

The Vancouver Hunger March of 1932:

Explaining a Third Period Success

by

Jean-Francois Maxwell

B.A. (History) Thompson Rivers University 2012

A Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in the Graduate Academic Unit of History

Supervisor: Gregory Kealey, PhD, Dept. of History

Examining Board: David Charters, PhD, Chair, Dept. of History
Jeff Brown, PhD, Dept. of History
David Frank, PhD, Dept. of History

This report is accepted by the
Dean of Graduate Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

August 2013

©Jean-Francois Maxwell, 2013

Abstract

On 25 February 1932 some 6000 protestors descended on Vancouver for a “Hunger March” organized by the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) to demonstrate for better conditions for workers, both employed and unemployed, across the nation. Although Hunger Marches were organized throughout Canada, Vancouver’s march was by far the largest and certainly the most successful. This study presents a thorough examination of the circumstances surrounding the Hunger March and explains what made the event such a unique success in this city. The event’s success derives from the Vancouver CPC’s ability to take advantage of the large mass of transients who came into the city in the early part of the Great Depression and then to funnel their discontent into mass agitation. The following study shows how the Hunger March is symbolic of the Vancouver CPC’s revolutionary pragmatism during the Third Period,

Acknowledgements

In this space I wish to thank the History faculty at Thompson Rivers University, and the University of New Brunswick, particularly Gregory S. Kealey whose personal collection of documents supplied many of the primary sources for this thesis. Many thanks are also given to his careful and dedicated supervision and his research funds which made this project possible. I also wish to thank my overworked and underpaid proofreader Eric Moore upon whom I foisted an unbelievable amount of work (i.e. slave labour) while supposedly doing labour history. The PhD students of the University of New Brunswick also deserve acknowledgement as they have been very kind to me while I have been away from my home province on the west coast.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Abbreviations and Terminology.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Historiography	4
Debates in the Historiography over the Third Period	7
Chapter One: The Unemployed in British Columbia	13
Economics of British Columbia.....	14
Unemployment in British Columbia prior to the Great Depression	16
Changes in Unemployment after the Great Depression.....	17
Chapter Two: The Political Response to Unemployment in Vancouver	21
The administration of relief in Vancouver	22
Treatment of those on Relief.....	24
Chapter Three: The CPC and the Politicization of Vancouver’s Working Class	28
How the CPC Connected with the Unemployed.....	32
The Vancouver CPC in a National Context.....	36
CPC operations during the Third Period.....	39
Governmental Reactions to the CPC	43
The Provincial Relief Camp Scheme	45
The Relief Camps in Operation	48
What the Hunger March tells us about the Third Period	55

Appendix A.....	57
List of the Hunger Marchers' Demands.....	57
A Note on Demands.....	58
Bibliography	59
Primary Sources	59
Government Documents	59
Books	59
Newspapers.....	59
Secondary Sources	60
Books	60
Films	61
Journal Articles	61
Theses, Dissertations, Etc.	62
Curriculum Vitae	

List of Abbreviations and Terminology

AFL: American Federation of Labor

CCF: Co-operative Commonwealth Federation

CPC: Communist Party of Canada

CPGB: Communist Party of Great Britain

CPUSA: Communist Party of the United States

District 9: Communist Party of Canada, BC District

“E” Division: British Columbia division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

ILP: Independent Labour Party

LAC: Library and Archives Canada

NAC: National Archives of Canada

NUWA: National Unemployed Workers Association

TLC: Trades and Labour Congress

RCMP- Royal Canadian Mounted Police

WUL: Workers’ Unity League

Introduction

The year 1931 was a difficult one for the BC section of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). According to RCMP security reports from December of that year, District Nine of the CPC, as it was called internally, was still reeling from the August 1931 arrest of the party's central leadership. The "party had developed into a rabble" making it "impossible for the organization to maintain contact with various units." In addition, the party's once prominent Finnish sections "were so deep underground that they had practically disappeared" with the only Finnish member still active in the party being "weaker than celery water."¹ With this in mind it was hardly surprising that the RCMP believed that the party's long planned series of Canada-wide "Hunger Marches" to protest against capitalism would be a dismal failure.²

Compounding this irrelevance was the fact that the BC CPC was stuck in the militant rhetoric of the "Third Period." This was an era in which Moscow directed Communist Parties throughout the western world to form separate revolutionary units to bring about revolution through class struggle whereas Comintern directives before and after tended to emphasize communist co-operation with other leftist groups in order to improve the lot of the working class. Co-operation with other working-class groups, such as the nascent Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, was forbidden by central leadership during the Third Period as other labour organizations were said to be "social-fascist" in character. This problem was particularly acute in Vancouver, as in the words

¹ RCMP "Communist Party of Canada- Vancouver- File for 1931" (Library and Archives Canada), 715-716. Hereafter referred to as RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver. Acquired by ATIP request by and in possession of Dr. Gregory S. Kealey.

² Ibid., 777.

of historian John Manley, the BC division of the CPC had become a “byword for [militant] waywardness”.³

When the day of the Hunger March finally came, however, the RCMP turned out to be spectacularly wrong. On 22 February 1932, despite the day’s cool damp weather, thousands of workers from across the province came to participate in a march that snaked through downtown Vancouver before sending a small delegation to present demands to the provincial legislature in Victoria. These demands most notably included requests for non-contributory employment insurance without discrimination by race, gender, or residency and better treatment of the unemployed in general.

Although this action was supposed to correspond with a larger series of Hunger Marches throughout Canada before culminating in one final march on Ottawa, Vancouver’s was by far the biggest demonstration.⁴ The Communist press organ, *The Worker*, reported that 12,000 came out in Vancouver, versus 3,000 in Winnipeg and 1,200 in Sudbury. Two weeks later the final demonstration at Parliament Hill in Ottawa proved anti-climactic with only a few hundred marchers turning out.⁵

³ John Manley, “Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935,” *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (2005): 36-37.

⁴ In truth the Hunger Marches in Winnipeg and Sudbury seem to have been fairly inconsequential. *The Winnipeg Free Press* did not even mention a march in the same city (although it did have an article about Vancouver’s march) whereas the *Sudbury Star* did not mention a Hunger March at all although it did cover a jobless march in London, England on 24 February 1932. For reference according to the 1931 census the population of Vancouver was 246,593, Winnipeg 218,785, Sudbury 18,518 and Ottawa 126,872 although these figures often do not take account of surrounding areas. “MORE THAN 5,000 B.C. UNEMPLOYED IN HUNGER MARCH,” *The Winnipeg Free Press* (Winnipeg), 23 February 1932; “POLICE DISPERSE MOBS OF JOBLESS,” *The Sudbury Star* (Sudbury), 24 February 1932; Canada Dominion Bureau of Statistics, General Statistics Branch “THE CANADA YEAR BOOK 1932: THE OFFICIAL STATISTICAL ANNUAL OF THE RESOURCES, HISTORY, INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE DOMINION,” (Ottawa, 1932), 103.

⁵ Although the CPC newspaper, *The Worker*, proudly proclaimed that a “Tremendous Demonstration of 10,000 Ottawa and Hull Workers Came Out” on its front page, the truth seems far less spectacular. The *Globe and Mail* did not even mention this show of force, The *Ottawa Citizen* only mentioned the delegates who went inside the parliament to meet with Prime Minister R.B. Bennett; and the *Mercury* from

Why was the Hunger March in Vancouver so much more successful than the others? The answer to this question is three fold: the particularly acute conditions of transient unemployment in British Columbia, the extreme repression of unemployed in the same province, and the specific conditions of communist organization in “District 9”, which aligned extremely well with the previous two factors. Through the use of hitherto secret RCMP documents, which were produced by RCMP officers spying on CPC rallies, meetings, and marches in Vancouver, this study will thoroughly examine these three factors which came together and culminated in the eventual success of the Hunger March. This examination of the Hunger March and its unique Vancouver success will advance our knowledge of the unique conditions of working-class repression on the west coast during the early part of the Great Depression. By analyzing the CPC party base geographically and politically furthest from the CPC party headquarters in Toronto this study will also consider whether militant policies in Vancouver were indicative of the realities on the ground or theoretical constructions resulting from Third Period militancy.

Tasmania, Australia (the only non-communist newspaper I have found that covered the demonstrations) said that a few hundred marchers protested before sending a delegation into parliament which was emphatically told by Bennett “Do you think you are gaining anything by coming here and making demands?” and “there will be no non-contributory insurance by any government with which I am associated.” The *Vancouver Sun* claimed 6000 marchers, while the RCMP claimed 3000 (although the latter seem to have always been downplaying communist presence in order to make themselves look better to their superiors in Ottawa.) “HUGE DEMONSTRATIONS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT IN THREE CITIES,” *The Worker* (Toronto), 27 February 1932; “STOP PRESS,” *The Worker*, 5 March 1932, “BENNETT REJECTS UNEMPLOYMENT SCHEME,” *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa) 3 March 1932, “CANADA’S UNEMPLOYED DEMAND FOR INSURANCE FORCE THREATENED,” *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania, Australia) 5 March 1932; “6000 B.C. JOBLESS PARADE,” *Vancouver Sun* (Vancouver) 22 February 1932; RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 835-836.

Historiography

There have been a few excellent scholarly overviews of the Communist Party of Canada that cover the party during the Third Period, most notably *Canadian Bolsheviks* by Ian Angus, which covers the party from its inception in 1919 until 1931, and John Manley's dissertation "Communism and the Canadian Working Class during the Great Depression: the Workers' Unity League, 1930-1936". The former provides a useful overview of the CPC during its early years and the latter an excellent summation of the party rank and file during the Third Period. Although Angus's work is marred at times by its overt Trotskyist bias, the research is still solid and it contains a very useful overview of an often turbulent and hard to follow party centre.¹

Much of the CPC's activism during the Great Depression was exercised by the Workers' Unity League (WUL). The WUL, which existed from 1930 to 1936, was a body of unions affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) in Moscow that were united in their quest to overturn capitalism rather than to establish a more comfortable place within it. This should be contrasted with other contemporary labour centrals such as the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) which focused on conciliation with the employing class in the name of bread and butter issues (such as wages). The WUL is thoroughly examined by Stephen Endicott in his recent monograph *Raising the Workers' Flag: The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936*. This work is seminal in the depth of its coverage, and useful in its attention to both the WUL's executive and its rank-and-file members. The book is

¹ All works mentioned in the Historiography section which are not given specific references can be found in the "Bibliography" section.

complemented by other works by Manley on the WUL: the articles “Moscow Rules? ‘Red’ Unionism and ‘Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935,” “Canadian Communists, Revolutionary Unionism, and “the ‘Third Period’: The Workers’ Unity League, 1929-1935”, and “Starve be damned!” Communists and Canada’s Urban Unemployed,”. The first article provides a useful view of the WUL and Third Period within the international context, the second a useful general overview of the WUL, and the third a more specific overview of the WUL’s attempts to organize the unemployed into the National Unemployed Workers Association (NUWA). The last article is of particular interest for this paper as the NUWA was extremely active in Vancouver and within the Hunger March.

Although there are many works focused on later developments such as the Vancouver Post Office Strike, The On to Ottawa Trek, and the Relief Camp Workers Strike of 1935, CPC activism in the early years of the Great Depression has been largely ignored.² By far the most relevant resource is Todd McCallum’s PhD dissertation, “‘Still Raining, Market Still Rotten’: Homeless Men and the Early Years of the Great Depression in Vancouver.” This dissertation covers the period from fall 1929 until spring 1932. Although more focused on the homeless and the administration of welfare than the Communist Party itself, there is a great deal of overlap between these topics.

Andrew Parnaby’s book *Citizen Docker: Making a New Deal on the Vancouver Waterfront, 1919 – 1939* discusses some labour activism in Vancouver during the Third Period, but does not overtly concern itself with the CPC, as it examines Vancouver

² For example see Steve Brodie and Maurice Rush’s *Bloody Sunday: Vancouver, 1938 : Recollections of the Post Office Sit-down of Single Unemployed*, Irene Baird’s *Waste Heritage*, a novel partially based on the events of Bloody Sunday and Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Calgary: Fitz House Ltd., 2003) .

dockworkers in greater depth. Its usefulness for this study is further hindered by the fact that its coverage of CPC activism is primarily concentrated on developments after the Hunger March (generally starting after a reorganization of the National Unemployed Workers Association in Fall 1932).

More general information on the politics of relief administration and the depression in British Columbia is provided by Louise Gorman's M.A. thesis "State Control and Social Resistance: the Case of the Department of National Defence Relief Camp Scheme in B.C." which despite the name contains much valuable information about the time preceding the initiation of the DND scheme in the fall of 1932. Gorman's M.A. thesis is complemented by Lorne Brown's monograph *When Freedom was Lost: the Unemployed, the Agitator, and the State* which contains a very readable account of relief politics from a Canada-wide perspective.

Predecessors to the Vancouver Hunger March of 1932 in an international context are best covered (albeit briefly) in *Hunger: A Modern History* by James Vernon. These include multiple hunger marches to state capitals organized by the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) in 1931, and Hunger Marches to protest poverty in Britain organized as early as 1905 (often by non-communist groups). These events had very little bearing on Vancouver organizers, even though these occurrences were likely well known to the CPC, the latter in particular among radical British immigrants. I have only ever seen one prior march mentioned by anyone in Vancouver while combing through hundreds of RCMP security files on the CPC in that city. The event in question was the Delaware Hunger March of 1931. The most important link between the American and Canadian marches may have been that both were organized in the name of employment

insurance (as Appendix A shows for the Canadian example). However, it is unclear whether the CPUSA and CPC both presented demands for employment insurance because Moscow mandated the two groups to do so, or because the members of both organizations independently desired this legislation.

The Vancouver Hunger March itself is mentioned in several other works, but outside of some popular history websites, the only work that gives a mention longer than a couple sentences is Sheils and Swankey's biography of Arthur "Slim" Evans, *Work and Wages!*. The account found in this book is biased in a way that makes both the Hunger March and Evan's participation in the event much more dramatic than was actually the case.

Debates in the Historiography over the Third Period

In the 1960s and 1970s the first generation of scholars to work on the history of the North American communist parties tended to emphasize the British, American, and Canadian communist parties' subservience to Moscow and the dictates of the Comintern. These early scholars argued that it was during the Third Period that the triad of Communist parties in question bore the heaviest marks of Soviet influence. Soviet dictates became the traditional explanation for why these parties embarked on the allegedly suicidal policy of "class against class" tactics, wherein they launched strikes without hopes of winning, alienated other working class groups who could have been potential allies, and adopted policies which caused members to leave en masse. All of these tactics were implemented not to serve their constituents but instead to mollify

Moscow. Such overt militancy led the CPC, CPUSA, and CPGB to become isolated and to lose much of what little support they had held in the labour movement.³

The first CPC specific history, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929* published in 1968 by William Rodney largely expressed this view. This was followed by works by Ivan Avakumovic, Ian Angus, and Norman Penner, all of which concurred with Rodney's conclusions that during the Third Period the CPC became a Stalinist tool.⁴ Such attitudes supposedly permeated downwards from the party centre in Toronto and caused local affiliates to embark on one suicidal venture across Canada after another. In Angus's own words, "Time and again the Workers' Unity League through a combination of adventurist tactics and sectarian refusal to cooperate with other labour organizations, led groups of workers into defeat."⁵

Starting in the 1970s American, Canadian, and British historians began to revise the orthodoxy on the CPC, CPUSA, and CPGB and suggested that the parties were responsive to the influence of national conditions as well as to Moscow's whims. Most of this revisionist work has been done on the Popular Front period (which began in 1935 and lasted until the start of World War Two) when Communist Parties around the world joined with other proletarian groups in broad-based working-class alliances. However,

³ John Manley. "Moscow Rules? 'Red' Unionism and 'Class Against Class' in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935," *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (2005): 9-10.

⁴ Conclusions about the Third Period CPC's militancy due to Stalinist command are also to be found in the "North American Exceptionalism and the Triumph of Stalinism in Canada," chapter of William Rodney's work as well as in the "The United Front of the Communist Party Alone" section of Norman Penner's monograph and within Ivan Avakumovic's "Class against Class" chapter. William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International; a history of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) 147-159; Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: the Stalin years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1988) 128-161; Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: a History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975) 54-96; *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1982).

⁵ Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* 2nd ed. (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2004) 197-202; 262. The second edition of Angus's book largely remains unchanged from the first edition in 1981. *Ibid.*, vii.

revisionism has also painted the Third Period in a less negative hue. Much of this recent revisionist work on the CPUSA and CPGB has argued that the Third Period line of these parties was warranted by local conditions, and their resulting militancy was a help rather than a hindrance to local organizations.⁶ Moreover, the Third Period is increasingly seen less as a monolithic block, but broken into diverse periods: early 1928 until mid-1929 is depicted as a period of caution, when Communist parties still worked within unions to a limited extent; this was followed by a period of virulent militancy which lasted until spring 1930, then came a phase ending in early 1933 when parties became less combative; the Third Period culminated with a still more moderate phrase which saw communists being encouraged to actively work with existing unions.⁷ In the Canadian context, these periods are seen by John Manley, the leading expert on the subject, as being slightly different: an early period of caution from 1927 until late 1929 while the CPC nervously embarked on new policies, a “high” third period of particular militancy that lasted until late 1931, the period of the party’s illegality from 1932 until 1934 during which the party went underground and transformed itself into a more moderate organization, before coalescing in a final period that lasted from 1934 to 1936 where the party actively worked with other unions and working-class groups until the end of the Third Period.⁸ Although new interpretations of the British and American parties have

⁶ For a complete list of example on revisionist Third Period scholarship see Manley’s “Red Unionism,” note 8.

⁷ Matthew Worley, “Courting Disaster? The Communist International in the Third Period,” in *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, ed. Matthew Worley (New York: Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004), 221-235.

⁸ John Manley, “Red or Yellow: Canadian Communists during the ‘Long’ Third Period, 1927-1936,” in *In Search of Revolution*,” 221-235. The tail end of Canada’s Third Period was in some ways longer than many other countries because it dissolved its “red unions” at a later date owing to the CPC’s positive perspective on these institutions’ successes. Manley, “Red Unionism,” 44-46. For an excellent summary of the Third

been vigorously contested, especially by witnesses to the events in question, so far new studies have convincingly demonstrated a much more multi faceted Third Period than that portrayed by earlier scholars.⁹

Unfortunately, revisionist work on the Third Period is less well developed with regard to the CPC. Most of the detailed revisionist work on the subject has been done by John Manley. He has argued that in many cases following the Third Period line may have been in the CPC's best interests. For instance, Manley posits that the CPC's 1920s policy of turning AFL craft unions into broad United Front unions that would eventually coalesce into industrial unions before proceeding to organize the unorganized was doomed to failure when the vast majority of CPC supporters never belonged to a union in the first place. Instead by focusing on workers in their places of work (whether or not that workplace was organized) the CPC had a much better chance of broadening their membership and influence. However, much CPC work, such as the expulsion of Trotskyists, was still centrally dictated.¹⁰

Stephen Endicott in his recent book, *Raising The Workers' Flag: The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936*, argues that the Third Period CPC was far less out of touch with the working masses than previously thought. Although he stipulates that

Period from a more international perspective see the introduction of the same work listed immediately above.

⁹ Manley, "Red Unionism," 10-13; John Manley, "Red or Yellow," 221-235. See notes 11 and 12 of Manley's "Red Unionism" for further summary of the debate in the British context and a list of works by Allan Campbell and John Mellroy which have vigorously contested the new line in historiography.

¹⁰ John Manley, "Red or Yellow," 221-225. Most workers in the CPC were immigrants in unorganized industries such as lumber camp work. Ibid., Trotskyists were followers of the Communist leader Leon Trotsky in the USSR, who was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1927, with his followers being deemed traitors to the Communist cause shortly thereafter both in the Soviet Union and amongst Communist parties around the world.

Comintern directives in the early part of the Third Period preceding the Great Depression were confusing to the CPC and half-heartedly implemented at first, he argues that the WUL which came out of them was responsive to the needs of the working class (both communist and non-communist) who clamored for a more militant and representative group during a time of labour passivity and economic disaster.¹¹

Although these are interesting conclusions, they are not yet supported by local studies in the Canadian context. Studies on CPUSA activities in the United States, such as that done by Randi Storch on the city of Chicago, have shown that “through the Depression’s earliest years, when party emphasis on Communist attitudes, beliefs, and activity was greatest... Chicago’s Communist Party proved to be a social movement that reflected the attitudes of individuals operating in local Communist cultures that tugged at... a dominant one that officials on high attempted to create.”¹²

In order to see if recent scholarship on the Third Period CPC is valid on a local scale this study will present a thorough examination of local conditions in Vancouver (Chapters One and Two) and an inspection of CPC responses to these conditions (Chapter Three) in order to see how the district that was the “most advanced politically and organizationally” in Canada which “fits into existing historiography of the Third Period.”¹³ This study determine if the most militant district during the radical Third

¹¹ Stephen Endicott, *Raising the Workers’ Flag: The Workers’ Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936* (University of Toronto Press, 2012) 22-31; 321-322.

¹² Randi Storch, “The Realities of the Situation”: Revolutionary Discipline and Everyday Political Life in Chicago’s Communist Party, 1928-1925,” *Labour: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 1 (2004): 23.

¹³ RCMP-CPC Vancouver files, 436-437. Although District 9 referred to the whole of BC, Vancouver by far the biggest city in the province claimed the vast majority of District 9’s members. Hence it seems safe to generalize that any RCMP statements about District 9 were probably in reality about Vancouver for the most part.

Period was the result of local leaders taking orders from Toronto and Moscow overzealously or because of concrete realities on the ground.¹⁴

¹⁴ CPC headquarters was in Toronto.

Chapter One:

The Unemployed in British Columbia

It was the craziest of times. From R.B. Bennett down to the lowest of the low some bohunk smelling of garlic and not knowing a word of English, why we were all in one huge lunatic asylum. We'd meet in the jungles and the guys, well, say it was Kamloops, the guys who had come in from Calgary they'd be waiting for a night freight to the coast and they'd say things like, 'Is that so', or 'Yeah, things are tough' or some such foolery and when the freight came along there they would be ready to hop her and on to Vancouver. You'd say why, why go there where is nothing doing and they would say something like they had a buddy they'd promised to meet at such and such a place. Aimless. Just wandering going nowhere.¹

At the best of times, work in British Columbia prior to the Great Depression was highly seasonal, straining the health and prosperity of working men and women who had no recourse to any sort of welfare state. When the Great Depression hit, seasonal workers often became permanently unemployed. As this chapter will show, the local transient situation in BC was exacerbated by the arrival of a growing tide of the unemployed from the rest of Canada soon after the Great Depression began. Newly unemployed workers were attracted to Vancouver primarily because of the city's moderate weather and its welfare system, which was advanced for the time. This chapter will show the unique nature of unemployment in Vancouver, an understanding of which is vital to comprehending the state and communist responses to the unemployment crisis examined in Chapters Two and Three.

¹ Barry Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years: Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Great Depression* (Markham, Ontario: Paperjacks 1972), 172. Unfortunately, the speakers in Broadfoot's work are not identified.

Economics of British Columbia

BC's seasonal economy was based on its rich bounty of natural resources.² The dependency on resource exportation in BC was exacerbated throughout the 1920s by the province's deepening ties with the United States. As the United States underwent explosive growth, a demand for raw materials caused Canada to push an increasing amount of raw materials southward. This was part of a nationwide trend. By 1929 Canada produced 65 per cent of the world's newsprint while exporting an astonishing 90 per cent of its own pulp and paper, while also producing 90 per cent of the world's nickel and 60 per cent of its asbestos.³

Throughout the 1920s BC's economy prospered by producing an increasing amount of lead, copper, timber, fish, and agricultural products, many of which crossed the border.⁴ Many of the jobs created by these industries were seasonal but both workers and capital had grown accustomed to this situation. It was routine for some workers to move from job to job to supplement their incomes. Men working in the resource industries often used their savings to live through winter in the cities before returning to work in the spring. As H.M. Cassidy, noted expert on Canadian unemployment, succinctly put it in 1939:

Single men, or men detached from their families, were particularly important in serving the needs of Canadian industry. They provided the manpower for logging, mining, railroad construction, railroad maintenance, and seasonal work on the farms. Typically they lived while they had jobs in camps in the wilderness and they returned to the main cities when their jobs came to an end. Thus is the winter months when

² Louise Gwenyth Gorman "State Control and Social Resistance: the Case of the Department of National Defence Relief Camp Scheme in B.C." (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1987), 14.

³ Ibid., 18; A.E. Safarian, *The Canadian Economy in the Great Depression*, 3rd ed. (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 44-45.

⁴ Gorman, "State Control," 18-20.

work was slack and in the years of the depression great numbers of these men congregated in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Montréal, Toronto, Halifax and other centres. In these cities they were pools of labour which could be drawn upon when necessary by the extractive industries.⁵

Any economy dependent on primary resources is highly susceptible to fluctuations in market prices, so when the Depression began, British Columbia's economy went into a tailspin. Between 1929 and 1933 the total value of production in the province declined by 52 per cent, with a 62 percent drop in timber value, a 72 per cent decline in net income for the fishing industry, and a 59 per cent decline in the value of mineral production.⁶

Within Canada the effects of the Depression were felt particularly hard in the resource-based western provinces. Secondary industries such as manufacturing and banking were shielded from the economic downturn to a certain extent. This situation was exacerbated by trade restrictions such as the United States' Smoot-Hawley Tariff and Prime Minister Bennett's attempts to "blast" Canada out of the Great Depression by erecting a tariff wall around the country. Both these sheltered eastern industry from competition while isolating western resources from potential markets. The net effect of this was that depression hit western Canada harder than other regions. Although all of Canada experienced a precipitous economic decline during the early Great Depression, industry in Ontario and Quebec fell by only 44 per cent from 1929 to 1933 whereas the Prairie Provinces had their economies collapse by an astonishing 60 per cent on average. This economic deterioration was in a large part due to the fact that net income from

⁵Quoted in Lorne Brown. *When Freedom Was Lost: The Unemployed, The Agitator, and the State* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1987), 19.

⁶Ibid., 29.

prairie agriculture declined by 94 per cent.⁷ Although BC's economy "only" declined by 47 per cent, as we shall see, it was disproportionately affected by the decline of the Prairie Provinces in comparison to central Canada as the unemployed from the region flocked to BC.

Unemployment in British Columbia prior to the Great Depression

Many of Canada's transient unemployed were accustomed to spending their winters in Vancouver prior to the Great Depression. This seasonal migration was due partially to the city's warm climate, and a national culture of camp and seasonally unemployed men who came into cities to spend their paychecks and downtime. As a heavy pre-World War I economic downturn showed, many workers from around the province felt Vancouver to be their unemployment home as early as 1913.⁸ Vancouver's transient mass included a group of men who would head east to find work on the prairies during the summer harvest and then head back west during the winter.⁹ This meant that many so called "transients" were actually Vancouverites (at least part-time), and a large number of workers had no place at all that they could truly call home. As will be seen later in this study, the transient nature of employment during this period greatly complicated the politics of relief administration.

Prior to the Great Depression there was practically no social welfare state in Canada. Only a patchwork of municipal arrangements provided the safety net. Vancouver was ahead of the curve on the eve of the Great Depression as it had established a permanent

⁷ John Conway, *The West: the history of a region in confederation* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1983) 99.

⁸ Diane L. Matters, "Public Welfare: Vancouver Style," *Journal of Canadian Studies/ Revue d'études canadiennes*, 14, no. 1 (1979): 4-5.

⁹ Gorman, "State Control," 11-12; 32-33.

relief office in 1912, as had Montreal and Toronto. These primitive welfare offices resembled previous poorhouses in that relief was designed to be punitive in order to ensure that it would only be given for a short duration, and also to minimize the financial burden. Private charities supplemented and augmented Vancouver's welfare department and would continue to do so throughout the Great Depression.¹⁰ Although this system had provisions for non-residents built into it, disbursements from this fund were only for "emergencies" (such as starvation), and the system was barely adequate even for permanent residents.¹¹ Never the less, this primitive system attracted some unemployed to the city during desperate times, as it was better than what existed in many smaller centres.¹²

Changes in Unemployment after the Great Depression

Soon after the Great Depression began, transient hobo camps sprang up all across the country. Conditions quickly became particularly acute in British Columbia. Not only did British Columbia have a solid supply of single young men in 1929 who were likely to become transients at the best of times, but unemployed from across the country began to make their way into the province by "hopping" the rails to Vancouver. One reason for this is simple: in a country with almost no social services, the ability to sleep and live outside comfortably was very important. Vancouver, almost uniquely in Canada, is a city where the temperatures rarely drop below zero degrees Celsius. Among the jobless at the

¹⁰ John Douglas Belshaw, "The Administration of Relief to Unemployed Workers During the Great Depression," (M.A. Thesis, 1979, University of British Columbia,) 13-17.

¹¹ Gorman, "State Control," 32-33; Matters, "Public Welfare," 4-5.

¹² Most centres had no municipal relief department, with a patchwork of private charities sometimes filling in. Brown, *When Freedom was Lost*, 18.

time Vancouver was known as “the only part of the country where you could starve before you froze to death.”¹³ Hence as soon as the Great Depression began many young men who would have formerly found work in the prairie provinces, or who found themselves unemployed elsewhere in the country began to pour into Vancouver. By 1931 four hobo “jungles” were established under bridges along the Vancouver waterfront, and many smaller cities in British Columbia maintained similar camps during the 1930s.¹⁴

Something of a popular hysteria about transients coming to Vancouver quickly developed during the early part of the Great Depression. City Alderman and Relief Committee Chairman W.C. Atherton was already declaring by February 1931 that the city relief system needed to be changed so that “We won’t need to feed every Tom, Dick and Harry, who comes here.”¹⁵ Due to a lack of hard data it is impossible to specify how many stationary unemployed were in British Columbia, and even harder to give any accurate figure about the number of transient workers in the province.¹⁶ Nonetheless, contemporary estimates and later academic consensus agree that Vancouver deserved its title as the “Unemployment Capital of Canada.” In 1932, for example, it was believed that 200 transients *per day* were arriving in Vancouver.¹⁷

¹³ *Fighting Heritage: Highlights of the 1930s Struggle for Jobs and Militant Unionism in British Columbia*, ed. Sean Griffin (Vancouver: Tribune Publishing, 1985) 18.

¹⁴ Patricia Roy and John Thompson, *British Columbia: Land of Promises*, (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2005) 124; Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years*, 138.

¹⁵ “RELIEF POLICY TO BE CHANGED; CUT NESSECARY,” *Vancouver Sun*, 12 February 1931.

¹⁶ Todd McCallum, “Still Raining, Market Still Rotten’: Homeless Men and the Early Years of the Great Depression in Vancouver,” PhD diss. Queen’s University, 2004, 166. The “stationary unemployed” I am referring to would be more settled individuals such as married men who owned a house in Vancouver, and who would have been less able leave the city and move around the country.

¹⁷ Gorman, “State Control,” 45-46. Government documents support this idea as well, with the provincial department of labour’s year end annual report reading that “Owing to the milder climate which prevails in British Columbia, this Province was confronted with a tremendous influx of individuals from other parts of Canada”. “Province of British Columbia The Province of British Columbia Annual Report of The Department of Labour for the Year Ended December 31st 1931,” (Government report, Victoria, 1932), 10.

Although there was pressure on the Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National Railway to stop the influx of unemployed into British Columbia and Vancouver, by all accounts such pressure amounted to nothing. In December 1931, Minister of Trade and Commerce H.H. Stevens admitted that both the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railway companies “long ago gave up any attempt to stop” transients from entering the province.¹⁸

A much greater problem for the unemployed who hopped the rails were policemen and the trains themselves. Police constantly harassed the unemployed to keep them moving and prevent them from drawing relief funds in a particular town.¹⁹ This system of policing seems to have been almost completely ineffective. Despite several police promises to the contrary the fall of 1933 brought the usual influx of transients to Vancouver.²⁰

Transients came to British Columbia for a number of reasons, and swelled the numbers of the province’s native unemployed, a group already in dire straits. Indeed H.M Cassidy, who examined the problem in a 1939 political report, suggested that BC’s population grew by 8.1 percent from 1931 to 1936, primarily due to an influx of transients.²¹ Vancouver’s rudimentary welfare system was not equipped to handle an

¹⁸ “NO CHECK ON TRANSIENTS COMING HERE: Railways Gave Up Efforts, Says Stevens,” *Vancouver Sun*, 28 December 1931. In fact at least one transient claimed that he was given advice by “obliging railway policeman” and a “brakie” in making his aimless journey throughout British Columbia smoother. Typically the Canadian Pacific Railway would steer transients towards the Canadian National Railway and vice-versa. Andrew Roddan, *Vancouver’s Hobos: Introduction by Todd McCallum* (Vancouver: Subway Books, 2002), 68-69. The lack of railroad pressure of transients seems to have been a Canada wide phenomenon. See Brown, *When Freedom was Lost*, 20-21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*,

²⁰ Gorman, “State Control,” 50-51. Although this study is concerned with the years 1931-1932, the above incident is still a good example of the non-effectiveness of the policing of train hopping.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 46. This population growth occurred while the Prairie Provinces population concurrently remained stagnant. *Ibid.*

onslaught of the permanently unemployed and it was rapidly overwhelmed after the Depression began. The ways in which this system was reformed to cope with the greatest recession Canada has ever known are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Two:

The Political Response to Unemployment in Vancouver

I would call attention to the strict law passed some years ago prohibiting the use of double bunks. Possibly under the circumstances it has been necessary to put the bunks in this matter.

It would not be tolerated in any construction or logging camp. Then there is the practice of sweeping the tables off with the broom, a most unsanitary thing as they are seldom washed... Many of the tables are overhung with wet clothes.

From the publicity recently given to the city refuge we were lead to believe there would be considerable variety in the "menu" served daily. So far as my experience goes, the breakfast consists of a thin oatmeal porridge; if there is any sugar or milk served with it, it is not discernible; dry bread and a mug of coffee or tea is given, and both taste alike. At noon mulligan, fish or beans and potatoes, with tea or coffee and dry bread. At night a sloppy dish of rice or barley and dry bread or jam and bread with tea or coffee...

I have paid taxes for 27 years and know something of the ever increasing burden of taxation.

*This is not written in a spirit of criticism but merely the view of the situation as it appears to one who has practical experience of working in the 'Refuge.'*¹

As fields on the prairie lay fallow, saws and axes rusted in the forests, and conveyor belts shuddered to a halt, the unemployed of 1929 flooded into Vancouver. Pools of unwashed, unshaven, unemployable men congregated in homeless camps around the city. By June 1931 British Columbia had the highest unemployment rate of any province, with nearly a third of adult males being out of work. A constant influx of men (particularly in the winter months) made the situation even worse.² The vast majority of these unemployed men congregated in the city of Vancouver. The *Vancouver Sun* declaring on 10 July 1931 that "Vancouver contains probably 90 per cent of the Transient

¹ "Broom Swept Tables," *Vancouver Sun*, 26 December 1931.

² Gorman "State Control," 30.

Unemployed in British Columbia”.³ The ways in which the city of Vancouver worked to systematically exclude citizens from relief are the subject of this chapter. This examination will show how many working-class people, particularly if they were “transients,” came to be frustrated with a system that was ostensibly designed to serve them. The results of this disenfranchisement eventually made them amenable to the universal system of relief proposed by the Communist Party of Canada.

The administration of relief in Vancouver

Constitutional division of powers and tradition had made unemployment relief the prerogative of the municipality throughout Canada.⁴ Although Vancouver was by far the biggest city in British Columbia, and one of the largest in Canada, with over half the province’s population in the immediate vicinity of the city proper, it was still ill-equipped to handle the torrent of men who arrived during the Great Depression.⁵ In fact, on 30 October 1929 (the day after the stock market crash) City Relief Officer George D. Ireland, informed city comptroller A.J. Pilkington, that the city would be \$50,000 short by the end of the year if single men were expected to work for relief.⁶

Shortly after the meeting between Ireland and Pilkington Vancouver’s city council resolved that the single men of Vancouver would be able to obtain work for \$1.00

³“NO JOBLESS AID HERE YET,” *Vancouver Sun*, 10 July 1931. The use of the word “men” is purposeful in this section, as men and women were dealt with separately in relief legislation and by the relief office.

⁴ Gorman, “State Control,” 32.

⁵ A *Vancouver Sun* editorial of 13 January claimed that Greater Vancouver held over 300,000 of the province’s 600,000 residents. This figure may be somewhat inaccurate and almost certainly did not take into account a constant in and out flow of transients, but certainly conveys the immense population size Vancouver held (and still holds) in relation to the rest of the Province. Robert J. Cromie [Editor of the *Vancouver Sun*], “Vancouver’s Population 246,000 or 300,000”, *Vancouver Sun*, 13 January 1931.

⁶ McCallum, “Still Raining,” 94. This was because, at least in part, that it was more expensive to have men work for wages (due to payment of bosses, supplies and materials, etc.) than it was to simply pay them outright. However, the belief that it was necessary for men to work in order to make them worthy enough to receive relief was deemed to be more important. *Ibid.*, 172-173.

a day and married men for \$2.00 a day, well below average wages in the province.⁷ Men on relief work were given to labouring jobs such as building sewers, parks, and roadways. Not only was this work poorly paid but it was also physically demanding, particularly as it sometimes was performed without the heavy machinery that was customarily used in such jobs. For example, digging machines were replaced by shovels during the construction of roads in Stanley Park.⁸ This was quite possibly done in the name of “stretching out” available work, while minimizing expenses (despite the human toll).⁹

Despite the demeaning nature of relief work, it never had any shortage of takers, as men often had no other way to survive. This allowed the City to freely discriminate in its allotment of relief work. Married men were always placed at the top of the relief hierarchy, as they were assumed to be the providers for family, and taxpayers and contributors to city welfare in better times. In theory (but not always in practice) married men were the first hired for relief jobs, after which they were also to be given a weekly food allotment; they were paid more when they did get relief jobs, and when relief camps came about married men were more likely to be asked to stay in town while single men

⁷ The civic employees whom relief workers likely displaced (despite Vancouver city government claims to the contrary) made roughly \$22 a week on average. Average pay scales from the Annual Report of the British Columbia Department of Labour for 1931 which puts weekly pay of experienced men at \$16.71 and inexperienced men and those under 18 at \$9.99. “Report of the Department of Labour,” 69.

Although married men could plausibly make \$11 a week, (5.5 day work weeks were the norm for civic employees), the chance of anyone gaining something close to full-time employment under relief rates was practically non-existent. According to the New Westminster Trades and Labour Council, previous city councils had set \$4.50 a day as the minimum “for the class of work done by these relief workers.” By any reckoning then, the city council was getting quite a bargain out of the unemployed. McCallum, “Still Raining,” 86; 159.

⁸ James D. Inglis, “Inefficiency, Charged in Relief Work at Stanley Park,” *Vancouver Sun*, 3 March 1931.

⁹ Brown states in *When Freedom Was Lost* that this was the case with a lot of relief work done in the later Department of Defence work camps schemes. It is quite plausible this could have been extended to earlier relief schemes as well. However, it may have just have been a fact of convenience as Vancouver did not have adequate machinery to actually do scheduled relief work in many cases. Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost*, 54; McCallum, “Still Raining,” 172-173.

were shipped off to the wilderness.¹⁰ Single property owners and families without a male head were both theoretically entitled to relief but were favored less than married males. Those judged to be transients were lowest on the relief scale and always the first to be cut off from benefits. They were considered not deserving of relief having never contributed to its maintenance through taxes in the first place.¹¹

When relief work was not available, both male and female unemployed became eligible for direct relief. Direct relief consisted of tickets that could be exchanged for goods, meals, and beds, somewhat akin to the “food stamps” of modern day welfare programs. Married men got the most relief, followed by other Vancouver residents, with non-residents receiving even less than the other two groups. Quite often though, the unemployed were simply cut off from all municipal relief programs, particularly if they were transient, single men. Those cut-off government relief were turned over to various private charity bodies throughout the city, such as the Salvation Army, from whom they would also receive goods rather than cash. All these programs made very little provision for women, who were often treated worse than single men, and generally left out of plans for relief provisioning.¹²

Treatment of those on Relief

Throughout the period in question, the Vancouver Relief Department was preoccupied with “rationalization.” According to historian Todd McCallum, the leading expert on the subject, after the relief department passed from George Ireland to Colonel

¹⁰ McCallum, 87-88.

¹¹ Ibid., I say “supposedly” because as the next section of this study shows the city had many ways of cutting people off.

¹² Ibid., 167; 155-156.

H.W. Cooper in the spring of 1930, it moved away from its paternalist ideals and began to disempower relief officers by abstractly categorizing relief recipients, so that their cases were standardized and their social situation fit into predetermined categories on standardized forms.¹³ This was ostensibly done in the name of efficiency and thrift, with what McCallum calls “business logic” in mind.¹⁴

The “business logic” which pervaded the relief department was in many ways a financial justification for one overriding goal: to ensure as little relief expenditure as possible, without violating contemporary social mores. This goal was easily achieved by ensuring that citizens fit into boxes and categories which prevented them from being eligible for official relief expenditures while minimizing the fiscal cost of those of who somehow still fit in. This explains the wholesale change from grocery orders to scrip despite the thousands of people of various needs whom it affected, the kicking of those over the age of 21 living with their parents off relief rolls (as they abruptly became transients due to departmental shuffling), and the sudden dismissal of 2500 single men from relief in March 1931 as all those who had been in the city for less than a year were suddenly classified as transients. All of the above was done despite the fact that the maintenance of married men cost the department more than the relief of single men, showing that the

¹³ George Ireland lost his post in a scandal as in the spring of 1930 it was revealed that he was skimming a great deal of relief money into his own pocket. McCallum asserts in his dissertation that “civic officials initiated a campaign to reorganize the department according to principles of business efficiency. They discarded Ireland’s paternal regime, predicated upon Victorian ideals of charity... in favour of a modern bureaucratized system.” However McCallum does not actually state what made Ireland’s system particularly “paternal” in his dissertation. *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

relief department was exploiting popular attitudes in their quest to drive down relief costs.¹⁵

The idea that relief was only to be given to the deserving also guided the spying on the unemployed that was done by the supposedly rationalized Vancouver City Relief Department. After answering an extensive questionnaire in order to get relief in the first place, those on relief were subjected to surveillance and intelligence gathering to ensure they were worthy. For example, *The Unemployed Worker*, a Vancouver paper put out by the Workers' Unity League, wrote that veterans in a Vancouver "Home for Heroes" were subject to punitive actions and kicked out of the refuge if they were caught drinking alcohol.¹⁶ In a similar vein there was an entire investigation section of the relief department devoted to weeding out cases of fraud and abuse. This section was even charged with going to the homes of those receiving relief to ensure they were worthy recipients.¹⁷

There was an element of political policing as well. With the mindset that relief was a gift, and that the recipient would (ideally) use this gift to return to bourgeois respectability, those who agitated for better gifts or against the desirability of returning to being a cog in the capitalist system were particularly suspect. They were either blacklisted from relief or, if possible, deported. The latter was part of a national policy to deport every known communist or suspected subversive; contributing to some 7000

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 150; 167; 181-182. One would think in such a large city there were also quite likely married men who would have been eligible to be cut off relief as well but this was not done at the time, or at least if it was, it was never publicized. Little other information is available on the change from grocery to scrip orders in McCallum's dissertation. *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁶ Although the *Unemployed Worker* was obviously a propaganda paper, Vancouver's claimed no drinking while on relief policies correspond with similar rules in other Canadian jurisdictions. "We Need Thee Every Hour We Need Thee," *The Unemployed Worker*, 12 December 1931; Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years*, 77-78

¹⁷ McCallum, "Still Raining," 188.

deportations in 1932 alone.¹⁸ In order to expedite this process, well-paid undercover relief investigators posed as communists and went from gang to gang in Vancouver to seek out agitators who were subsequently fired.¹⁹

Of course a system which marginalized, humiliated, and denigrated the unemployed had serious repercussions among the unemployed themselves. Since the system was designed to cut off transients from relief in particular, it was this group who, unsurprisingly, was particularly apt to protest against the unfairness of the system. It was the alienation and suffering of this group of workers at the hands of Vancouver's relief system that undoubtedly caused them to turn to the organization which most strongly defined relief as a human right rather than a gift to be sparingly doled out to the most deserving recipients

¹⁸ Gorman, "State Control," 65.

¹⁹ McCallum, 104-111; Gorman, "State Control," 65. The authoritative work on political deportation during this period remains Barbara A. Roberts, *Whence They Came: Political Deportations In Canada from 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988). Canadian law at the time allowed for deportation of immigrants "who did not appear likely to become good citizens" without warrants or convictions. Moreover, the vague and widely encompassing nature of deportable offences (such as being a member of a prohibited class upon entry by having the wrong medical conditions, political views etc. meant that it was in practice shockingly easy to deport undesirables. Unlike the giving of relief the cost of deportation was not born by government as the company who transported the undesirable into Canada was liable to pay their fare back out. *Ibid.*, 12-34. Apparently Vancouver's police enthusiastically participated in this policy as in December 1932 the Vancouver Board of police commissioner wrote to the Prime Minister asking for deportation processes to be speeded up. Gorman, "State Control," 65.

Chapter Three:

The CPC and the Politicization of Vancouver's Working Class

It is apparent that the sentiment of workers is absolutely opposed to being herded in the concentration camps, and the utmost coercion and intimidation is being used on the small minority that refuse to go out. The authorities dare not allow thousands, or even hundreds, of unemployed workers to remain within the City entirely without relief. They are bluffing and it is up to the workers to call their bluff...

REFUSE TO BE CUT OFF RELIEF!

STAY IN TOWN AND FIGHT!

PREPARE FOR A MIGHTY HUNGER MARCH FEB. 22 AND 23!

BUILD THE N.U.W.A.¹

This chapter will examine the relationship between Vancouver's working class and the CPC, with a particular focus on the unemployed. This will lead into a discussion of BC police forces' repression of militant working-class organizations, and the eventual decision to disperse the unemployed into "labour camps" in the name of political expediency. The CPC's reaction to the terrible conditions in labour camps, alongside of their previous activism among the working class, will be shown to have been the forces that made the Vancouver Hunger March such a unique success in Canada.

As Chapters One and Two have shown, the Vancouver working class was saturated with transients during the early part of the Great Depression. These same individuals were particularly aggrieved because of their systemic disenfranchisement by the city. This situation caused Vancouver's transient unemployed to flock to the National

¹ "Stop the Cut Off," *The Unemployed Worker*, 6 February 1932.

Unemployed Workers Association (NUWA), a militant union affiliated with the WUL. The NUWA sought to organize the unemployed into a political force, which would use mass action to pressure the government for better treatment of the unemployed. This was all part of the larger strategy of the WUL, which sought to move away from the contemporary craft unionism and bread and butter tactics of the AFL and the TLC in favour of more militant activism with the ultimate objective of overturning the capitalist system itself. The NUWA was originally formed by the CPC at the direction of Moscow. Industrial Secretary of the CPC, Tom McEwan, who was tasked with creating the NUWA, was at first so busy simultaneously creating the WUL that he was barely able to pay the former any attention in most cases. Hence even in large cities such as Toronto and Montreal local branches of the NUWA existed only on paper as late as the end of December 1930.² The nature of the transient situation in Vancouver, however, made it more conducive to NUWA organizing than any other of the large cities.

As John Manley, the foremost expert on the CPC during the Third Period, explains in his dissertation:

Vancouver's early pre-eminence was based on the presence of Allan Campbell, an articulate and extremely militant "Red Clydesider" whose experience of organizing the unemployed went back to the early days of the communist movement in Scotland; and also to the presence, in the first depression winter, of a huge number of single, transient unemployed.³

Although Allan Campbell was undoubtedly a talented organizer, successful demonstrations after his deportation suggest that the other factors such as

² Manley, "Communism and the Canadian Working Class," 542; Stephen Endicott, *Raising the Workers' Flag, The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936* (University of Toronto Press, 2012), 31-32.

³ Manley, "Communism and the Canadian Working Class," 542.

Vancouver's unique transient situation were of greater importance. Campbell was a large enough thorn in the side of law enforcement that he was deported as soon as possible, but there were a great many other lesser-known leaders willing to take up the charge and mold the unemployed into an aggressive political organization. These leaders include Jim Litterick (who actually started the NUWA in Vancouver), George Drayton, John Thomas Bradley, William Bennett, and Malcolm Bruce.⁴

Almost as soon as the Depression began the city of Vancouver encountered problems with the organized unemployed. Vancouver had its own WUL paper, the *Unemployed Worker* by late 1929 and the first parade of the Vancouver Unemployed Workers Organization occurred on 5 December 1930, only three days after the organization was formed in Vancouver. Throughout the month of December the Vancouver city relief office was besieged by constant demonstrations, requests for meetings, and continuous agitation for the better treatment of the unemployed organized by the CPC. By the end of the month, however, the organization had decided that directly petitioning city council and relief offices was a waste of time, and a much better course

⁴ It should be noted that, Campbell was deported in August 1931, with an RCMP security file on him saying that he was "one of those recommended for deportation long ago" on 19 January 1931; Bruce was often touring around the country and was incarcerated from November 1931 until July 1934; and J.T. Bradley was often touring around British Columbia. Tom McEwan wrote a biography of William Bennett entitled *He Wrote For Us: The Story of William Bennett, Pioneer Socialist Journalist* (Vancouver: Tribune Publishing Company, 1951). RCMP Security Files CPC Vancouver, 784-784; 715-716; Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Little Band, The Clashes between the Communists and the political and legal establishment in Canada, 1928-1932* (Ottawa, Ontario: Deneau Publishers, 88; 215; Endicott, *The Workers' Unity League*, 85; 156; 177-87; 248-52. The question of who in the Vancouver leadership was involved in the Hunger March, or CPC organizing in general, is a difficult one because of the redactions of almost all names in the RCMP security files. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that memoirs, newspapers, and other Communist sources that cover the Third Period rarely mention Vancouver at all. For these reasons until further sources surface it is difficult to speculate on what individual persons did during the Hunger March or in early Third Period Vancouver in general.

of action would be to focus on public demonstrations and parades in order to show and garner support. This was predictably a point of contention for the Vancouver city police and the RCMP, which had already decided by 16 December that such demonstrations were the stuff of dangerous “agitators.” The police from the outset dispersed demonstrations with truncheons and other implements of force. Over 100 demonstrations were organized throughout the next year, many of which would be deemed “riots” by the police authorities.⁵

The police were always able to ensure a speedy response to any Communist Party plans because both the Vancouver City Police and the RCMP maintained a multitude of police spies and “stool pigeons” who would attend CPC rallies and meetings to keep abreast of communist movements. After attending meetings police officers would send reports to their headquarters in order to co-ordinate responses to perceived upcoming dangers.⁶ The Vancouver CPC and affiliates were well aware of police spying, even going so far as to joke about the police taking out “pencils and notebooks” at their meetings. However, the CPC was practically powerless to stop police spying, as actually interfering with police operations in a serious way, such as ripping a pen and paper out of an officer’s hand, would surely be reason for deportation, imprisonment or both. Hence,

⁵ Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class,” 542; McCallum, “Still Raining,” 90-103. Many of these so-called riots which often amounted to little more than minor property damage, were caused at least in part by the aggressive police actions breaking them up. This problem was particularly acute in Vancouver with its extremely aggressive and large protests. In fact, police responses to these mass actions were remembered by protesters fifty years later. Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost*, 39; Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class,” 185.

⁶ The RCMP reports were sent on to Ottawa and filed in the RCMP archives before being placed in CSIS’s possession in the 1980s. Gregory S. Kealey then requested the files in the mid-eighties from CSIS itself before the material went to NAC (now LAC). Copies of the material was generally sent through the mail but on a few occasions it was viewed at CSIS and NAC headquarters in Ottawa depending on the timing of research trips. Requests for documents were also made to the RCMP who sent most documents through the mail while others needed to be viewed at RCMP headquarters in St. John’s Newfoundland (where Dr. Kealey resided at the time). Almost all such documents were the subject of complaints to the Information Commissioner in order to reduce the number of redactions (which are still very numerous).

the Vancouver CPC's reaction to the police surveillance was to position itself as the antithesis of the "police terror" campaign against the working class. The RCMP and Vancouver City Police were called "tools of the bourgeoisie" by the CPC during party meetings and the party itself held "monster" demonstrations to protest police repression and encourage the working class to join the CPC and its affiliates to "fight for their rights."⁷

How the CPC Connected with the Unemployed

As unemployment worsened throughout 1930 and 1931, more and more disenfranchised transients streamed into the city of Vancouver.⁸ The local CPC grew as a result and related affiliates such as the NUWA came to include large numbers as they enlisted the local disenfranchised.⁹ One particularly virulent demonstration in March 1931 that attracted 1500 marchers after a cut-off of those on relief was announced. The CPC was highly adept at taking advantage of popular discontent with the relief system.¹⁰

This does not mean that the unemployed workers actually joined the Vancouver CPC. Dues paying membership of the BC party was only 1200 in 1935, and this was after

⁷ CPC Vancouver Files 419; 301-302; 646-647.

⁸ According to A.E. Safarian, the best expert on the subject, "The most comprehensive indicator of economic activity, the index of the physical volume of production reached its lowest point in the first quarter of 1932." Hence the economy shrunk for roughly ten quarters. Safarian, *The Canadian Economy*, 109.

⁹ Although the WUL and its affiliated unions were designed to appear separate from the CPC, with pains being taken to ensure the latter had a separate office from the former, the WUL was initiated and dissolved on CPC demand, and it was at least partially controlled by the CPC (although Endicott's work has shown not as much as previously thought). The Vancouver RCMP believed the CPC and various WUL branches were one and the same (although the RCMP in general were prone to calling every socialist organization communist). Endicott, *Raising the Workers' Flag*, 34-36; 303-304; 321-327; RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 378.

¹⁰ Pierre Berton, *The Great Depression* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1990) 79-80; Manley, "Communism and the Canadian Working Class," 260 ; RCMP-CPC Vancouver File, 360.

party membership had been climbing for a number of years.¹¹ However, judging by rally attendance, much of the general public was supportive of at least some CPC Vancouver aims, a development that was alarming enough for municipal authorities.

Without the influence of the party Vancouver's transient population would most likely have never become organized. The evidence for this is simply that in a city flooded with unemployed, no alternative institutions or organizations that ever succeeded in putting together a substantial rally or meeting during the time period under study. As the Depression progressed and long term unemployment became normalized, this seems to have been less the case. But particularly at this point in the early years of the Great Depression, only the CPC took advantage of unique conditions in Vancouver while also implementing a national agenda.

As Todd McCallum points out, in the early part of the Great Depression, the Vancouver CPC, and other branches of the party sought to sever the link between production and relief. In December 1931 the Vancouver NUWA demanded two days of work at \$4 a day or direct relief of \$8 a week if no work could be found for single men and women. It demanded four days of work at the same rate or \$16 dollars a week for any worker with dependents. By demanding relief at the union rates of regular civic employees whether or not there was work available, the organization transformed what had formerly been a privilege into a right.¹² The NUWA's system of relief was never advertised as an emergency stop-gap measure to be grudgingly given to those who needed the help the most. The CPC's version of unemployment insurance, on the

¹¹ Manley, "Communism and the Canadian Working Class," 260.

¹² The "union rates" referred to are the wage structures for regular civic employees. The Vancouver CPC sought parity between relief worker and civic workers wages in their pay demands. See note 48, and McCallum, "Still Raining," 159-160.

contrary, would provide support indefinitely. The CPC sought to make cash relief into a fundamental human right.¹³ Just as governments would always make provisions to ensure law and order, they should always guarantee a living allowance.¹⁴

Almost uniquely in Canada, the CPC also worked to extend the right for equal wages to working women. Whereas the city of Vancouver designed its relief system so that women were always paid less than men, regardless of whether or not they had dependents, the CPC actively lobbied for women to be treated equally as men when it came to wages.¹⁵ As Appendix A shows, the party demanded that “Single unemployed workers, male or female, with dependents,.. [must] receive the same benefits as the married.” The party further stipulated that married workers were to be treated as equals in the dispensation of relief regardless of gender.

The notion that working women were on the same plane as men was revolutionary in 1930s Canada. Although there were some faint cries for better treatment of women on relief in occasional letters to the *Vancouver Sun*, the plight of working-class women was almost ignored by other labour groups. The CPC sought to integrate women into their communist world view, by propagandizing about the better treatment of women in the Soviet Union and in a Communist future. As Todd McCallum shows, the Vancouver CPC’s treatment of women as working-class equals was part of the national party’s overall militancy during the Third Period. During the Popular Front period, when the CPC sought to conform to contemporary societal views, women were increasingly

¹³ Refer to Appendix A for an example.

¹⁴ McCallum, “Still Raining,” 157-158. The Vancouver CPC was fond of pointing out at meetings that the government always seemed to have plenty of money for the RCMP to stop demonstrations but was always miserly with relief. See for example RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 737-738.

¹⁵ See the “Administration of Relief” section of Chapter Two for more information on this.

consigned to traditional domestic roles in party life and propaganda. The Vancouver CPC's propagandizing among women enjoyed some success. According to the *Vancouver Sun* women did actively participate in the event, marching alongside men to demand employment insurance.¹⁶

The Vancouver CPC also operated outside of societal norms with respect to racism, admonishing workers to treat their Asian fellow workers as equals. These anti-racism campaigns were part of the larger Third Period mandate which saw the industrialized world as eventually bifurcating into a struggle between workers and owners, regardless of gender, ethnic, or racial origins. Unlike their work with female workers, however, the Vancouver CPC's anti-racism campaigns amounted to little in this period. RCMP reports on CPC attempts to organize Asian workers describe these efforts as going nowhere; if Asian workers did come out to the Hunger March they were not mentioned in contemporary press reports.¹⁷ Despite this failure, however, the CPC's broad yet militant version of relief is an example of how Third Period militancy could actually have a wide appeal, especially among groups that were excluded by traditional policies of relief. As we shall see, the Hunger March shows these policies appear to have

¹⁶ McCallum, "Still Raining," 160-162; CPC Hunger March propaganda still admonished that "wives and sweethearts should come and bring their children" to demonstrations "as this would make police beatings less likely." The previous quote shows that gender roles were not completely reversed in the Vancouver CPC. RCMP- CPC Vancouver File, 710. Further discussion of the CPC and women in the third period can be found in Manley, "Communists and Canada's Urban Unemployed," 469-471.

¹⁷ Sara Diamond's film *On to Ottawa* briefly and vividly discusses the plight of the Chinese who were excluded from relief rolls in Vancouver, and their starvation in the face of blatant racism. Sara Diamond, *On to Ottawa*, Documentary, (1992: Vancouver: On to Ottawa Historical Society and the Women's Labour History Project), Film.

been particularly successful among transients, and to a lesser extent, among female workers.¹⁸

The Vancouver CPC in a National Context

The Vancouver CPC was quite radical by central party standards. It had long been known for charting its own course independent of the central leadership in the east. Similar to the California division of the CPUSA.¹⁹ With minor exceptions, such as its support of strikes at Fraser Mills and Maillardville, the Vancouver CPC's focus during this period was on transients.²⁰ In fact the organization was so reliant on transients that the RCMP officers monitoring the party wrote that the WUL "was organized to work on the masses of the unemployed," even though the WUL was formed to organize all workers. The Vancouver CPC's preponderance of transient members caused some dissension within Communist Party ranks as other centres attacked Vancouver for its overt dependence on "seasonal workers." However, it was a reliance on transients that allowed Vancouver to take advantage of unique local conditions.²¹ Moreover, at this point in the Great Depression, the Communist Party was practically the only group looking to organize the unemployed. This gave the CPC access to an untapped market from which to gain potential adherents. As Lorne Brown said in his 1979 PhD dissertation:

¹⁸ RCMP- CPC Vancouver File 489; 880-881; "JOBLESS WANT \$25 A WEEK INSURANCE,"; McCallum, "Still Raining," 160-162.

¹⁹ Manley, "Moscow Rules," 62-63; McCallum "Still Raining," 105.

²⁰ Jeanne Meyers has an excellent summary of the Maillardville and Fraser Mills strikes in *Workers, Capital, and the State*. Meyers claims that the strikes semi-successful results were primarily due to the strikers' cohesion with one another due to their living in a "company town" although she also notes that the strike was led by the WUL and the NUWA sent men from Vancouver to help man the pickets. Jeanne Meyers, "Class and Community' in the Fraser Mills Strike 1931," in *Workers, Capital, and the State*, eds., Rennie Warburton and David Coburn (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 141-160.

²¹ RCMP-CPC Vancouver Files, 378; Manley, "Communism and the Canadian Working Class," 541-544.

Many unions virtually collapsed during the period 1929-1932... The established trade union movement could hardly hold itself together in the face of the depression much less mount the ambitious campaign which many felt the times required... The result was the creation of a vacuum which was not filled by either established trade unions or the major parties.²²

Only the CPC sought to build a mass “national movement with concrete political aims.” Politicizing the transient unemployed was an important part of this strategy.²³

This overt reliance on organizing the unemployed into one coherent mass also influenced how the Vancouver CPC implemented the “United Front” policy announced by the party centre in 1931. This policy encouraged those in the nucleus of revolutionary unions, such as the NUWA, to lead and include “unorganized workers, members of reformist unions, workers who support the conservative or liberal parties, members of the ILP as well as other WUL unions” in order to achieve common demands and goals.²⁴ In March 1932, shortly after the Hunger March, this policy was broadened further and the NUWA was taken out of the WUL entirely, made independent, and transformed into the National Council of Unemployed Councils (NCUC). This policy allowed CPC members to convince potential recruits to join newly emerging block and neighborhood councils with more ease, as one ostensibly did not need to be a “Red” or “Marxist” to participate in neighborhood activities, such as demanding free utilities and an end to evictions.

According to the RCMP, when the policy of block and neighborhood councils was first announced to Vancouver CPC members in November 1931, speakers at party meetings admonished the unemployed “to organize groups in their homes and [for] the

²² Quoted in Lorne Brown, “The Bennett Government, Political Stability and the Politics of the Unemployment Relief Camps, 1930-1935,” PhD diss., Queen’s University, 1979, 49.

²² RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 760.

²³ Ibid., 162; 535.

²⁴ “What is the United Front,” *The Worker*, 19 February 1932.

leader to report to 61 Cordova Street West, so that the association would be able to keep their activities secret.” This seemed a reasonable precaution, especially given that much of the party leadership had been arrested the previous August. However, when the truth was revealed to the Vancouver CPC by central party leadership, namely that neighborhood and block councils were part of a moderation in policy, the Vancouver and Montreal CPC revolted against the dictates of their party, with the former charging the party’s leadership of making an opportunist retreat in the face of the Bennett government’s offensive. Vancouver stood down in the fall of 1932 after the majority of local party members adapted to the changes. This minor revolt against central dictates shows that tension could occur between locally held patterns of organization and the wider international culture of communism.²⁵

Central dictates were eventually adapted to systems of local organization. As John Manley notes in his article “Communism and Canada’s Urban Unemployed,” despite initial resistance the Vancouver CPC adopted the new system and was able to go from “strength to strength” creating 114 block councils with over 2200 members by January 1933. United Front policies encouraging work with other parties, which may not have clashed as much with previous successes as the new organizational scheme of the NUWA did, were rapidly adopted by the Vancouver CPC. The party took advantage of the new policy and employed it in their preparations for the Hunger March. Posters advertised the parade as a United Front event, while also arranging meetings with sympathetic trade

²⁵ RCMP- CPC Vancouver Files, 69[final digit cut off]; 822; John Manley, “Communists and Canada’s Urban Unemployed,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 79 4 (1998): 469-473. The RCMP file in the 690s does not actually use the words “United Front” or “Block and Neighborhood Councils”; it does however basically describe that latter system, so I judged it fair to describe it as the announcement of the policy at Vancouver CPC meetings.

union groups in order to ensure their attendance. The nature in which the Vancouver CPC adopted the United Front policies of 1931-1933, in conjunction with its reliance on transients demonstrates how the local party adopted Third Period policies to make the best use of local conditions, rather than trying to hammer Third Period policies into place despite local conditions.²⁶

CPC operations during the Third Period

While other cities around the country were still struggling to breathe life into their NUWA branches, Vancouver's CPC was organizing demonstrations involving thousands of workers. Judging by RCMP documents, the CPC held a never-ending series of meetings (at which speakers would address attendees), rallies, banquets, dances and parades under various front organizations to attract workers to the Communist cause. Meetings were held by a wide variety of groups, not all of which were actively Communist. Affiliate groups included the CPC, the Trade Union Education League, the Women's Labour League, the Canadian Labour Defence League, Friends of the Soviet Union, youth sports groups and the WUL. Some cities near Vancouver, such as Burnaby even had their own variants of these groups (such as the NUWA). Various other Finnish and Ukrainian cultural groups which were not directly under Communist influence also had a strong enough Communist presence that the RCMP believed spying on them was in the state's best interest. Two or three meetings being held simultaneously in Vancouver through some combination of the CPC and its front groups was not rare, although

²⁶ Manley, "Communists and Canada's Urban Unemployed," 469-473.

meetings of the CPC itself seem to have been the most common.²⁷ It is quite likely that the constant organizing of the Vancouver CPC in the early part of the Great Depression, may have been part of a long-term movement that made Vancouver the ideal launching ground for the On-To-Ottawa-Trek. However, until there is a substantial study of the Vancouver CPC during the Great Depression I am hesitant to say this. In the short term, Communist gatherings served a three-fold purpose: to raise money for Communist activities; to propagandize to those already in the party; and to organize the rallies which bolstered the CPC's image and sought to bring concrete benefits to the working class.

As has been recounted in many other histories of the CPC, and despite contemporary anti-party propaganda to the contrary, the much fabled "Moscow gold" did not exist. Even the leaders of the CPC were dirt-poor, and the Vancouver part of the organization was constantly struggling to make ends meet (having so many members who were unemployed transients probably did not help matters). Nearly every meeting sold literature and ended with a collection plate being passed around. Occasionally, in order to pay rent on meeting properties, the collection plate would be passed around for a second time. Money was also occasionally solicited on a national scale as well, as was the case when legal funds were raised for the defence of the Communist Party leadership during their 1931 trial.

Banquets and dances also helped to bind the party together and maintain unity. It is not a stretch to imagine that the CPC came to dominate much of its members' social lives and identities during the period in question, especially because many members did

²⁷ RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 378; 838-839. In March 1931 there were nine CPC gatherings mentioned in RCMP documents versus five meetings for other various front groups, although these records are very likely incomplete. RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver 340-391 (March 1931).

not speak fluent English (many party members were recent immigrants), were unemployed and likely had little else to do, or both. Evidence of the all-encompassing nature of a communist social life can be seen in the fact that when followers of Leon Trotsky were kicked out of the party in 1929, the majority returned to the party in a few months and recanted their heretical views because they could not handle the isolation. Control was also exercised on a local level as Vancouver comrades were admonished because “of backsliding caused by a weakness for the weaker sex,” and those who were exposed to be police spies were quickly expelled of course. However, outside of extreme cases such as this, expulsion seems to have been a unique phenomenon.²⁸

Unity was necessary for the Vancouver CPC because it was highly engaged in Third Period sectarianism. Party members would often criticize the AFL, TLC, and other trade union organizations, as “fakers” and allies of the bourgeoisie. Claiming that the only possible savior of the working class were “Red Unions” such as the WUL. They even went as far as to attack Lyle Telford, leader of the Independent Labour Party (a CCF predecessor) in Vancouver, despite the closeness of some party aims, such as an end to police brutality, and a better system of relief. Despite the fact that Telford was able to set up a debate between his party and the CPC about the merits of Communism which drew at least 5000 attendees (far more than the CPC could usually muster), yet the CPC still

²⁸ The CPC Vancouver had so many ESL speakers they briefly tried to run an English language school. RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 630; 670-671; 446-447. For a discussion of the most famous police spy in the CPC’s ranks see Steve Hewitt, “Royal Canadian Mounted Spy: The Secret Life of John Leopold/Jack Esselwein,” *Intelligence and National Security* 15 (2000): 144–168; Andrew Parnaby and Gregory Kealey. “How the ‘Reds’ Got Their Man: The Communist Party Unmasks an RCMP Spy,” *Labour/Le Travail* 40 (1997): 253–67. Methods of discipline are not mentioned in the RCMP CPC Vancouver files and are unclear. Expulsion is almost never mentioned, and when it is mentioned it seems to have been done long ago, although exactly how long ago is also vague.

attacked Telford throughout 1931, calling him a “labour fakir” and protesting his ILP meetings at times.²⁹

The unity of the CPC Vancouver with the CPC as a whole was also preserved by the repetition of obvious CPC-wide propaganda at meetings. Any speakers who had been to the Soviet Union always described the country in glowing terms. The workers were well-paid; the capitalist press about forced labour and dictatorships in the Soviet Union were all a brazen lie; and at times Canadian workers were admonished to demand the end of a trade embargo with the Soviet Union. The Vancouver CPC also participated in national level campaigns, including a petition drive demanding unemployment insurance in 1931 that led to a famous showdown between communist Reverend A.E. Smith and Prime Minister Bennett in the halls of Parliament. The strange combination of being immersed in an encompassing communist culture while being isolated due to sectarianism seems to have made quite an impact on those who were active members of the CPC in Vancouver, judging by the numbers who came to meetings and gave up their meagre savings to support the party.³⁰

In their public advertisements and demonstrations the CPC pursued a less militant line. Interestingly only one of the crude hand-drawn posters which survive in the RCMP Vancouver archives mentions the evils of any other union group, although these posters are generally all still fairly bellicose about the glory of the Soviet Union and the evils of the Bennett government. The rhetoric during public marches seems to have been more of the same. This lends itself to the conclusion that the CPC Vancouver may have taken a less hardline stance in public in order to encourage acceptance by potential recruits who

²⁹ RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 411-412; 590; 537.

³⁰ RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver., 324; 355-354; 373-374; 341.

had not yet been immersed in the militant Communist world view, but had connected to the movement through exposure to some aspect of Communist philosophy.³¹

However, it was likely through hard-core “regular” members that the CPC was able to reliably put up posters, spread the word about the party, and sell newspapers (the latter duty in particular was closely monitored by the party). These mediums were used to advertise “monster demonstrations” and it was through these public events that the CPC found their widest support (at least in a numerical sense). Although the CPC rarely had over a thousand attendees at meetings (with most subgroups such as the WUL having far less members come to meetings),³² public rallies could attract many more, as demonstrations throughout 1931 showed. For example, a January 1931 rally against the trying of Communist leaders attracted 4000 attendees, a March 1931 demonstration against unemployment cuts drew 1500, and an August “anti-war” demonstration brought out a surprising 6000 attendees.³³

Governmental Reactions to the CPC

A police report on the aforementioned August 1931 anti-war “riot” and a *Vancouver Province* article on the same subject note that fences, sidewalks, and gravel

³¹ Posters in the RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, include, 823, 826, 382; 388; 399; 423-435; 450, 492, 530-531, 546; 588; 618; 689; 727-729; 720; 747; 761; 772; 822; 867; 832; 826; 850; 851. The poster attacking another working class group is 894 which proclaims that “Percy Bengough, always the leader of the Trades and Labour Council of Vancouver in refusing to assist the unemployed workers in any way, has been sent by Bennett to the League of Nations Labor Congress to assist Tom Moore in betraying the workers on an international scale.”

³² Those who attended meetings were not necessarily members. The CPC at times did hold public and private meetings but the vast majority of meetings, or at least the ones the RCMP went to, seem to have been public affairs. For example a speaker, whose identity is censored on RCMP documents, addressed the Ukrainian branch on the 19 and 22 November in private and public formats about the development of the Soviet Union. 30 and 300 spectators came to each respectively. It is unclear why there was a private meeting for this event (as this was regular fare) but it may have been for security reasons. There were also meetings held in members’ private homes. The RCMP seemingly did not go to the latter type of meetings, possibly because their agents well not inserted well enough into the CPC to do so. See *Ibid.*, 707; 347-350.

³³ *Ibid.*, 277-279; 360; 562.

were torn up to be thrown at police, and that several car windows and a store window were smashed in the fracas.³⁴ Minor property damage, such as broken windows, began to occur during demonstrations and an anti-communist hysteria began to sweep the city. Already in February 1931 newspapers were endorsing government plans for centralizing of the unemployed in suburban barracks.³⁵ Redbaiting seeped into the halls of power in Vancouver as well. In May 1931, the head of the Vancouver RCMP, H.M. Newson warned the RCMP commissioner in Ottawa that if something was not done by fall to improve the lot of the unemployed, riots would occur, as “Communist propaganda is being disseminated and listened to more than ever before, and will bear fruit if not counteracted.”³⁶

These attitudes were not uncommon. Across Canada those who militantly agitated for better treatment of the unemployed were accused of engaging in subversion against the Canadian state, and exploiting unemployed discontent for the purposes of violently overturning the democratic system. The treasonous attitude of these agitators was attributed to their foreignness, and allegiance to Moscow. For instance, RCMP Police Commissioner James MacBrien illogically said in 1932 that “if we were to get rid of them [the communists], there would be no unemployment or unrest in Canada.” Minister of Labour Senator Gideon Robertson, after touring western Canada and being greeted by jeering demonstrators at every turn in the spring and summer of 1931, somehow

³⁴ The initial telegram from Vancouver police to headquarters claimed there was 5000 demonstrators. “Police Injured In Downtown Street Battle,” *Vancouver Province* (Vancouver), 3 August 1931; RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver 567.

³⁵ “WHAT NEXT,” *Vancouver Sun*, 22 January 1931.

³⁶ Rose-Betcherman, *The Little Band*, 93; RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 462.

postulated that the removal of those ‘aliens who are spreading dissension,’ through deportation was a necessary step in solving the unemployment problem.³⁷

Vancouver’s situation was uncommon, however, and vilification and disenfranchisement of the unemployed did nothing to prevent increasing radicalism and relief costs. As long as there was no national solution to unemployment, a continuing stream of transients into Vancouver would likely make these problems worse. Hence two other solutions offered by Robertson on his trip piqued the B.C. establishment’s interest, perhaps even more than his mass deportation suggestion. One idea, to stop transients from using the rails, never had much effect, but the second, a national program to send transients to work camps in the wilderness, would soon be embarked upon by Canada’s westernmost province on a massive scale.³⁸

The Provincial Relief Camp Scheme

Vancouver was not the only Canadian municipality in severe financial difficulties soon after the Great Depression began, but as we have seen its relief system was uniquely strained by its transient problem. Almost immediately after the Great Depression commenced Vancouver began to agitate for assistance from the federal government arguing that the nature of Canada’s unemployment made the problem a federal issue. In January 1930 Vancouver held a conference for the mayors of western municipalities which pressed the federal government to do more. Negotiations never got very far with the Mackenzie King government as the then PM insisted that unemployment was a temporary issue, best dealt with by lower levels of government

³⁷ Berton, *The Great Depression*, 84.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

The federal government began to take on slightly more responsibility for unemployment with the election of Prime Minister R.B. Bennett in 1930. For the most part Bennett followed his predecessor in maintaining that unemployment was an issue best looked after by municipalities and provinces, though he did, grudgingly, begin to make some changes.³⁹ Soon after coming to power the Bennett's Conservative government put forward the Unemployment Relief Act of 1930 which set forth \$20 million in federal funds (10 times that spent in the entirety of the 1920s), to be spent on relief by 31 March 1931. The act stated that unemployment relief to remain a municipal and provincial responsibility, temporary crisis notwithstanding. In accord with the spirit of the act the federal government would pay a quarter of relief costs, municipalities half, and provinces the remaining quarter. This stop-gap measure may have made the problems of transients even worse in Vancouver because initially the city was capable of matching federal and provincial funds to handle a transient influx. In all likelihood Vancouver's size allowed it to subsidize provincial and federal funds while many smaller centres would have been unable to muster the finances. The shortsightedness of this policy was demonstrated in February 1931 when 2500 so-called "transients" were cut off from relief in a move that foreshadowed the coming change in federal policy. These cuts added greatly to popular discontent and contributed to mounting unrest.⁴⁰

The Unemployment Relief Act of 1932 was similar in substance to its predecessor except that it stipulated that the federal government would pay half of its relief subsidy in labour costs; the province and municipality would contribute a quarter of the same, and the municipality would pay 50 per cent of the cost of materials and any administrative

³⁹ Gorman, "State Control," 66-68

⁴⁰ Ibid., 67-69; McCallum, "Still Raining," 182.

and overhead costs.⁴¹ In the same act, Senator Robertson put forth the idea of shared responsibility for work camps. British Columbia immediately took advantage of the act to establish a wide-ranging system of relief camps which sought to disperse the unemployed across the province working on “useful” projects such as highway construction.⁴²

The city of Vancouver had set up camps for the unemployed in the past, with one being constructed in 1913 for example. But these were close to the city limits.⁴³ The idea of moving the unemployed to camps deep in the wilderness seems was a new one. The city of Vancouver may have been agitating for such a solution before the Bennett government gave them the financial wherewithal to do so with the Unemployment and Farm Relief Act of 1931. As a letter from Premier Simon Tolmie in February 1932; states that:

The City of Vancouver was constantly urging the Provincial Government to take the transients... together with the unemployed men without dependents into camp. Immediately after negotiations with Ottawa... it was decided to rush the men out of the cities in order to prevent, what the Chief of Police was afraid might happen, wholesale damage to property.⁴⁴

Although often marketed to the public as voluntary, there was actually a penalty of \$1,000 or a three-month prison term for those who refused to go, although in practice unemployed people who refused to go were most often cut off relief and left to starve.⁴⁵

Prior to the opening of the camps there was a province-wide registration of the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

⁴² British Columbia was not the first province to have Relief Camps. That dubious honor belongs to Saskatoon in 1930. However the city of Saskatoon’s relief camp was more akin to a settlement on the outskirts of town for transients rather than a wilderness outpost. Alma Lawton, “Relief Administration in Saskatoon During the Great Depression,” *Saskatchewan History*, 22 (1962) 54; Brown, *When Freedom was Lost*, 47.

⁴³ More research is needed on the issue. However these early relief camps are mentioned in Matters, “Public Welfare,” 3.

⁴⁴ Quoted from Gorman, “State Control,” 75.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

unemployed. So to a certain extent the police and relief authorities were able to “rationalize” as many unemployed men into the camps as possible and ensure that those who did not go were marginalized, jailed for vagrancy, or left to rot.⁴⁶

Compared to the later military-run Department of National Defence camps, the BC concentration camps, at least in their initial conception, paid over twice as much.⁴⁷ The original premise of the camps was that 35 cents an hour would be given to those with dependents, 25 cents to those without, for working eight hours a day, five and a half days a week, with a \$ 1 a day deduction for room and board. Although this wage was still seen as ridiculously low by the unemployed, as it turned out work camp wages tumbled exclusively downhill after this point.⁴⁸

The Relief Camps in Operation

Although the camps were initially conceived of as a fiscally shared responsibility between provincial and federal governments, the two rapidly fell out over relief costs. Although later government documents would claim the temporary stoppage of work was due to miscommunications between federal and provincial governments and “excessive cost” (hinting that unsustainably high wages were the culprit), the truth was that graft played a major part in rapidly reducing relief funds. This was acknowledged by Charlotte

⁴⁶ The registration process was extremely incomplete at best, see McCallum, “Still Raining,” 167-168. Many unemployed felt that 50 cents an hour would be a much fairer wage. Gorman, “State Control,” 76.

⁴⁷ The phrase “concentration camps” which was used by both governmental and non-governmental sources to describe the scheme, did not have the same chilling overtones in 1931 as it does today for obvious reasons.

⁴⁸ The later governmental report “In the Matter of the Commission on Relief Camps in British Columbia” claimed that married men received \$2.80 per day, single men \$2 per day and both were docked ¢85 a day for board. However, I have chosen to highlight the figures from the initial *Vancouver Sun* story of the date that the Relief Camp scheme was announced, as the latter figure might reflect changes that happened at a later date. “BC TO OPEN JOBLESS CAMPS,” *Vancouver Sun*, 28 July 1931; Hon. W.A. MacDonald, C.T. McHattie, Esq. Rev. E.D. Braden, “In the Matter of the Commission On Relief Camps in British Columbia,” [Royal Commission Report,] (Ottawa, 1935), 3.

Whitton on her three-month, government-sponsored tour of the west in spring and summer 1932 to survey problems with the existing system of public welfare. She saw a great deal of patronage in the camps, reporting that the government paid twice the going rate for timber at “friendly” firms, one cabinet minister’s relative was receiving \$7000 a year in rent for a camp located on his property, and at one camp in Mission 104 carpenters were on the payroll, whereas in reality only four men were actually on the job.⁴⁹ After the relief camp scheme ran out of money in November 1931, married men were sent home, and single men were left in the camps to do subsistence and survival work. After a winter spent inactive, work resumed on 12 February 1932 with the astoundingly low wage of \$7.50 a month or 40¢ a day. Making matters even worse was that much, if not all of this wage, had to be spent on supplies at government stores.⁵⁰

Government patronage in relief camps was hardly a secret. The pages of the *Vancouver Sun* were full of allegations of graft and mismanagement in relief camps, with one exasperated worker in the camps in 1931 proclaiming:

Right here we have an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate made superintendent of camps at \$300 a month. And when one gets to realize enormous sums of money which must have been spent on equipment...it looks to the average layman as though money has been specially provided to help out the manufacturer and wholesaler, rather than the unemployed working class.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Berton, *The Great Depression*, 137.

⁵⁰ “RELIEF CAMPS RESUME WORK”, *Vancouver Sun*, 12 February 1932. “LATEST GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS IN SLAVE CAMPS IN BC,” *The Unemployed Worker*, 5 March 1932.

⁵¹ “Work Camps”, *Vancouver Sun*, 14 November 1931.

Eventually so great was the public outcry that the provincial government was forced to create a commission to look into the issue of graft in relief camps, which conveniently found nothing askew.⁵²

Not only was graft endemic but conditions in the camps were hardly cozy either. As Louise Gorman explained in her 1987 Master's Thesis:

A typical camp would be made up of three bunkhouses each containing 320 bunks providing each man with 30 inches of sleeping space, a dining room, kitchen and stores, two latrines and washroom, a drying room for clothes, disinfector room, and an office block.⁵³

Moreover the camps were excruciatingly boring, and the food was dreadful and repetitive. One camp's menu was simply "mush and tea for breakfast, potatoes and beans for lunch, and mulligan with raw meat for supper."⁵⁴

The camps were never designed to be make-work projects in the proper sense of the word. Instead they were merely designed to be holding camps wherein single men could survive until private sector work opened up elsewhere. Even John Boyko whose recent biography of R.B. Bennett verges on hagiography, acknowledges this. Boyko freely admits that in Bennet's 1932-1935 work camp schemes, which were extremely similar to their provincial predecessors, that the money given to the unemployed was not

⁵² Gorman, *State Control*, 76.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁴ "WORKERS ORGANIZE IN CONCENTRATION CAMP", *The Unemployed Worker*, 19 December 1931. Men were instructed to provide their own games, sports equipment etc., and there was no reading materials, movies or other diversions. Berton, "The Great Depression," 275-277. One camp inmate in February 1932 even went as far as writing to the *Vancouver Sun* to ask for "an old radio, old magazine, musical instruments, and athletic equipment in particular." J. Wheatley "Camp Needs," *The Vancouver Sun*, 20 February 1932.

meant to substitute for wages, but instead to be “pocket money” for buying cigarettes and the like.⁵⁵

Naturally the unemployed took exception to being placed in corrupt, uncomfortable, quasi-penal holding camps deep in the wilderness. Immediately the CPC and NUWA seized on the discontent this scheme created, As soon as the scheme was announced the CPC came out against it, encouraging the unemployed to stay in the city and fight as long as possible. For those who did go, the party worked hard at sending agit-prop materials to those deep in the camps.

One of the CPC’s mediums for sowing discontent was the agit-prop paper *The Unemployed Worker*. This weekly was, as Todd McCallum points out in his dissertation, almost completely devoid of any coverage of the lives of the unemployed except for their dealings with relief departments (both private and public).⁵⁶ According to somewhat contradictory RCMP reports the paper was reportedly selling over 1500 copies a week in spring 1931 with some issues reaching sales figures of 3000, and copies were sent in the mail as far as “the prairie provinces”. Perhaps not coincidentally sales reached a new high shortly after the relief camps first ran out of money in November 1932. All these figures are extremely impressive given the fact that the main CPC organ at the time *The Worker* was only selling 7000 copies a week or so.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Boyko was referring to the Department of National Defence Camps that largely replaced provincially run camps in the Fall of 1932, which paid even less, ¢20 a day, but the same in my opinion could be said for the B.C. camps. John Boyko, *Bennett: The Rebel Who Challenged and Changed a Nation*, (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2012,) 316-320.

⁵⁶ McCallum “Still Raining,” 153-154.

⁵⁷ RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 340; 686-688. The RCMP reported that circulation had dropped from 1000 to 750 in December 1932, but they also reported sales hit an all-time high of 1500 in March 1931, with some issues selling 3000 copies, although a “greater than ever” circulation of 1500 was again hit in November 1931. Ibid., 745-746; 340; 686-688. Keep in mind a paper marketed towards the poor, would

Even before men were sent to the camps the CPC was working to have copies of *The Unemployed Worker* smuggled and sent into Relief Camps. Moreover, as soon as possible the dire situation in the camps (work stoppages, terrible food, the isolation, and horrid working conditions) were reported in the pages of *The Unemployed Worker* itself.⁵⁸ For the thousands of workers reading the paper, these letters must have represented a chilling vision of a probable future. For those inside the camps the papers were likely a vital lifeline to an outside culture that actually seemed to care about their fate, whereas contemporary newspapers largely ignored the plight of men in the camps.

Alongside agit-prop material, the CPC worked to send actual agitators into the camps as well. Although the camps were subject to the same political policing as previous relief work, the CPC still managed to gain some small footholds in the camps. For example a letter was sent to *The Unemployed Worker* in January 1932, proclaiming that some camps were beginning to become organized, and that “some ‘Unemployed Workers’ [sic] and other papers were desired.” The combination of personnel and propaganda the CPC had sent organized inside the camps made them well placed to bring a great mass of camp delegates forward for the Hunger March demonstration when the request went out.⁵⁹

All these developments provided the backdrop for the Hunger March, as much of the unemployed population of British Columbia likely viewed the CPC’s work within the

very likely have been passed around freely and read many more times than it was bought. The paper itself claimed sales of 2000 in June 1931. “THIS IS YOUR PAPER,” *The Unemployed Worker*, 27 June 1931.

⁵⁸ RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver 599-600.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 599-600, 760. “MILITANCY GROWS IN RELIEF CAMPS,” *The Unemployed Worker*, 16 January 1932.

relief camps and the city of Vancouver as making them one of the primary champions of the unemployed. Although this did not necessarily mean that masses of workers were converted to the cause of communism, the CPC was still able to use the mass support it had garnered through grass roots methods to organize “monster” demonstrations.

Hence when the Vancouver CPC began to put forward proposals for men from work camps and cities from across British Columbia to come to the Hunger March, it was able to draw on previously existing connections and a winter of discontent, regardless of what the ideology of working class people in the province might have been.

The Vancouver CPC was able to use three systems of support to maximize attendance at the Hunger March of 1932. The usual party sections which were constantly meeting, holding rallies, and organizing affiliates; its delegations to other working class groups and unions under recent United Front policies; and its recent forays into the relief camps.⁶⁰ These same groups combined to help manage incoming delegates from across the province in the week prior to the march, showing organizational coherency and dedication. All these factors taken together contributed to the success of the Hunger March, the sheer volume of which prompted *Vancouver Sun* writer R.D. Bouchette to proclaim “There has been nothing quite like it [the Hunger March] in the city’s history.”⁶¹

The lead up to the Hunger March began in the week preceding the event proper, when Hunger Marchers from around the province began to stream into Vancouver.

⁶⁰ It should be noted that it is even though the Vancouver TLC as a whole rejected participation, some of its affiliates still joined. RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 760; 832-833; TRADES UNIONS AND WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT HUNGER MARCH; *The Unemployed Worker*, 2 January 1932.

⁶¹ R.D. Bouchette, “HUNGER MARCH,” *Vancouver Sun*, 23 February 1931.

Participants were housed in various workers' halls while the Workers International Relief Organization fed the marchers. On the morning of the March the thousands of participants assembled at the Powell Street Grounds, after which a delegation was sent to city hall to ask for permission to proceed to the Cambie Street Grounds. Permission was swiftly granted although the stipulated route was not the one hoped for by organizers. However, the leaders of the march decided that it would be best to follow the given course "owing to the large number of women and children present" in the RCMP's words. After arriving at the Cambie Street Grounds several thousand more participants joined the march. At first organizers attempted to get participants to sing "The Internationale" but it turned out "perhaps only 30 knew this song" and as such, the leaders quickly got the marchers to sing "The Red Flag" instead, which worked "much better." After this delegates from a myriad variety of organizations (various regional branches of the NUWA, CLDL, etc.) were sent to city hall with various demands, the contents of which are below in Appendix A. After the delegates left a variety of speakers addressed the crowd while awaiting the return of the petitioners from City Hall. When it was learned the delegates would not return that day, the delegation planned another meeting for 23 February and the meeting came to a close. Around the same time another delegation to the Relief Office managed to secure 1500 bed and meal tickets from the relief office for visiting marchers. After the formal meeting ended about 700 marchers went to the see the delegates off to Victoria.⁶²

⁶² "ALL ON THE STREETS MONDAY," *The Unemployed Worker*, 20 February 1932; RCMP Security Files- CPC Vancouver, 838-840; "JOBLESS WANT \$6000 A WEEK INSURANCE." Hunger Marchers are first mentioned as being in the city on 17 February 1932 by *The Worker* although unfortunately no details are given of how those workers got along in the city while they waited for the march to begin. "Hunger March Enthusiasm Grows," *The Worker*, 19 February 1932. The planned meeting for the 23

The next week a couple further Hunger Marches were held in Victoria and delegations were sent to the provincial and civic governments there, and relief tickets were briefly obtained for visiting marchers before the Victoria city council refused to grant any more relief to marchers from out of town, presumably forcing them to return home, bringing the Grand Spectacle of the Hunger March to an end.⁶³

What the Hunger March tells us about the Third Period

If the old orthodoxy that CPC militancy during the Third Period was entirely a result of Stalinist diktat is correct, then the Vancouver case would be of limited historical interest. Such an examination would only show that Vancouver's CPC branch was particularly out of touch with the local populace, their militancy simply a reflection of Comintern orders. Instead, as the spectacular success of the Hunger March demonstrates, Vancouver's Third Period militancy was at least partially the result of the CPC's responsiveness to the local context. The Vancouver CPC was able to use a broad Third Period mandate of class against class to escape from contemporary Vancouver relief politics, which divided poor Canadians into subdivisions of worthiness over the issue of who was eligible for meagre amounts of relief. The Vancouver CPC stepped into a vacuum not filled by other working-class organizations and represented groups who were

February might have happened but sources are unclear as there is no RCMP report from this day. An RCMP report from 24 February notes that the planned "bigger and better" Hunger March ended up being a non-event due to rain and the failure of the delegation to come back from Victoria, this second march could have been the planned event of the 23 February and the report could have been filed a day later, or it could have been a different event altogether.

⁶³ "IDLE PARADE THROUGH CITY," *Victoria Times Columnist* (Victoria) 23 February 1932, "JOBLESS AGAIN SEE GOVERNMENT," *Victoria Times Columnist*, 23 February 1932.

not being served by the relief systems. The Vancouver CPC was particularly successful in marketing their organizational tactics and propaganda to the multitude of transients in Vancouver who were being repressed and ignored by contemporary relief politics, showing the organization's ability to take advantage of local conditions.

It would be a stretch to say that the Vancouver CPC charted its own course completely independent of central leadership. Several events covered in this paper show the alternating friction and co-operation that marked the relationship between these local and central groups. Despite tensions with CPC leadership, the Vancouver CPC was certainly immersed in a wider Third Period communist culture that isolated them from many working-class groups. However, as the Hunger March showed, this broad culture could be adapted to local conditions. By understanding the Third Period Vancouver CPC in a context wherein that group was subject to less central control and more conducive to working class needs than previously thought, this study provides support to the recent scholarship of Manley and Endicott in making the CPC's Third Period militancy of this time less a product of Stalinism, and more a product of what one could call revolutionary pragmatism.

Appendix A

List of the Hunger Marchers' Demands

1. Non-Contributory insurance for unemployment at the rate of twenty-five (\$25) dollars per week, without discrimination against race, creed, or color.

Pending the granting this demand the immediate demands are:

2. That all married men be given four (4) days' work per week at the rate of four (\$4) dollars per day as a minimum or the equivalent in direct cash relief. Single unemployed workers, male or female, with dependents, to receive the same benefits as the married.

3. Single unemployed workers to be given the same wage with three days work or the equivalent in direct cash relief.

4. Seven (7) hours day on all relief work.

5. No evictions for non-payment of rent or taxes: no foreclosing of mortgages, shutting off water, gas, or light.

6. Extension of public works, hospitals, nurseries, playgrounds, etc. to be built in working class districts and union wages to be paid.

7. Immediate cessation of all interest on municipal bonds, etc. until the needs of the unemployed are met.

8. No funds to be allotted for "stool pigeons"

9. Repeal of section 98 of the criminal code, to be endorsed by the civic and provincial authorities.

10. Release of all class war prisoners.

11. No deportation of workers for being a public charge or for their activities in the labour movement.

12. Repeal of the vagrancy law.

Taken from the *Vancouver Sun* article “Jobless want \$25 a week.” from the day after the march, February 23 1932.

A Note on Demands

The fact that relief camps weren't mentioned in these demands shows that they were probably centrally dictated (as camps were still practically non-existent in the rest of Canada). However the same *Vancouver Sun* article claimed a great many strikers from relief camps came to the march due to conditions in the camps with march leader A.H. Evans being quoted as saying “we weren't expecting them [the men from relief camps]... but conditions in them were so rotten they came en masse.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The issue of Arthur Evans participation is a curious one because although he appears in the *Vancouver Sun* article above, and his biography *Work and Wages* claims he led the march, I have never seen any mention of his involvement in any capacity whatsoever in any articles that preceded the march in any sources (*Vancouver Sun*, *The Unemployed Worker*, *The Worker* etc.) in all fairness though his name may have been censored out of the original RCMP accounts. His biography also claims 30,000 people participated in the Hunger March, which seems extremely optimistic being as not even *The Worker* or *The Unemployed Worker* claimed anything close to this amount. Sheils and Swankey, *Work and Wages*, 35-36.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Government Documents

British Columbia Department of Labour *The Province of British Columbia Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year Ended December 31st 1931*. Government report, Victoria, 1932.

Canada Dominion Bureau of Statistics, General Statistics Branch *THE CANADA YEAR BOOK 1932: THE OFFICIAL STATISTICAL ANNUAL OF THE RESOURCES, HISTORY, INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE DOMINION*. Government report, Ottawa, 1932.

MacDonald, Hon. W.A., C.T. McHattie, Esq. Rev. E.D. Braden. "In the Matter of the Commission On Relief Camps in British Columbia." Royal commission report, Ottawa, 1935.

"RCMP Security Files- Communist Party of Canada Vancouver." Government reports, Ottawa, January 1931- April 1932 (File Numbers 261-894).

Books

Baird, Irene. *Waste Heritage*, Ottawa, Ontario: University of Ottawa Press, 2007.

Broadfoot, Barry. *Ten lost years: 1929-1939: Memories of Canadians who Survived the Depression*. Markham, Ontario: PaperJacks. 1975.

McEwan, Tom. *He Wrote For Us: The Story of William Bennett, Pioneer Socialist Journalist*. Vancouver: Tribune Publishing Company, 1951.

Roddan, Andrew. *Vancouver's Hobos: Introduction by Todd McCallum*. Vancouver: Subway Books, 2002.

Newspapers

The Mercury (Hobart, Tasmania)

The Ottawa Citizen (Ottawa)

The Sudbury Star (Sudbury)

The Unemployed Worker (Vancouver)

Vancouver Sun (Vancouver)

The Winnipeg Free Press (Winnipeg)

The Worker (Toronto)

Secondary Sources

Books

Avakumovic, Ivan. *The Communist Party in Canada: a history*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975.

Berton, Pierre. *The Great Depression: 1929-1939*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1990.

Betcherman, Lita-Rose. *The Little Band: The Clashes between the Communists and the Legal and Political Establishment in Canada, 1928-1932*. Ottawa: Deneau, 1982.

Boyko, John. *Bennett: The Rebel Who Challenged and Changed a Nation*. Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2012.

Brodie, Steve and Maurice Rush. *Bloody Sunday: Vancouver, 1938 : Recollections of the Post Office Sit-down of Single Unemployed*. Vancouver: Young Communist League, 1974.

Brown, Lorne. *When freedom was lost: the unemployed, the agitator, and the state*. Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1987.

Conway, John Frederick. *The West: the history of a region in confederation*. Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1983.

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

Fighting Heritage: Highlights of the 1930s Struggle for Jobs and Militant Unionism in British Columbia. Edited By Sean Griffin. Vancouver: Tribune Publishing LTD, 1985.

Hewitt, Steve, *Spying 101: the RCMP's secret activities at Canadian universities, 1917-1997*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

Howard, Walter T. *Forgotten Radicals: Communists In The Pennsylvania Anthracite, 1919-1950*. Lanham, Maryland: University of America, 2005.

- Parnaby, Andrew. *Citizen Docker: Working Towards a New Deal on the Vancouver Waterfront, 1919-1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Penner, Norman. *Canadian communism: the Stalin years and beyond*. Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1988.
- Roberts, Barbara Ann. *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada, 1900-1935*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988.
- Rodney, William. *Soldiers of the International; a history of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968.
- Safarian, A. E. *The Canadian economy in the Great Depression*. 3rd Edition. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009.
- Sangster, Joan. *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1989.
- Sheils, Jean Evans and Ben Swankey. *"Work and wages!": semi-documentary account of the life and times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans*. Vancouver, B.C.: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977.
- Vernon, James. *Hunger: a modern history*. London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Waiser, Bill. *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot*. Calgary: Fitz House Ltd., 2003.
- Worley, Matthew. *In search of revolution: international communist parties in the third period*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2004.

Films

- Diamond, Sara. *On to Ottawa*. Documentary. 1992: Vancouver. On to Ottawa Historical Society and the Women's Labour History Project. Film.

Journal Articles

- Ekers, Michael. "The Dirty Scruff": Relief and the Production of the Unemployed in Depression-era British Columbia." *Antipode* 44 (2012): 1110-1142.
- Hewitt, Steve. "Royal Canadian Mounted Spy: The Secret Life of John Leopold/Jack Esselwein." *Intelligence and National Security* 15 (2000): 144-168.

- Lawton, Alma. "Relief Administration in Saskatoon During the Great Depression." *Saskatchewan History* 22 (1962): 41-59.
- Matters, Diane L. "Public Welfare: Vancouver Style." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études Canadiennes* 14 (1979): 3-15.
- Manley, John. "Canadian Communists, Revolutionary Unionism, and the "Third Period": The Workers' Unity League, 1929-1935." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 5 (1994): 167-194.
- Manley, John. "Communists and Canada's Urban Unemployed." *Canadian Historical Review*, 79 4 (1998): 466-491.
- Manley, John. "'Communists Love Canada!': The Communist Party of Canada, The People and the Popular Front, 1933-1939." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36 (2001): 59-86.
- Manley, John. "Moscow Rules? 'Red' Unionism and 'Class Against Class' in Britain ,Canada, and the United States,1928-1935." *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (2005): 9-49.
- Meyers, Jeanne. "Class and Community' in the Fraser Mills Strike 1931." In *Workers Capital, and the State*. Edited by Rennie Warburton and David Coburn, 141-160. Vancouver: University of Vancouver Press, 1988.
- Parnaby, Andrew and Gregory Kealey. "How the 'Reds' Got Their Man: The Communist Party Unmasks an RCMP Spy," *Labour/Le Travail* 40 (1997): 253-67.

Theses, Dissertations, Etc.

- Belshaw, John Douglas "The Administration of Relief to Unemployed Workers During the Great Depression." M.A. Thesis, 1979, University of British Columbia.
- Browne, Lorne. "The Bennett Government, Political Stability and the Politics of the Unemployment Relief Camps, 1930-1935." PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 1979.
- Gorman, Louise Gwenyth. "State Control and Social Resistance: the Case of the Department of National Defence Relief Camp Scheme in B.C." Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1987.
- Manley, John. "Communism and the Canadian working class during the Great Depression: the Workers' Unity League, 1930-1936." PhD dissertation, Dalhousie University, 1984.

McCallum, Todd. “‘Still Raining, Market Still Rotten’: Homeless Men and the Early Years of the Great Depression in Vancouver.” PhD dissertation, Queen’s University, 2004.

Curriculum Vitae

Candidate's full name: Jean-Francois Normand Maxwell

Universities attended: Thompson Rivers University Bachelor of Arts, 2012.

Conference Presentations:

- Thompson Rivers University Politics, History, and Philosophy Conference 2011
2012.
- Thompson Rivers University Women's Day Conference 2012
- University of New Brunswick Graduate History Conference 2013.