were slow to arrive.⁸²⁸ In Toronto the numbers were slightly higher than elsewhere in Canada – 4 000 in a march, and 7 000 at a rally⁸²⁹ – but the number of organizations present had decreased.⁸³⁰ But in each case, there was almost no representation from non-CPC affiliated organizations such as the CCF, ILP, Social Credit movement, New Democracy movement, or the unions. The Popular Front was dead in the water.

⁸²⁴ LAC, CPC, H-1646, *The Party Builder – June 1939*.

⁸²⁵ "On the Job to Build Up the Labor-Progressive Press," *The Daily Clarion*, June 19, 1939.

⁸²⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 2", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 406.

⁸²⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 2", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 402-403.

⁸²⁸ "Mark May 1 With Election Victory: Vancouver CCF Wins new Seat," *The Daily Clarion*, May 3, 1939.

⁸²⁹ "Democracy Needs Labor Movement," *The Daily Clarion*, May 2, 1939.

⁸³⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 2", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 401; "131 City Groups In Big Parade," *The Daily Clarion*, May 1, 1939.

An atmosphere of despair also marked the Fourth CYC, held in Winnipeg on June 30, 1939.⁸³¹ Between the Third and Fourth CYCs, Kenneth Woodsworth had alienated many of the more moderate members by openly attacking the Munich Agreement⁸³² and by arguing against compulsory military training for youth.⁸³³ At the CYC itself, the YCL was the single largest group represented with 124 delegates out of a total of 365 delegates⁸³⁴ – a far cry from earlier CYCs where the YCL went out of its way to not have the largest delegation.⁸³⁵ The YCL was able to get a number of its resolutions passed on issues such as support for China, against Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, and on the question of the vote for Asian Canadians. The French-Canadian delegates opposed the adoption of the CPC's Rowell-Sirois submission's line on constitutional changes, arguing that any change to the BNA Act should need provincial consent.⁸³⁶ However, the decisions were basically moot: the YCL, which had been in decline for some time, was not able to put forward a comprehensive plan of action, and so the motions were symbolic victories only. While the CPC was happy with the resolutions, there was some criticism that the YCL had failed to impress the CYC.⁸³⁷ Indeed, the Congress was so unimportant to the CPC that it was only briefly reported on in *The Clarion*; it was given far less coverage than the previous four Congresses.

⁸³¹ "Youth Congress Opens 500,000 Canadians Represented at 'Peg," *The Clarion*, July 1, 1939; Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 92.

⁸³² Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 86.

⁸³³ Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 89.

⁸³⁴ Ruth Latta, *They Tried: The Story of the Canadian Youth Congress* (Ottawa: Self Published, 2006), 95.

⁸³⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 422.

⁸³⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 423.

⁸³⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 424.

Left to its own devices, the CPC was flailing in 1939. To make matters worse, on August 23, 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed. The Pact, which was a non-aggression agreement between the USSR and Nazi Germany, undermined nearly five years of work of the various Communist Parties around the world. The CPC for instance had upheld the USSR as the foil to fascism: the USSR wanted peace but would struggle against fascism, whereas the fascists wanted nothing more than conquest and bloodshed in the name of profits. And yet, with the Pact, the USSR began actively collaborating with the Nazis.

In Canada, the reaction was visceral.⁸³⁸ Many Jews and Poles left the CPC. The CPC was unsure of how to respond. Even Stewart Smith was apparently unaware of how to react.⁸³⁹ The CPC waited a number of days before calling meetings, and sent telegrams to both London and Moscow asking for advice. Eventually, however, the CPC settled on a line which argued that the pact should not be a surprise in the face of failed diplomatic overtures by the Soviet Union to the bourgeois democracies, that it was somehow proof of Soviet diplomatic consistency, that it was a defeat for Chamberlain's plot against the USSR, and that it split the Axis powers.⁸⁴⁰ *The Clarion* reported:

⁸³⁸ Stewart Smith, *Comrades and Komsomolkas: My Years in the Communist Party of Canada* (Toronto: Lugas Publications, 1993), 188.

⁸³⁹ "I can record an incident which occurred on August 24, 1939, the day the world learned of the Hitler-Stalin Non-Aggression Pact, which gave Germany the green light to march into Poland. I happened to be in Toronto on that day and as I boarded a streetcar I noticed Stewart Smith, one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Canada, sitting inside. I walked over to him and asked him to explain how it was possible for the Soviet government to sign a peace treaty with Nazi Germany, knowing the consequences. His answer is etched in my memory; he said: "Personally I don't know, but we're having a meeting on Sunday when Tim will explain it to us..." "

David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1981), 150.

⁸⁴⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour

The pact does not mark the slightest change in Soviet foreign policy, which was stated in clear and forthright terms by Stalin in March of this year, and by him as far back as 1932. German's accepting now the long-standing offer of the U.S.S.R. of a pact of non-aggression is a further confirmation of the correctness of the consistent fight of the U.S.S.R. for world peace. It will hinder the plans of Chamberlain, who wishes to unleash the mad dogs of fascism upon the U.S.S.R.⁸⁴¹

Stewart Smith went as far as to argue that it was actually a defeat for the Nazis, and that Hitler had been forced to sign the Pact as a concession.⁸⁴² Other leaders were less sure; Peter Hunter, for instance, saw the Pact as a delaying tactic on the part of the USSR.⁸⁴³ In any case, James Litterick, Manitoba MLA, was correct when he said "This act has shaken the very foundations of the Communist Party of Canada and much confusion and despair is to be seen quite prevalent among the members of the Communist Party."⁸⁴⁴

Thus, when Germany invaded Poland on September 1 and Great Britain declared war on Germany, the CPC was in a state of disorganization and disarray. The CPC leadership initially discussed opposition to the war, but opted to support it for fear of being made illegal.⁸⁴⁵ The position in early September was confused support for the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact while also supporting the war against Germany.⁸⁴⁶ The CPC went as far as instructing its members to enlist. However, the CPC soon received a letter

History, 1997), 415; "United People's Action Can Yet Save Peace!," *The Clarion*, August 26, 1939; "The Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact and World Peace," *The Clarion*, September 2, 1939.

⁸⁴¹ "United People's Action Can Yet Save Peace!," *The Clarion*, August 26, 1939.

⁸⁴² MSC, Stewart Smith, *Who is Double-Crossing Peace?*.

⁸⁴³ Peter Hunter, *Which Side Are You On Boys... Canadian Life on the Left* (Toronto: Lugas Publications, 1988), 119.

⁸⁴⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 412.

⁸⁴⁵ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 415.

⁸⁴⁶ "People's Unity to Defeat Hitler: Away With every Shred of "Munich"," *The Clarion*, September 9, 1939; "British People Stand Firm, Determined to Crush Fascism," *The Clarion*, September 9, 1939; "What Must Be Done To Win This War," *The Clarion*, September 16, 1939.

from Moscow “clarifying” its position on the war. The CPC switched gears, and came out against the war, arguing that rather than being a war against fascism, it was actually an inter-imperialist war.⁸⁴⁷ In the *Clarion*, Buck argued that the “working people have nothing in common with the imperialist interests and aims... The imperialist character of this conflict of interests was revealed... by the sabotage of the negotiations for an Anglo-French-Soviet pact. ... The Communist Party stands for the defeat of Hitler and welcomes the spontaneous popular determination that the Nazi regime shall be destroyed.”⁸⁴⁸ The CPC’s new position, called the “War on Two Fronts”, also argued for Mackenzie King to be defeated in the next election and for a progressive anti-fascist government to be elected in its place.⁸⁴⁹

In the context of ideological disarray, confusion over the war, and organizational decline, the CPC began to go underground in September 1939, well before it was made illegal under the War Measures Act.⁸⁵⁰ The CPC would never recover.

The Tragedy of the Democratic Front

The period of the Democratic Front, from May 1938 to September 1939, was a period of defeats and setbacks for the CPC. Nearly all of the CPC’s main work –in the

⁸⁴⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 416.

⁸⁴⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 417-418.

⁸⁴⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, “Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3”, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 418.

⁸⁵⁰ Laurie Lewis, *Little Comrades*, (Erin: Porcupine’s Quill, 2011), 44.

peace movement, the labour movement, the unemployed movement, the youth movement, the movement for solidarity with Republican Spain, the united front movement – fell apart. The CPC was unable to grow, and its organization became increasingly weak. In response, the CPC moved to the right, and attempted to orient itself towards progressive Liberals and Conservatives. The true tragedy of the Democratic Front was that neither group was particularly interested in unity with the CPC: thus, unlike the previous era of building the united and Popular Fronts with the CCF and other working class organizations, the CPC reinvented itself without much gain.

The Democratic Front marked a total abandonment of class as an organizing principle and revolution as a goal for the CPC. In the place of socialism, what Canada needed, according to the CPC, was democratic national unity. The CPC actively undermined its own initiatives in the hopes of gaining greater electoral advantage. This was particularly evident in the unemployed movement. Organizationally, the CPC reorganized itself along bourgeois electoral lines, and decreased the demands on its members. Paper membership became a problem. The Democratic Front was the continuation of the process of de-Bolshevization.

While the struggle against the bourgeois line in the CPC was not as strong as it had been during previous eras, it still existed. At the Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum, the BC section was criticized for not adopting the Democratic Front strategies in BC, especially towards the Liberal Pattullo government. “Sectarianism”, which is to say independent Communist politics, continued to be a problem among the rank-and-file; a problem which the CPC leadership sought to eradicate. In the labour movement, there were examples of CPC organizers disagreeing with and even disobeying the instructions

of the CPC's central leadership. In the unemployed movement, CPC organizers directly confronted CPC elected officials, and agitated unemployed workers against them. All of these acts constituted class struggle within the CPC, however unconscious such a process was. However, resistance to the line of the Democratic Front was largely ineffectual: it was clear that by 1939 the bourgeois line had irrevocably consolidated itself within the CPC. A particularly egregious example of the consolidation of the bourgeois line within the CPC can be seen in Regina: in June 1939, the CPC-supported civic administration, after years of failing to secure loans for working-class housing projects, had the Hudsons Bay Company build luxury apartments.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁵¹ J. William Brennan, "The common people have spoken with a mighty voice': Regina's Labour City Councils, 1936-1939," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 81.

VII. Conclusion

Having explored the history of the Popular Front era in Canada, it is now worthwhile to draw some general conclusions about the Popular Front. In the conclusion, I will answer two questions. First, following from the question John Manley poses in his introduction to *RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part II, 1935*: what sort of party had the CPC become by 1939? Second, was there a class struggle within the CPC?

To examine what sort of party the CPC had become by the end of the Popular Front era, it is pertinent to examine some of the major shifts that occurred during this time. Here we can look at: organizational shifts (the CPC's structure, its membership composition, and its relationship with its mass organizations), political changes, and changes in the types of practice in which the CPC engaged.

On the level of the CPC's structure, in a process of de-Bolshevization the CPC moved further and further from traditional Leninist organizing principles. In late 1935 the CPC emerged into the open, and began transitioning itself into becoming a mass party rather than a vanguard party. To facilitate this transition, the CPC urged its current members to ease the level of pressure and discipline on its new members. This process continued until the Eighth Dominion Convention, at which point the CPC began issuing individual membership cards (which it had previously refused to do due to security concerns), moved away from shop nuclei to neighbourhood and mass branches, experimented with women-only and middle-class-only branches, and re-organized around bourgeois electoral districts. Finally during the period of the democratic front the CPC

abandoned political requirements for membership. On the level of structure, the CPC moved from the traditional Communist model of organization, towards a model much closer to the bourgeois political parties of Canada.

In terms of changes in the membership composition of the CPC, in the absence of firm membership statistics it is difficult to draw any broad conclusions. For instance, we know that the CPC's membership increased significantly between 1934 and 1939, from 4100 to 15 000. Documents also show that the CPC peaked at around 15 000 members: at that level, the number of newly recruited members only just replaced the number of members leaving. Thus, as of the Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum in June 1938, the CPC had recruited 2 300 people in 1938 thus far, yet its membership was still 15 000: the same as it had been at the Eighth Dominion Convention in October, 1937.⁸⁵² Only around 15% of the CPC's membership were women at the time of the Eighth Dominion Convention.⁸⁵³ It is probable that the CPC's membership continued to be largely eastern-European (Jews, Ukrainians, Finns), but increasingly less so as the CPC sought to recruit more Anglo-Saxon and French Canadian members. But beyond those broad observations, very little exists in the realm of detailed membership data.

The focus of the CPC's recruitment efforts is also interesting to examine. Overwhelmingly, during the Popular Front era CPC members were told to focus on recruiting Anglo-Saxon and French Canadian workers in an effort to Canadianize the CPC. However, as the Popular Front reached its height, increasingly the CPC emphasized the recruitment of housewives, the middle-class, and professionals. Indeed, a recruitment

⁸⁵² MSC, Sam Carr, "Building the Communist Party" in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 44.

⁸⁵³ TFL, KC, Sam Carr, *Communists at Work*, 28.

drive held in Quebec in March, 1937, established a “points system” to determine the winners of the drive: unemployed recruits only counted for half the points of employed recruits.⁸⁵⁴ Thus, as the Popular Front developed, the CPC abandoned Lenin’s call to “go down *lower and deeper*, to the real masses,”⁸⁵⁵ in its recruitment efforts.

It would be a mistake to over-determine the extent to which the focus of the CPC’s recruitment shaped the composition of the CPC’s membership during the Popular Front era. The CPC, by sheer force of numbers, remained an overwhelmingly proletarian party. However, one realm in which the increased focus on the recruitment of middle-class members did have an effect was the disproportionate level of middle-class recruits occupying middle-leadership positions. For instance, at the Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum in 1938, Sam Carr lamented the lack of industrial workers occupying staff and leadership positions within the CPC.⁸⁵⁶ Carr’s observation is corroborated by other accounts. For instance, Peter Hunter observed that most of the new leadership in the Popular Front era came from student and middle-class backgrounds: Hunter was one of the few from a proletarian background.⁸⁵⁷ Based on interviews, Merily Wiesbord argued that by the late 1930s, the majority of CPC members in Montreal were not working class.⁸⁵⁸ This is plausible insofar as the CPC was one of the few parties which took anti-fascism seriously: it is not surprising to hear that middle-class and professional Jews in

⁸⁵⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937, “Bulletin #846”*, (St John’s: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 122.

⁸⁵⁵ Vladimir Lenin, “Imperialism and the Split in Socialism,” accessed from: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/oct/x01.htm>.

⁸⁵⁶ MSC, Sam Carr, “Building the Communist Party” in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 47.

⁸⁵⁷ Peter Hunter, *Which Side Are You On Boys... Canadian Life on the Left* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1988), 116.

⁸⁵⁸ Marily Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, The Spy Trials, and the Cold War* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1994), 65.

Montreal were more interested in the CPC than middle-classes elsewhere in Canada. John Manley further argues that while 10% of all recruits during the Popular Front were from non-proletarian class backgrounds, they made up a disproportionate amount of the middle-leadership.⁸⁵⁹ Thus, by the end of the Popular Front era, even if the CPC's membership was still overwhelmingly proletarian, there had been a shift in its middle-leadership towards the middle-class.

Another structural change in the CPC during the Popular Front era was in how the CPC approached the question of mass organizations. Prior to the Popular Front, the CPC had established a number of mass organizations, which allowed it to organize sections of the working class not yet ready or willing to become CPC members. During the Third Period this took on a more sectarian bent, but nevertheless, in 1934, the CPC had a number of strong mass organizations such as: language federations, the YCL, the CLDL, the WUL, the Workers Ex-Servicemen's Leagues, the Women's Labour Leagues, and others. During the Popular Front era, insofar as the CPC sought to build unity at all costs, it either liquidated its mass organizations (such as the WUL, WLL, CLDL, etc.) or had them change their political orientations (the YCL). Indeed, the main mass organization of the Popular Front era, the CLAWF/CLPD, was organizationally more distant from the CPC than had been the case in previous eras, and was primarily directed at the middle classes.

On the political level, the shifts in the CPC's line during the Popular Front era are more drastic. There are two major areas of change: first, the question of the state, and second, the question of who constituted the forces that could form the People's Front. On

⁸⁵⁹ John Manley, "'Communists Love Canada!': The Communist Party of Canada, the 'People' and the Popular Front, 1933-1939," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 36 (Winter 2002), 74.

the question of the state, the CPC entered the Popular Front with a Leninist understanding which underscored the class nature of the state and the need for violent revolution to overthrow capitalism. Thus, the CPC's election materials in 1935 were still anti-electoral, and Buck spoke in favour of revolution on May Day. However, after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, the CPC moderated its understanding, and began to argue that insofar as socialism was impossible in the short term, it actually was possible to win fundamental reforms through the state. Thus the CPC began to funnel its efforts towards electoralism and lobbying, even going so far as to undermine struggles among the unemployed. By the time of the democratic front in 1937/1938, the CPC had declared that the fundamental problem in Canadian society was the problem of incomplete national unity. As such, the Canadian state had to be fundamentally fixed on the constitutional level (amendment of the BNA Act) in order to build a more perfect bourgeois democracy. Class was virtually absent from the CPC's understanding of the state. And finally in 1938 and 1939, the CPC openly renounced violence. Thus over the course of the Popular Front era, the CPC moved away from a Marxist understanding of the state and adopted a bourgeois understanding.

On the question of who constituted the forces which could build the People's Front, the CPC initially sought to build unity with the CCF on an electoral basis. Other new political organizations –Social Credit, Reconstruction, etc. – were considered fascist. When unity with the CCF failed, the CPC shifted towards liquidating the WUL in order to build unity within the trade union movement, and began to focus on the CCF rank-and-file. After that strategy reached its limits, the CPC softened its approach towards the Liberal Party, before eventually, at the Eighth Dominion Convention in October 1937,

saying that the Liberals would split and that the progressive half could form part of the democratic front. Around this time the CPC also reached out to the Social Credit Movement. Eventually the CPC abandoned unity overtures with the CCF in any substantial way, industrial work became less important, and the CPC went as far as to reach out to sections of the Conservative Party. In 1939, the CPC openly supported the New Democracy movement, led by Herridge, an ex-Conservative. Thus, by the end of the Popular Front era the CPC advocated aligning with sections of the bourgeoisie.

Another area in which the political shifts in the CPC's line can be seen is by looking at how the CPC named its various publications and mass organizations. The Popular Front era brought with it a shift away from using the language of class. Starting as early as 1935, the Canadian Labour Defence League was liquidated, with the Citizens Defence Movement replacing it. In Winnipeg, the CLDL was renamed the "Citizens Liberty Club".⁸⁶⁰ In April of 1936, the YCL ended its paper, *The Young Worker*, and replaced it with a new publication named *The Advance*.⁸⁶¹ In May, *The Worker* became *The Daily Clarion*. That summer and into the fall numerous other organizations changed names: the Polish Labour Farmer Temple Association became the Polish People's Association,⁸⁶² the Yugo-Slavian Workers Education Clubs were split into the Croatian Cultural Association and the Serbian Progressive Movement,⁸⁶³ and in December 1936 the Lithuanian language publication of the CPC, formerly *Workers' Word*, became *The*

⁸⁶⁰ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #801", (St. John's, 1995), 156.

⁸⁶¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #803", (St. John's, 1995), 171.

⁸⁶² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #817", (St. John's, 1995), 310-311.

⁸⁶³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #825", (St. John's, 1995), 403-404.

People's Voice.⁸⁶⁴ By the end of the year the Czechoslovak Workers' Educational Clubs had become the Slovak Cultural Federation.⁸⁶⁵

This trend continued into 1937 and 1938. In March of 1937, *BC Workers News* became *People's Advocate*.⁸⁶⁶ In August, the youth section of the ULFTA was renamed the Federation of Canadian Ukrainian Youth,⁸⁶⁷ and the *Ukrainian Labour News* was rebranded as *Nrodna Gazetta*, or the *People's Gazette*.⁸⁶⁸ The same month, even the CLAWF name was deemed too radical, and became the CLPD. In September the Russian language CPC publication was renamed *Canadian Whistle*.⁸⁶⁹ In November 1937, the German Workers and Farmers Association was renamed the German-Canadian League, and its publication renamed from *German Worker Times* to *German-Canadian Peoples Times*.⁸⁷⁰ By November 1938 the Canadian Hungary Worker's Clubs had become the Canadian Hungarian Clubs Association,⁸⁷¹ and the Italian CPC publication, formerly *The*

⁸⁶⁴ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part III, 1936*, "Bulletin #836", (St. John's, 1995), 538.

⁸⁶⁵ LAC, CPC, H-1585, *Memorandum on the Work of the National Language Organisations*.

⁸⁶⁶ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #851", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 165.

⁸⁶⁷ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #866", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 321.

⁸⁶⁸ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #869", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 364.

⁸⁶⁹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937*, "Bulletin #870", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 371.

⁸⁷⁰ A. Grenke, "From Dreams of the Worker State to Fighting Hitler: the German-Canadian Left from the Depression to the end of World War II," *Labour/Le Travail*, 35 (Spring 1995), 89-90.

Note that Grenke's claim that the "there is little evidence that [other language groups affiliated with the Communist Party] changed the names of their organizations to strengthen their appeal among anti-fascists..." is incorrect.

A. Grenke, "From Dreams of the Worker State to Fighting Hitler: the German-Canadian Left from the Depression to the end of World War II," *Labour/Le Travail*, 35 (Spring 1995), 90.

⁸⁷¹ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #904", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 325.

Worker, became *The Italo-Canadian Voice*.⁸⁷² Finally, in early 1939, *Todowymzu*, or the Society for the Liberation of Western Ukraine, changed its name to the Association for the Defence of the Ukrainian People.⁸⁷³ The concept of the people replaced the working class, and the Canadian character of organizations was emphasized.

On a practical level, the main difference in the CPC's practice from previous eras was its orientation, at least on the level of the CPC's central leadership, towards moderate leaderships of non-communist organizations. Thus, the CLAWF/CLPD, an organization which was essentially a collection of the leaderships of other community organizations, was the main focus of the CPC's mass work during the Popular Front era. Similarly, the CPC oriented its union work towards ingratiating itself with the trade union bureaucracy, even going as far as to undermine a strike of textile workers in Cornwall in order to strengthen its position with the labour bureaucracy. A similar strategy was pursued in building the CYC: the YCL was willing to abandon all of its political positions in the interests of building unity with non-communist, and even reactionary, youth organizations. More often than not the CPC favoured unity over politics, but the unity that the CPC built, in the absence of having a political basis, was always fragile, as can be seen by the practical failure of the Popular Front from 1938 onwards.

By the end of the Popular Front era, the CPC had gone from being a revolutionary working-class party to a party which copied the organizational forms of the bourgeois political parties, increased the number of non-proletarian members both in terms of

⁸⁷² Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Bulletin #904", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 327.

⁸⁷³ Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part V, 1938-1939*, "Civil Security Intelligence Summary No. 3", (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 388.

membership composition as well as within leadership positions, had adopted bourgeois understandings of the state, had abandoned revolution as a goal, was orienting its main work towards bourgeois political parties, and in its practical work had abandoned political preconditions for unity. To answer John Manley's question, the CPC had become a very different type of party by 1939: instead of being a revolutionary working-class party, it had become, on the levels of organization, politics, and practice, a bourgeois political party.

Having established that the CPC adopted a bourgeois orientation during the Popular Front era, I now turn to the second question I will resolve in this conclusion: was there a class struggle within the CPC? What I have demonstrated is that the implementation of the Popular Front, the transformation of the CPC from a revolutionary party to a bourgeois party, was not a smooth process, but instead was punctuated and resisted by elements within the CPC in what can be considered a process of class struggle internal to the CPC itself. The contending classes were on the one side the CPC's proletarian core who remained skeptical of the Popular Front line. On the other side was the majority of the CPC's leadership, increasingly bourgeoisified, who sought to push the CPC in a more bourgeois direction, in terms of political line, organizational structure, and membership composition.

This class struggle was not an open or self-conscious process. The Communists of the Popular Front era had yet to develop the theoretical framework to allow them to understand the existence of class struggle within a Communist Party. While the idea that class struggle continued under the dictatorship of the proletariat was not new, as a position it was increasingly sidelined at this time in the USSR in favour of Stalin's

totalizing conceptions of the monolithic party and state.⁸⁷⁴ As such, it was not likely that Canadian communists, lacking strong theorists and ground-breaking practice, would conceptualize their struggles in such a way. Indeed, one of Mao's major contributions to Marxism was the emphasis placed on the continuation of class struggle under socialism. In *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, written in 1957 shortly after the People's Republic of China had begun expropriating national-capitalists, Mao wrote:

Class struggle is by no means over. The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the various political forces, and the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the ideological field will still be protracted and tortuous and at times even very sharp. The proletariat seeks to transform the world according to its own world outlook, and so does the bourgeoisie. In this respect, the question of which will win out, socialism or capitalism, is not really settled yet.⁸⁷⁵

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao went even further, and pointed to the Communist Party as the potential site of bourgeois restoration.

With this in mind, it is also worth clarifying what is meant by the “bourgeoisification” of the CPC, or its “bourgeoisified” leadership. On the surface it seems unthinkable that a party which had for over a decade gathered within itself the

⁸⁷⁴ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 536.

⁸⁷⁵ Mao Tsetung, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” accessed from: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_58.htm on June 15, 2016.

These ideas are further developed by Deng-Yuan Hsu and Pao-Yu Ching in their article “Rethinking Socialism: What is Socialist Transition?”.

When workers participated in the mass movements in the 1950's and 60's, their class consciousness was gradually raised; but workers did not realize, until the Cultural Revolution, that class struggle continued after the judicial transfer of the ownership of the means of production to the state.

Deng-Yuan Hsu and Pao-Yu Ching, “Rethinking Socialism: What is Socialist Transition?,” accessed from: <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/WIST.html> on June 15, 2016.

most conscious and militant elements of the Canadian working class could be taken over by the bourgeoisie. And yet, as many other historians have pointed out, the politics of the Popular Front represent a decisive shift away from class struggle and towards non-Marxist understandings of the state. The point of contention therefore is not so much that the CPC's political line during the Popular Front era became more bourgeois, but rather how that process played out.

To take a step back from the Canadian example, it is worth looking at the work of Charles Bettelheim. Inspired by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and building on the contributions of Mao and the Cultural Revolution to Marxism, Bettelheim sought to analyze the history of the Soviet Union so as to understand its contemporary malaise; the invasion of Czechoslovakia, properly considered, was but "one moment" in a process of evolution.⁸⁷⁶ Bettelheim argued that existing histories of the Soviet Union:

relegate to the background (when they do not purely and simply ignore them) the movement of the objective contradictions, the various forms assumed by class struggles, and the role played by ways of seeing reality that were inherited from the past and affected the aspirations of the masses and the views of the leaders alike.⁸⁷⁷

Through examining the history of the USSR through an historical-materialist framework, Bettelheim concluded that the USSR of 1976 was ruled not by the working class but by a state bourgeoisie, and that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

⁸⁷⁶ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: First period: 1917-1923* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 14.

⁸⁷⁷ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 12.

(CPSU) was simply a “party of the “functionaries of capital”.”⁸⁷⁸ Bettelheim defined the state bourgeoisie as:

agents of social reproduction, other than the immediate producers, who, by virtue of the existing system of social relations and prevailing social practice, have de facto *at their disposal the means of production and of their products* which, formally speaking, belong to the state. The economic basis for the existence of this bourgeoisie is constituted by the forms of division and unity in the process of reproduction... its real place in the process depends on the class struggle which permits (or forbids) the state bourgeoisie and its representatives to occupy certain positions in the machinery of state and, given certain circumstances, to change the class nature of the state.⁸⁷⁹

Bettelheim argues that the NEP allowed for the state bourgeoisie to come into existence, and what he describes as the failure of the NEP strengthened the social position of the state bourgeoisie.⁸⁸⁰ Post-NEP, the focus on accumulation as the driving force for production also politically strengthened elements of the state bourgeoisie,⁸⁸¹ allowing them to consolidate their position within the Soviet state. As a result, class struggle in the USSR after 1930 was almost entirely internal to the state rather than between the proletarian state and the external bourgeoisie.⁸⁸²

In turn, Bettelheim argues that the consolidation of the state bourgeoisie had a number of ideological effects on the Bolsheviks. Chiefly, Bettelheim points to Stalin’s concept of “totality” (the abandonment of dialectics, the monolithic party, and formalistic

⁸⁷⁸ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: First period: 1917-1923* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 22.

⁸⁷⁹ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: First period: 1917-1923* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 53-54n53.

⁸⁸⁰ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 42.

⁸⁸¹ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 532.

⁸⁸² Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 561.

rather than political unity),⁸⁸³ the identification of the CPSU with the state and the proletariat,⁸⁸⁴ and the reduction of Marxism to a form of “stagism”.⁸⁸⁵ Insofar as these shifts moved away from scientific conceptions of Marxism, Marxism in the Soviet Union became less a way of analyzing society and more a system of legitimation, in which decisions were justified rather than informed by Marxism.⁸⁸⁶ In turn these conceptions engendered a productivist approach to Marxism which saw the CPSU emphasize the importance of technicians and intellectuals in society and the Party.⁸⁸⁷

As a result of the consolidation of the state bourgeoisie into the state and the CPSU, many of the ideological mistakes of the Soviet social formation found their way into the line of the Comintern. Indeed, E. H. Carr describes a process in the early 1930s by which the priorities of Narkomindel (the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs) gradually became the determining factors in Comintern policy, an account which corroborates the narrative constructed by Bettelheim.⁸⁸⁸ Sections of the Comintern

⁸⁸³ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 536-542.

⁸⁸⁴ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 542.

⁸⁸⁵ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 548.

⁸⁸⁶ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 535.

⁸⁸⁷ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 551, 561.

⁸⁸⁸ E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 151-152.

“It is tempting to dramatize the Franco-Soviet pact and the declaration of May 16, 1935, as marking an abrupt abandonment of the aim of world revolution ... in favour of the defensive alliances sponsored by Litvinov – the decisive victory of Narkomindel over Comintern. But this would be an undue simplification. ... What was new in 1934 and 1935 was the recognition that the defence of the USSR could be assured through the support, not of foreign communist parties too weak to overthrow ... their national governments, but of the governments of capitalist countries exposed to the same external menace as the USSR. ... After 1935 the defence of the USSR was the highest common factor in the program of Comintern and the diplomatic manoeuvres of Narkomindel.”

committed “mistakes that were *similar* to those committed by the Bolshevik Party.”⁸⁸⁹ To this, Bettelheim adds:

Of course, if a particular Communist Party *was influenced* by some of the mistaken theses upheld by the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern, *the reason for this must be sought in the social practice of this Party, in its relations with the various classes of society, in its internal structure, and in its greater or lesser capacity to generate criticism and self-criticism, drawing up the balance sheet of its own experience and learning lessons therefrom.*⁸⁹⁰

It is with this in mind that I now turn back to the question of the bourgeoisification of the CPC.

The consolidation of the state bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union provided the initial impetus for the bourgeoisification of the CPC. Not only was the Comintern instrumental in the consolidation of the Tim Buck clique over the leadership of the CPC,⁸⁹¹ but insofar as the legitimacy of the CPC’s leaders was based on their connection to the Soviet Union, the recognition enjoyed by the CPC leadership from Comintern, the Soviet Union, and the leadership of the CPSU also served to strengthen the hold that the Tim Buck clique had over the CPC. Thus, when the Popular Front line was announced in mid-1935, there was virtually no question from the upper leaders of the CPC about changing the Party’s orientation.

This shift in orientation set off a dialectical process –a positive feedback loop – by which the Popular Front’s orientation towards middle-class, professional, and progressive petty-bourgeois elements increased the number of members of these classes in the orbit

⁸⁸⁹ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 16.

⁸⁹⁰ Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: Second period: 1923-1930* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 20n6.

⁸⁹¹ For an account of this process, see Ian Angus’ *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada*.

of the CPC. The CPC was able to recruit many of these people. The CPC's orientation towards classes other than the proletariat forced the CPC to moderate its politics, thus allowing the Canadian bourgeoisie to consolidate its ideological hegemony over the CPC, even if it was not inside the CPC. The demographic shift in the membership further facilitated the CPC's shift to the right.⁸⁹² In turn, the CPC's electoral and union success during the Popular Front put a number of leading members into positions of authority in external structures: many CPC members became full-time politicians in bourgeois governments, in some cases even running the municipal administrations, and many other CPC members became union bureaucrats. By the end of the Popular Front, McKean observed that the "selection of party officials became more and more based ... on the criteria of ability to mix with the bourgeoisie ... in other words on the ability to ape the typical bourgeois politicians."⁸⁹³ Thus, by the end of the Popular Front era, the CPC had within it a modest party-bourgeoisie, which while small, had a disproportionate influence on the politics of the CPC.

The influence of the CPSU and the Comintern, the CPC's self-moderation in order to appeal to middle-class, professional, and petty-bourgeois Canadians, and the creation of a small party-bourgeoisie were the driving forces in the CPC's bourgeoisification.

⁸⁹² This was not a mechanistic relationship; the CPC's shift towards the Democratic Front was not solely based on the shift in membership. Indeed, the Comintern played the decisive role in the political shift of the CPC during this time. It is also worth pointing out that in many cases the CPC oriented itself towards different sections of the masses without necessarily achieving the desired results; the CPC's membership remained majority working class, even during the Popular Front.

⁸⁹³ Fergus McKean, *Communism versus Opportunism: An Examination of the Revision of Marxism in the Communist Movement of Canada* (Vancouver: Broadway Printers, 1946), 227.

To what extent did the bourgeoisie within the CPC share some sort of collective class consciousness, in which they understood themselves to be above the general membership? There is evidence to support the view that over the course of the Popular Front, the CPC leadership adopted a style of work which reinforced the social divisions between the leaders and those they led, which also mirrored the division between mental and manual labour under capitalism. For instance, Jack Scott recalls that in 1937 Stewart Smith told Scott that it was Scott's job to think for the party, and not engage in menial day-to-day tasks. Scott argues that there was a level of contempt for the CPC rank-and-file on the part of the leadership: "they were the ones that did the work, we were the guys who do the thinking."⁸⁹⁴ James Napier, a UAW organizer, had a similar experience: he wrote of intellectuals taking control of the CPC leadership and incorrectly lecturing working-class members on how to form unions.⁸⁹⁵ Sam Carr's organizational report at the Thirteenth Central Committee Plenum in 1938 also points to this problem; CPC members thought that promotion within the Party entitled them to having a staff, specifically a "girl in the office that you could turn to every minute."⁸⁹⁶ Laurie Lewis, daughter of the leader of the Alberta CPC leader Anderson Lewis, recalls a discussion in her kitchen between her mother and the wife of Leslie Morris. Morris' wife stated that it pained her to see CPC leaders driving in new cars surrounded by poverty: Lewis' mother answered that the CPC had to project an image of being more than a party of the poor.⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹⁴ Jack Scott, eds. Bryan Palmer, *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988), 51-52.

⁸⁹⁵ James Napier, *Memories of Building the UAW*, 29.

⁸⁹⁶ MSC, Sam Carr, "Building the Communist Party" in *A Democratic Front for Canada: Reports, Speeches, Resolutions at the Thirteenth Session of the Dominion Executive, Communist Party of Canada, June, 1938*, 47.

⁸⁹⁷ Laurie Lewis, *Little Comrades*, (Erin: Porcupine's Quill, 2011), 33.

Thus, Fergus McKean's observation⁸⁹⁸ seems to be corroborated by a number of independent sources. It is plausible that the CPC leadership, or at least sections of the leadership, conceived of themselves as existing apart from and being above the rank-and-file CPC membership. Combined with the fact that the middle-leadership was disproportionately from non-proletarian backgrounds, it becomes clear that the leadership of CPC had become bourgeoisified. This becomes even clearer when we consider that the CPC remade itself in the image of a bourgeois party during this period, that people joined the Popular Front mass organizations or the CPC to advance their own social standing⁸⁹⁹, and that the CPC created special "closed branches" to protect the class standing of its middle-class members. The process of the CPC becoming a bourgeois political party was the result of the unconscious agenda of the bourgeoisie within the CPC and the adherence of the CPC leadership to a bourgeois political line.

However, as has been demonstrated, the implementation of the Popular Front line –the remaking of the CPC into a bourgeois political party – was not a one-directional process. The CPC's proletarian core resisted the implementation of the Popular Front to varying degrees at nearly every step of the way. During the period of the united front, the rejection of the united front in Nova Scotia and BC, and the On-to-Ottawa trek were

⁸⁹⁸ Fergus McKean, *Communism versus Opportunism: An Examination of the Revision of Marxism in the Communist Movement of Canada* (Vancouver: Broadway Printers, 1946), 227.

Peter Hunter suggests that the selection of leaders was based on their ability to compromise. These two positions are not mutually exclusive: they would have been compromising with reformists and bourgeois politicians.

Peter Hunter, *Which Side Are You On Boys... Canadian Life on the Left* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1988), 117.

⁸⁹⁹ For instance, R.L. Calder: Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins: The Depression Years Part IV, 1937, "Bulletin #878"*, (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997), 476; John Manley, "From United Front to Popular Front: The CPC in 1936", in Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *The RCMP Security Bulletins, Part III, 1936* (St John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1995), 18-19.

significant acts of resistance against the CPC's central leadership. During the period of the Popular Front proper, there was an increase in the CPC central leadership fighting against "sectarian" elements, and A.E. Smith continued to be enough of a nuisance, especially on the role of the "Soviet Canada" slogan, and the existence of the CLDL, that he was sent overseas twice during the Popular Front era. During the period of the democratic front there was debate over the role of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, disagreement with the CPC in BC over the nature of the Pattullo government, disagreement between union militants and the CPC central leadership over the correct labour strategy, and open conflict between CPC elected officials and CPC-organized unemployed workers over relief rates. "Sectarianism", a charge frequently levelled by the upper leadership against CPC members who pushed for independent communist political action, plagued the CPC for the entire period of the Popular Front.

Those that pushed back strongest against the Popular Front tended to be members of the language federations (Eastern European communists), unemployed workers, miners, or part of the CPC in BC and Nova Scotia. Thus, there was a class struggle within the CPC. While the lines were not clearly drawn, there is no doubt that this struggle was largely between a bourgeoisified leadership and the CPC's proletarian core, between the Popular Front and between communism.

However, just as it would be a mistake to over-determine the extent to which the CPC's recruitment goals shaped the composition of its membership, it would also be a mistake to overdetermine the extent to which the class position of CPC members determined its approach to the Popular Front. Many of the CPC's working-class core supported the Popular Front, and indeed, most of the CPC's upper leadership had

proletarian origins. Some CPC leaders, such as Malcolm Bruce, adamantly opposed the Popular Front's implementation in Canada. The class struggle within the CPC was not an open process, and lacking the theoretical tools to conceptualize such a struggle, the lines were not clearly drawn. However, there is no doubt that in examining the Popular Front, such a class struggle did exist within the CPC. By the end of the Popular Front era, despite the resistance from the CPC's proletarian core the bourgeoisie had consolidated itself within the CPC, and the CPC had become "just another bourgeois political party."

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