IAN McKAY

Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914

AS JAMES PENDER SAT AT HIS DESK on 6 November 1912, he was thinking about the traumatic events of the last few months and their ominous implications. Just one month before, the machinists in his nail factory in Saint John had presented a request for a wage increase and the nine-hour day, and they later refused to work on a Saturday afternoon at the rate normally paid during the week. On 7 October, three machinists, including two who had represented the workers in negotiations with Pender, were dismissed, and the remaining men went on strike in support of their shop mates. Like so many other employers in the Maritimes, Pender found himself in the middle of a difficult industrial conflict.[1]

Pender exemplified many of the features of the age of consolidated capitalism. He doubtless saw himself as the Saint John *Sun* described him, as a "progressive business man" and a "most excellent citizen". He had responded with anger to attempts by the U.S. Steel Company to force Canadian wire nail manufacturers into dependence, pledging his support instead to the Dominion Iron and Steel Company and its new rod mill in Sydney. Predictably Pender supported protection for the wire industry, and he also supported the Liberal Party, whose policies toward the steel industry had allowed it to reap the benefits of protectionism without formally rejecting its free-trade heritage. When he ran as a candidate for the party in 1908, 55 workers in his factory signed a letter praising him as "the friend of labor and the unswerving and outspoken advocate of everything pertaining to the welfare of our city". Sixteen of these workers had been employees of Pender for more than 15 years. Pender at once represented both the old competitive capitalism, for the nail industry in Saint John had been one of the conspicuous triumphs of the National Policy, and the new monopoly capitalism, for the Pender enterprise was soon to be little more than a bookkeeping entry in the consolidated balance sheet of the Dominion Steel Corporation.[2]

Perhaps he had been stung by the attacks upon his use of "Homestead tactics" and upon his rudeness to the men's committee. (A poem in the labour press on this strike noted, "Next day he sent for the committee,/ said he dident

1 *Standard* (Saint John), 8 October 1912, *Eastern Labour News* (Moncton), 12 October 1912. An earlier version of this paper was delivered to the Atlantic Workshop in Halifax in 1981. Since that time I have received support and criticism from many colleagues, for which I am very grateful. I thank Doug Cruikshank for sharing his own research on strikes with me, and Linda Baggs and Pat Burden for research assistance.

2 *Sun* (Saint John), 7, 8 April 1904, 19 September 1908.

[sic] give a damn,/ He would'nt [sic] be dictated to/by any union man").[3] Whatever the reason, Pender took the unusual step of writing a heartfelt polemic on the subject of strikers and labour organizers to the Department of Labour, denouncing labour organizers and the foolish workers who listened to them:

> We think it an outrage on Canadian Industries that lazy adventurers from the United States should be permitted to come into this country & organize Unions & collect dues from Confiding dupes who Know little or nothing about the way their dues are wasted by these loafing promoters who bask in the sunshine of these dues contributed by their confiding dupes who thus loaf a soft & easy living and live in affluence on the mischief they create between men & their employer by playing on the feelings & prejudices of the men & who make them believe that they are abused & badly used when such is not the case We think they should be jailed or deported whenever they show their mischievous presence in Canada & we hope to see legislation ere long that will deport them same as lepers.[4]

From Pender's point of view, the strike was the result of foreign agitators who had somehow undermined the relations of men and employers by appealing to irrational feelings. (In fact, the "lazy adventurer" in question was the Canadian vice-president of the International Association of Machinists, and Pender's solution of erecting a protective barrier against foreigners would not have stopped him). Pender thought the vital nucleus of the problem was the contamination of his naive workers, those confiding dupes who just four years before had pledged they would forever be "willing and anxious to fight the battles of our generous employer". Now they seemed to be fighting against him. The workers thought the problem stemmed from the impact upon Pender of his dependence upon the growing monopoly in the steel industry. Noted the *Eastern Labour News:* "Mr. Pender is not altogether to blame for this matter. He has generally been fair, but the heads of the great steel trust at Sydney, who own the Pender Plant with one Douglas as chief executive, are the people to blame for the present trouble in a usually peaceful house".[5] Monopoly capitalism, this analysis seemed to suggest, had created a new type of employer. What is so fascinating about these comments is that both sides thought that a previously peaceful situation had been transformed by the new structures of Canadian capitalism. Their angry responses brought out the bewilderment and uncertainty felt by men in a difficult new situation.

3 *Eastern Labour News*, 23 November 1912.

4 Strikes and Lockouts Files, Vol. 300, file 3605, Department of Labour Records (RG 27), Public Archives of Canada [PAC].

5 *Eastern Labour News*, 26 October 1912.

Recent studies have illustrated the strength and significance of working-class movements in the Maritimes during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Other work has emphasized the organization of local and international unions and the emergence of the socialist movement in the region.[6] A study of strikes in the Maritimes can help provide a regional context for such work, and also help correct the regional imbalance in national historiography. Strikes themselves were crucial events, and no historical interpretation of the region in this period can safely overlook them. By studying the vigorous response of the region's workers to the new political economy of the early 20th century, we can start to understand the human implications of economic change. For these reasons, it is worth our effort to describe and analyze the general pattern of strikes, often in quantitative terms. This general pattern can then be related to the region's economic structure and help broaden our understanding of the economic revolution which transformed the region from the 1880s to the 1920s. In particular, two major themes emerge from this analysis: the transformation of the labour market and the revolution in the workplace. In important ways, then, this study can help us grasp the complex and profound changes taking place in the Maritimes, a society too often written off as a peripheral backwater where deferential and isolated workers were sporadically aroused by organizers for international unions. A history of the strikes of 1901-1914 helps us replace this condescending approach with a more complex understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the working-class movement in the Maritimes in a decisive period of class awakening. It shows us how widespread was the movement of resistance which had so shocked and offended Pender.

The Maritime Provinces were dramatically transformed in the years between 1870 and 1914. Initially dependent upon exports of timber, lumber products, ships and fish, the Maritimes experienced rapid industrial growth in the decade following the introduction of the National Policy in 1879. In the first phase of industrialization, the region was characterized by locally-controlled secondary manufacturing located in widely-dispersed centres. In the 1890s and early 20th century, a widespread movement of economic consolidation brought most of these consumer-goods industries under the control of Montreal finance capital,

6 Recent publications in Maritime working-class history include Robert Babcock, "The Saint John Street Railwaymen's Strike and Riot, 1914", *Acadiensis*, XI (Spring 1982), pp. 3-27; Peter DeLottinville, "Trouble in the Hives of Industry: The Cotton Industry Comes to Milltown, New Brunswick, 1879-1892", *Historical Papers 1980*, pp. 100-15; Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port* (Toronto, 1982); David Frank, "Company Town/Labour Town: Local Government in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1917-1926", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XIV (May, 1981), pp. 177-96; Donald Macgillivray, "Military Aid to the Civil Power: the Cape Breton Experience in the 1920s", *Acadiensis*, III (Spring 1974), pp. 45-64; Nolan Reilly, "The General Strike in Amherst, Nova Scotia, 1919", *Acadiensis*, IX (Spring, 1980), pp. 56-77; Allen Seager, "Minto, New Brunswick: A Study in Class Relations Between the Wars", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 5 (Spring 1980), pp. 81-132. See David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, IV (1979), pp. 85-113, for an article which parallels the present study in periodization and regional focus.

the major seaports into the Canadian transportation system, and the separate communities of the Maritime Provinces into closer association with each other and with Montreal, the metropolis. A second phase of industrialization, focused on the coal and steel industries, emerged strongly in the same period. The advent of monopoly capitalism coincided with both the industrialization and subordination of the region. The consequence was highly paradoxical, for while the rapid loss of control over the regional economy by its indigenous capitalists accentuated underdevelopment in the long term, its short-term effect was to help overcome the problem of fragmentation and enable Maritimers to build more coherent class and regional traditions.[7]

Throughout the period 1901-1914 workers in the Maritimes faced an economy and society of striking variety. The greater part of the region was dominated by the rhythms of rural life, whether this was the agriculture of Prince Edward Island and the Annapolis Valley or the fishing economy of the coastal villages from Passamaquoddy to Cape North. If we remove the metal and coal towns of the region's north-east (the band of communities from Moncton to Glace Bay) and the two large seaports, we find in the remainder of the region only three communities with more than 5,000 people in 1911: two capital cities (Fredericton and Charlottetown) and the venerable old port of Yarmouth. In the remaining 20 centres in this zone, the average population was 2,469. Here was a zone of slow growth and outright population losses. The first, dispersed phase of industrial growth had left its mark; there were still cotton factories in Windsor, Milltown and Marysville, among other legacies of the National Policy. But the greater part of this area was dominated by primary production. Working-class life took place in small towns or villages, and only a few of these developed large labour movements. Paternalism could find its natural habitat here, in communities small enough to permit the personal sway of the capitalist to carry into many spheres of life.

Halifax and Saint John were different places altogether. Retaining many industries founded during the National Policy, they also faced the massive restructuring required by the growth of a national transportation system. The redevelopment of both cities as the winter ports of the Dominion suggested the consolidating logic of the new age. Workers here lived in variegated urban centres. In the early 20th century both cities were undergoing rapid changes which tended to conflict with their modest growth of population. In Saint John

7 See T.W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-1910", *Acadiensis*, I (Spring 1972), pp. 3-28; Larry McCann, "Staples and the New Industrialism in the Growth of Post-Confederation Halifax", *Acadiensis*, VIII (Spring 1979), pp. 47-79; Robert Babcock, "Economic Development in Portland (Me.) and Saint John (N.B.) During the Age of Iron and Steam, 1850-1914", *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, IX (Spring 1979), pp. 3-37; David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Industry and the Rise and Fall of the British Empire Steel Corporation", *Acadiensis*, VII (Autumn 1977) pp. 3-34; Elizabeth W. McGahan, *The Port of Saint John*, Vol. I, *From Confederation to Nationalization 1867-1927* (Saint John, 1982).

5,270 employees worked at 177 major establishments in 1911; in Halifax-Dartmouth 4,490 workers found employment at 123 establishments. These estimates do not include the many men who found employment on the waterfront and who formed the natural core of the labour movement in both cities.

Finally, in the region's eastern and northern section, was found the belt of heavy industry and the coalfields, which from Moncton to Glace Bay formed the dynamic heart of the second wave of industrialization. The coalfields posted a 93 per cent increase in production in the first decade of the 20th century, and the number of employees rose from 9,184 to 14,977. Even more impressive were the huge population increases in Amherst and Sydney. Unified by the railway system, dominated by the bankheads belching smoke and by dirty duff banks, and dotted with the heavy industry spawned by the age of the railway — from car works at Trenton and Amherst, to the new steel mills themselves at Sydney and Sydney Mines — this zone had an ambience quite different than that of Halifax or the rural Maritimes. Workers here lived in the front ranks of the great economic transformation, and they experienced its opportunities and difficulties at first hand. Often they lived in instant communities, built for the sole function of servicing the great empire of steel and coal whose conquests were the pride of the local boosters. This was the heartland of monopoly capitalism.

Speaking in round figures — it would be pretentious, given the highly flawed statistics, to do anything else — of the region's 45,000 industrial workers in 1911, 61 per cent lived in the highly industrialized zone from Moncton to Glace Bay, 22 per cent in the great seaports, and 18 per cent in the semi-rural remainder of the region.[8]

Where do we find significant working-class protests in this period? Almost everywhere. In Halifax and Saint John, workers increasingly supported international unions and resurrected trades and labour councils; labouring men mounted campaigns for political representation; labour issues were debated in the churches and in the newspapers. Labour movements here were often divided. Longshoremen, because of the enduring effects of casualism, often fought each other as strenuously as they fought their employers; only after the International Longshoremen's Association installed itself on the docks did a degree of unity replace division. Skilled craftsmen might well regard unskilled workers as potential enemies who stood ready to help employers undermine their position. The many women who found employment in the two major cities were generally left outside the ranks of organized labour (although there were significant exceptions) and little effort was made to organize the juveniles who delivered messages and performed countless other functions in the urban economy. Trade

8 The data in the preceding paragraphs are drawn from the *Census of Canada, 1911*, Vol. III, Tables XI, XII, XXXV. It should be noted that census statistics are approximate because establishments with fewer than five employees were not counted, and many seasonal industries were also missed.

unionism in the two major cities had made important and decisive gains, and the "foreign agitators" so roundly denounced by Pender had effected a shift towards international affiliation — but it did not challenge the traditional divisions within the working class nor the political order very aggressively.[9]

It was a far different story in the railway, metal and coal towns of the industrial core. There one found many powerful and cohesive trade unions which within their communities exerted an impact far beyond the workplace. The most important union of all was the Provincial Workmen's Association, perhaps the most misunderstood and misrepresented of all Canadian trade unions. Frequently labelled a "company union" by its critics, the PWA united workers in the coalfields throughout Nova Scotia and made significant and controversial inroads into the transportation sector. Because the PWA had changed its structure at the end of the 19th century to one in which many important powers were wielded by district sub-councils, the workers within the union were rarely discouraged from going on strike. More strikes were waged by the PWA in this period than by any other union. Decentralization aided local militants, who in many cases sympathized with socialism. Much of the rhetoric of the local activists was tinged with a syndicalist spirit, in stark contrast to the moderate language of the union's leadership. The PWA absorbed many of the energies unleashed by the "new unionism" of the 20th century, and like many of the trade unions discussed by David Montgomery, this aggressive local pursuit of workers' power coexisted with a moderate provincial leadership. International unionism made headway in Moncton, Sackville and Sydney, but until 1908 the PWA exerted an unquestioned sway over the coalfields. Only when a conservative rump attempted to undermine a majority decision to affiliate with the United Mine Workers of America did the PWA lose its credibility as the fighting arm of the miners.[10]

The rest of the region is something of an enigma. International unions were influential in St. George, Fredericton, the Hants County gypsum district, and elsewhere. Local organizations surfaced in surprising places. Pugwash had its own longshoremen's union, and the workers of Sussex, New Brunswick, united behind a local Nine Hours League. From some sectors of the rural Maritimes there is silence: whether because of the partial nature of our sources or a genuine absence of working-class mobilization, there is next to nothing indicating organization in the lumber camps, the great majority of the fishing communities, or in agriculture. Fishermen in Nova Scotia belonged to the Fisher-

9 See Robert Babcock, *Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 119-123 for a description of the activities of the American Federation of Labor in the Maritimes; earlier organizational history may be found in Eugene Forsey, *Trade Unions in Canada 1812-1902* (Toronto, 1982).

10 The union's early history is described by Sharon Reilly, "The History of the Provincial Workmen's Association, 1879-1898", M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1979.

men's Union of Nova Scotia, which was a union in name only.[11] However, sardine fishermen in Charlotte County and lobster fishermen at Gabarus and Main-a-Dieu in Cape Breton organized active protests against canneries which suggest something more than spontaneous, unorganized outbursts. Many small communities of the rural Maritimes witnessed serious strikes by workers who, at least formally, had no organization. In Shelburne, Bridgetown, Woodstock, and Parrsboro — to name only a few places — we find strikes organized by men who made coherent demands and fought in an organized way. The many ties of kinship and community binding workers together in these centres may have helped them fight successfully without formal union organization. In the rural Maritimes, supposedly dominated by an ancient paternalism and an absence of class conflict, we find instead a number of interesting experiments in purely local working-class mobilization.

The workers of the Maritimes faced a wide variety of conditions and created an astonishing diversity of organizations, but certain things were commonly experienced. No one stood completely apart from the dynamic expansion of the economy. Throughout the record of strikes, we find navvies and construction labourers, from the new sewers of Springhill and Amherst and Fredericton, the buildings of Dalhousie University in Halifax and the churches of Sydney, to the waterworks extension in Saint John and railway construction near Campbellton. The new economy entailed a massive expansion in the physical capital of the state apparatus. Everywhere we find the same complaint: "Labour is scarce". There are no reliable unemployment statistics for this period, but the consistency with which the scarcity of labour is referred to suggests that the workers' movement faced no great shortage of jobs. Although no studies of the standard of living have been completed of the calibre of those for other regions, it appears that Maritime workers all faced an economy in which wage increases did not keep pace with inflation. The record of the strikes brings to the fore the pervasive fear that earnings were slipping beneath what workers thought an acceptable level. Prices of food, fuel and other necessities in Maritime cities rose between 31 and 43 per cent, and rents from 36 to 56 per cent: lower increases than reported elsewhere in Canada, but enough to make the workers of the Maritimes very anxious. Local construction booms, such as the one in Sydney between 1901 and 1904, sent prices and rents skyrocketing.[12] Everywhere we find evidence that the region was increasingly being unified by the railway system and the emergence of much larger employers. The rail yards of Halifax gave

11 L. Gene Barrett, "Underdevelopment and Social Movements in the Nova Scotia Fishing Industry to 1938", in Robert Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 127-160, provides the essential background for fishing.

12 As the *Chronicle* (Halifax), 18 June 1901, remarked during a strike of steamer firemen in 1901: "There is a scarcity of firemen here, and in consequence the men are very independent". For the cost of living, see Canada, Department of Labour, Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living, *Report* (Ottawa, 1915), Vol II, pp. 76-7, 377, 382, 1063

work to men from Memramcook, unemployed fishermen found work in Halifax and Saint John, and the great building boom in Sydney caused a shortage of skilled workers in Halifax and a reorientation of agricultural production in the surrounding countryside. Coal strikes were regarded with utmost seriousness because they could bring to a halt industries throughout the region. A strike in Springhill caused real fears of fuel shortages in Saint John, Amherst, and Moncton. Longshoremen were reminded of the wide ramifications of their militancy by no less a personage than Israel Tarte, who warned Saint John longshoremen that their excesses would drive their port into the same ruin which had befallen Quebec, all to the benefit of Montreal and Halifax.[13]

There were isolated strikes in this period, strikes waged by men whose actions had little possible bearing on workers elsewhere in the region. But such isolated strikes loom less large than the strikes which affected parts of the region far removed from the site of the conflict. In an economy dependent on coal, railways, and steamships, workers derived tremendous power from the interlocked character of production. A 19th century coal strike was a nuisance; a large coal strike in the 20th century was a calamity. A new dynamism could be found in this economy, and here lies the key to the militancy of these years. Workers enjoyed the unusual position — in the Maritimes, at any rate — of being able to take advantage of their scarcity value in the labour market. The rapid expansion of the economy masked serious structural weaknesses and allowed contemporaries to confuse growth with genuine development. But it did give workers a rare chance to make their power felt in this society, and this chance was seized with real enthusiasm.

Workers in the Maritimes fought at least 411 strikes from 1901 to 1914, accounting for 1,936,146 striker-days. It is difficult to place this statistic in national context, because it is derived from sources different than those customarily cited. (The official data for the Maritime region are highly defective). The highly ambiguous statistics we do possess hint that this level of militancy was comparatively high.[14] It is also not altogether easy to place this finding in temporal perspective. Only a few places have been researched on the same level from the 19th to the early 20th centuries. In Halifax from 1901 to 1914 there were more strikes (54) than in the half century before 1900 (42), and in the two Cumberland coalfields there were more strikes in the first 14 years of the 20th century (37) than in the preceding 21 years (36). Impressionistic evidence

13 *Chronicle*, 5 June 1901, 30 May 1903, *Herald* (Halifax), 17 June 1904, *Sun*, 24 October 1907, 24 November 1905.

14 The number of striker-days is calculated by multiplying the number of strikers by the working days involved. All strike statistics in this paper are drawn from a computer file compiled from three sources: (1) the published works of the Department of Labour, notably the *Labour Gazette* and the *Report on Strikes and Lockouts in Canada 1901-1916* (Ottawa, 1918), (2) unpublished reports on strikes prepared by the Department of Labour in the strikes and lockouts files, and later departmental revisions [RG 27, PAC], (3) newspapers of the region, notably daily newspapers in the two major cities throughout this period (the *Sun*, *Standard* and *Globe* in Saint John

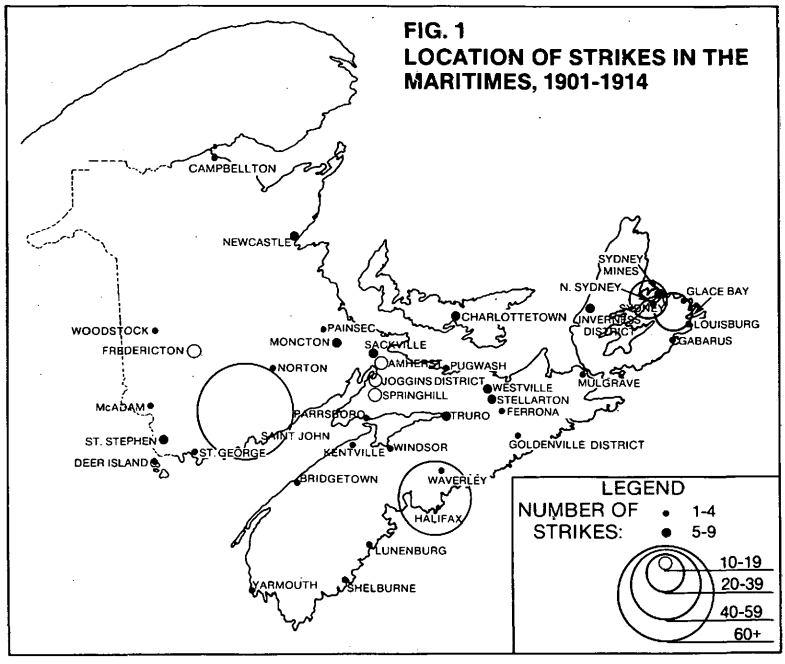
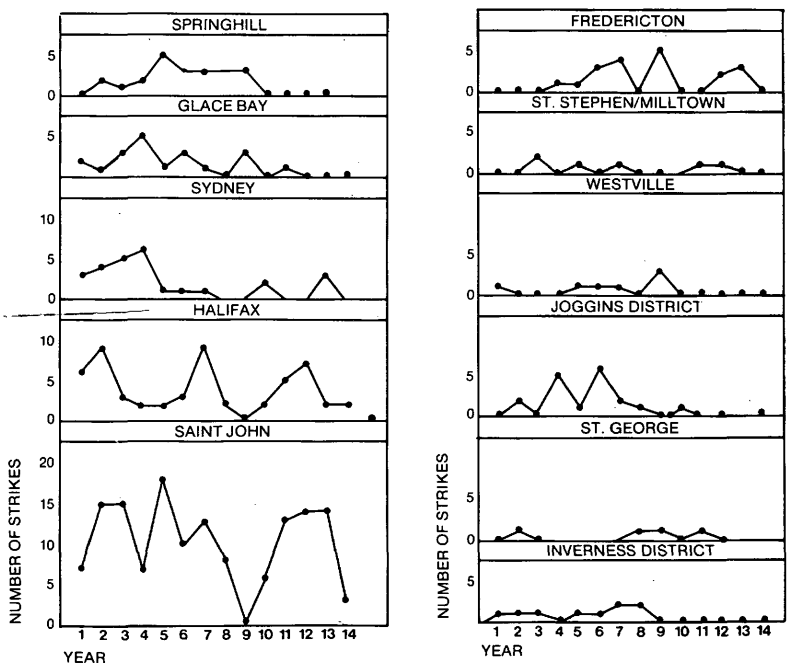


FIG. 1
LOCATION OF STRIKES IN THE MARITIMES, 1901-1914
CAMPBELLTON
NEWCASTLE
WOODSTOCK
FREDERICTON
MONCTON
PAINSEC
SACKVILLE
AMHERST
PUGWASH
NORTON
JOGGINS DISTRICT
SPRINGHILL
WESTVILLE
STELLARTON
FERRONA
MULGRAVE
McADAM
BARRSBORO
TRURO
ST. STEPHEN
ST. GEORGE
DEER ISLAND
SAINT JOHN
KENTVILLE
WINDSOR
GOLDENVILLE DISTRICT
BRIDGETOWN
WAVERLEY
HALIFAX
LUNENBURG
YARMOUTH
SHELBURNE
CHARLOTTETOWN
SYDNEY MINES
N. SYDNEY
SYDNEY
GLACE BAY
INVERNESS DISTRICT
LOUISBURG
GABARUS
LEGEND
NUMBER OF STRIKES:
1-4
5-9
10-19
20-39
40-59
60+


SPRINGHILL
GLACE BAY
SYDNEY
HALIFAX
SAINT JOHN
FREDERICTON
ST. STEPHEN/MILLTOWN
WESTVILLE
JOGGINS DISTRICT
ST. GEORGE
INVERNESS DISTRICT
NUMBER OF STRIKES
YEAR
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

from Saint John in the 1880s suggests that the high level of militancy in the early 20th century might also be seen as a break with the past.[15]

There is an abundance of evidence which suggests that contemporaries perceived the strikes of the early 20th century as a departure from tradition. In Lunenburg, the workers of the Smith and Rhuland shipyard launched in November 1910, what the local correspondent called "the first strike in the era of our commercial enterprizes . . . ". The strike of workers at the Eastern Hat and Cap Company in Truro was reported under the headline, "Truro Has Had Its First Taste of a Real Genuine Strike With Modern Accompaniments", and after enumerating such signs of local progress as paved streets and a new railway station, the writer concluded, "Now the sight of strikers on our streets gives the finishing touches to all that goes to make up the daily routine of the biggest city in the world". The general strike of skilled and unskilled workmen in Shelburne, which in 1912 closed down the shipyards, boat shops and other establishments of the town, was thought to be the community's first major strike. It was believed that the workers of the Hartt Boot and Shoe Factory in Fredericton had launched the factory's first strike when they walked out in 1907.[16] Even in the coalfields and major ports, where large strikes had been noted since the mid-19th century, contemporaries noted a new intransigence. In Springhill, a town which more than any other symbolized the class polarization of the age, it was said that "wars and rumours of wars are practically our daily portion in this town". The Halifax *Chronicle* conveyed the same sense of alarm when it commented in 1901, "Local labor circles are agitated just now and it is not known where the end will be".[17]

and the *Herald* in Halifax), supplemented by the *Eastern Labour News*, the *Maritime Mining Record*, and a wide variety of local papers which were consulted if other sources indicated industrial unrest. The official strike statistics compiled by the Department of Labour are highly unreliable. According to *Strikes and Lockouts in Canada* there were 153 strikes in the Maritimes from 1901 to 1914; our evidence suggests this estimate is based on only 37 per cent of the strikes known to have occurred in the region. Moreover, the departmental estimates of individual strikes generally had to be recalculated. Inter-regional strikes are excluded from this analysis. The grave problems associated with official statistics suggest that inter-regional comparisons will have to wait until historians recalculate the strike statistics for other regions: there is at present no sound statistical base for such an enterprise. For seminal work on strike patterns in other countries, see Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France, 1830-1968* (Cambridge, 1974), James E. Cronin, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain* (London, 1979), and Michelle Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève: France 1871-1890*, 2 tomes (Paris, 1974), probably the best study to date.

15 See Ian McKay, "The Working Class of Metropolitan Halifax, 1850-1889", Honours Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1975; Babcock, "Saint John Street Railwaymen", p. 10, and James Richard Rice, "A History of Organized Labour in Saint John, New Brunswick, 1813-1890", M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1968 — although this last work reminds us of the more militant period in Saint John of the 1870s.

16 *Herald*, 22 November 1910; *Colchester Sun* (Truro), 23 October 1912; *Evening Mail* (Halifax), 14 May 1912; *Globe* (Saint John), 4 July 1907 and *Daily Gleaner* (Fredericton), 11 July 1907.

17 *Herald*, 7 August 1907; *Chronicle*, 3 June 1901.

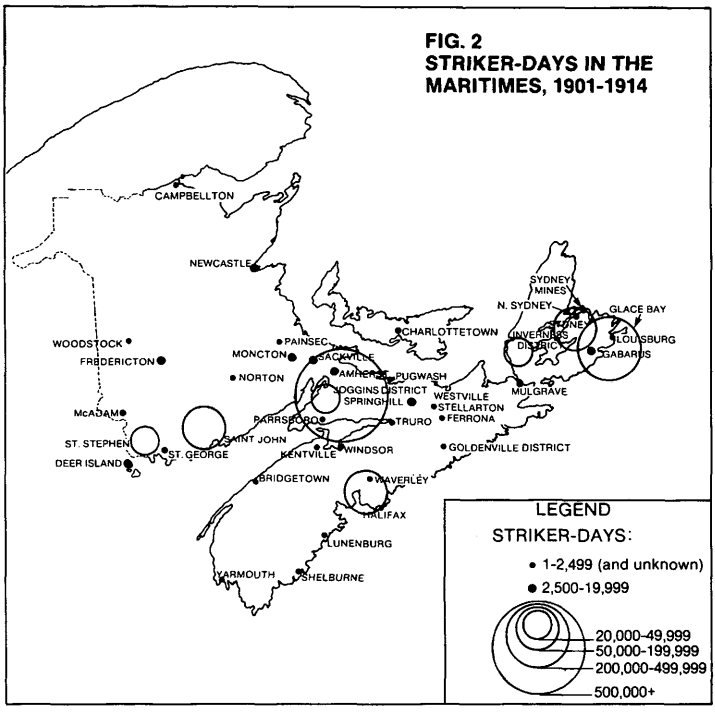
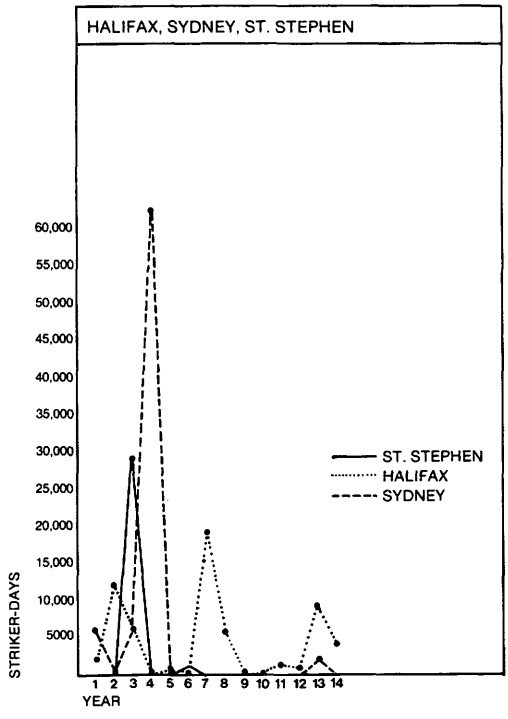
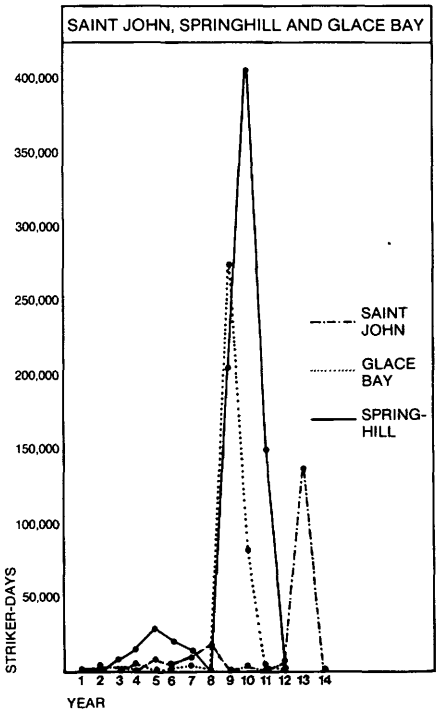


FIG. 2
STRIKER-DAYS IN THE MARITIMES, 1901-1914
CAMPBELLTON
NEWCASTLE
WOODSTOCK
FREDERICTON
PAINSEC
MONCTON
SACKVILLE
NORTON
AMHERST
PUGWASH
CHARLOTTETOWN
SYDNEY MINES
N. SYDNEY
GLACE BAY
GLACE BAY DISTRICT
LOUISBURG
GABARUS
SPRINGHILL
WESTVILLE
STELLARTON
MULGRAVE
McADAM
PARRSBORO
TRURO
FERRONA
ST. STEPHEN
ST. GEORGE
SAINT JOHN
KENTVILLE
WINDSOR
GOLDENVILLE DISTRICT
DEER ISLAND
BRIDGETOWN
WAVERLEY
HALIFAX
LUNENBURG
YARMOUTH
SHELBURNE
LEGEND
STRIKER-DAYS:
1-2,499 (and unknown)
2,500-19,999
20,000-49,999
50,000-199,999
200,000-499,999
500,000+


HALIFAX, SYDNEY, ST. STEPHEN
STRIKER-DAYS
60,000
55,000
50,000
45,000
40,000
35,000
30,000
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5000
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14
YEAR
ST. STEPHEN
HALIFAX
SYDNEY


SAINT JOHN, SPRINGHILL AND GLACE BAY
STRIKER-DAYS
400,000
350,000
300,000
250,000
200,000
150,000
100,000
50,000
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14
YEAR
SAINT JOHN
GLACE BAY
SPRING-HILL

The strikes were found throughout the region. The greatest number were found in the seaports (198), followed by 143 strikes in the region of heavy industry and 70 in the widely-dispersed industrial and resource communities elsewhere. Table One lists the Maritime centres which recorded more than 10,000 striker-days in the period 1901-1914. Of these 11 locations, five were dominated by the coal-mining industry. Other important strike locations included Sydney Mines (8 strikes), Moncton (5), Fredericton (19), Amherst (11), and Newcastle/Chatham (8). One may read the evidence in two ways. If one is anxious to stress the peculiar militancy of the coal miners, one should note that 69 per cent of the striker-days in the region can be placed in Glace Bay and Springhill. More than half the total striker-days can be attributed to the coal miners' strikes in Inverness, Glace Bay and Springhill in 1909-11 for recognition of the United Mine Workers of America. On the other hand, Saint John was by far the regional leader in the *number* of strikes, and the two port cities together accounted for 48 per cent of the region's strikes. An approach to the region's workers, such as that championed by Stuart Jamieson, which emphasizes the

Table One

Strike Centres in the Maritimes, 1901-1914

Place	Number of Strikes	Striker-Days	Active Workers
Springhill	19	978,664	Coal miners, railwaymen, trapper boys
Glace Bay	20	363,382	Coal miners
Saint John	144	199,025	Longshoremen, construction labourers, civic labourers, building trades, metal trades
Sydney	26	80,487	Building trades, steelworkers, construction labourers
Halifax	54	64,185	Longshoremen, building trades, metal trades
Inverness District	9	39,970	Coal miners
St. Stephen/Milltown	6	29,800	Cotton factory workers
St. George	4	24,278	Granite cutters, pulp mill workers
Joggins District	18	20,223	Coal miners
Westville	7	18,760	Coal miners
Sackville, N.B.	5	16,948	Metal trades

"low incidence of strikes or other overt expressions of industrial conflict", outside the coal mining industry, falls wide of the mark. The coal miners were exceptional not because they decided to go on strike more often than other workers but because their strikes were far larger in terms of numbers and duration.[18]

The strikers could be found in a wide range of occupations. Messenger boys, waitresses, actors, professional hockey players, attendants at bowling alleys, paid members of church choirs, and firemen comprised some of the less usual strikers, whose 24 strikes are classified under "miscellaneous". Coal miners waged 82 strikes, unskilled labourers 140, factory workers 62, and skilled craftsmen 103. These data are somewhat startling, because they disagree sharply with the pattern in central Canada, where skilled craftsmen dominated both the labour movement and the history of industrial conflict. The most active single group were the labourers — including longshoremen, haypressers, freight-handlers, construction labourers, — and if we add to their number the factory workers, men who rarely were considered skilled, we arrive at the surprising conclusion that close to half the strikes were waged by those without generally recognized skills. As soon as we examine striker-days, however, the coal miners once again assert their dominance, accounting for fully 74 per cent of the striker-days (as compared with 3 per cent for unskilled labourers, 14 per cent for factory workers, 7 per cent for skilled craftsmen, and 2 per cent for other workers).

Particular groups within each occupational category emerge from the analysis as leaders of strikes. A surprising number of strikes (18) were fought by boys who worked in the coal mines, an indication of the power wielded by these young workers who minded ventilation doors, drove the horses, and often helped load the coal. More than half the craft strikes were found in the building trades, centred in such places as Halifax, Saint Johh, Sydney and Fredericton, and more than two-fifths were concentrated in the metal trades. Sackville, Moncton, and Amherst stand out particularly in this revolt of the skilled metal trades, a battle made all the more bitter by the intransigence of such employers as the Record Foundry in Moncton and the Fawcett Foundry in Sackville. The strikes of craftsmen were concentrated in the two economic spheres most closely integrated with the new capitalism — construction and heavy industry. There were very few strikes to be found among other craft groups, although such ancient trades as printing and caulking accounted for a few. The labourers are perhaps the most interesting group. Some of them, such as the longshoremen of Saint John and Halifax, were in the process of creating controls over the waterfront that stood comparison with the exclusivism of the crafts. Other labourers, such as the civic labourers in Saint John, were able to count on the old traditions of patronage and the political benefits of winning favour with a visible component

18 Stuart M. Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66* (Ottawa, 1968), p. 100.

of the working-class movement. These labourers, while they had few marketable skills, could use other means to defend their interests in the labour market. Many others were not so fortunate. A surprisingly large amount of the heavy construction work was done by foreigners. Hungarians and Italians helped build the Sydney steel mill, and Italians laid new sewers in Fredericton and built the railway in northern New Brunswick. Such men, provided to local contractors through intermediaries in Quebec or the United States, had only the most rudimentary ways of defending their interests. Isolated from the rest of the society, and confronted with contractors who always seemed on the verge of bankruptcy, these foreigners faced problems quite different in scope from the unskilled labourers of the cities. Twenty-six strikes were fought exclusively by foreign workers, whose most common fate was to be immediately replaced by another gang.

Although many critics of the working-class movement placed the blame for insurgency on the shoulders of meddling organizers, the record of the strikes does not support their contention. Out of 384 strikes for which information on union status is available, 164 involved non-unionized workers, 112 members of international unions, and 108 members of regional or local bodies. The PWA alone accounted for 65 strikes, many waged by local lodges without central approval. Of course the workers of the Maritimes did not live in isolation, and

Table Two

Yearly Levels of Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914

Year	Number of Strikes	Striker-Days	Largest Strikes
1901	26	16,489	Pictou coal miners
1902	41	37,303	Moncton moulders
1903	39	56,449	Milltown cotton workers
1904	37	96,065	Sydney steelworkers
1905	39	58,696	Springhill coal miners
1906	38	41,015	Springhill coal miners
1907	44	190,418	Springhill coal miners
1908	20	47,501	St. George granite workers
1909	21	543,320	Glace Bay coal miners
1910	14	479,689	Springhill coal miners
1911	21	164,281	Springhill coal miners
1912	32	17,339	Moncton moulders
1913	32	172,324	Saint John mill workers
1914	7	15,257	Amherst machinists
Totals	411	1,936,146	

ideas and methods of both American and British trade unions were followed with interest. But few strikes can be blamed on the relatively infrequent visits by American organizers, and local workers lacked neither the will nor the reasons for going on strike.

The decision to go on strike was influenced by many factors. Table Two summarizes the annual strike record for the region, and suggests the impact of the business cycle. In the boom years of 1901-1907 there was a tight labour market and about 32 strikes a year. The recession of 1908 reduced the number of strikes, and only in 1912 and 1913 did strikes regain previous levels. By 1914 an economic reversal and the coming of the war brought strikes to their lowest point in this period. The pattern evident in the number of strikes supports the classic view that strikes were most common in times of prosperity.[19]

If we look more closely at the individual communities, as Figures One and Two allow us to do, we discover a more complex picture. Each community had its own pattern. The most violent fluctuations were evident in Saint John, where no fewer than 18 strikes were fought in 1905 (the peak of any location in the Maritimes in a single year) and where no strikes have surfaced in 1909. In Halifax where the peaks were lower, the city's maximum totals were found in 1902 and 1907 (nine strikes). In both cities, there was a drastic reduction in the years 1908-1910, and recovery afterwards, with Saint John experiencing a major wave of strikes in the years 1911-1913 in response to the expansion of the port. These cities most closely resembled the Ontario pattern described by Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer. In Sydney, strikes were concentrated in the first four years of the period, and were sharply reduced after the defeat of the steel strike waged by the PWA in 1904. The coalfields possessed their own pattern. The years leading up to 1909 were exceptionally militant; there were no fewer than five strikes in Springhill in 1905 alone. In 1909 to 1911 the coal miners went against the regional trend by waging the region's largest strikes, and they fell almost silent after their defeat. Were one to rely on the statistics of striker-days, one would discover a positive correlation between economic recession and militancy — because the coal miners were counter-cyclical, waging their most impressive struggles in the depths of recession.

Workers went on strike for a wide variety of reasons, and there are a number of ways of analyzing the general pattern. Adopting the categories used by Heron and Palmer, with minor additions for the regional context, Table Three suggests the importance of wage struggles in the working-class movement. (Because a strike involving two issues is counted twice, the total of issues raised does not correspond with the total number of strikes). About 46 per cent of the issues raised in strikes focused on the level of wage payment, while strikes in Category II, which turned broadly on questions of control, made up 50 per cent of the

19 Compare with Craig Heron and Bryan D. Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914", *Canadian Historical Review*, LVIII (December, 1977), pp. 425-6.

Table Three

Strike Issues

Category I	
For higher earnings	204
Against wage reductions	22
Category II	
For recognition of union	14
For shorter hours	46
Defence of trade unionism	7
Sympathy	7
Apprenticeship control	2
Objection to new system of work	12
Change in conditions of work	31
Objection to employment of particular persons	36
Adjustment of procedures of wage payment	44
Against dismissal of worker or supervisor	43
Improvement in housing conditions	3
Political demands	2
Other/Unknown	21

issues raised. It might be objected, however, that this minimizes the impact of economic issues involved in strikes by counting as demands for "control" essentially economic issues. By dividing the strikes between economic and non-economic on the strict criteria of whether or not the strikers would obtain immediate economic advantages if they won the strike, we find 280 "economic" strikes, 115 "control" strikes, and 16 which cannot be classified. Table Four outlines the yearly fluctuations of these strictly demarcated control" strikes. Both estimates of the issues raised in strikes make the same point. It would be misleading to present the strike as a simple response to "bread-and-butter" issues. Whether we define control broadly, as in Table Three, or very narrowly as in Table Four, we find control strikes accounting for between 28 and 54 per cent of the total. By either measure, we find workers were determined to defend certain basic controls over their jobs, such as the right to control the discharge of individuals and the character of supervision. David Montgomery's pathbreaking work on American control strikes suggests that such strikes at the turn of the

Table Four

Strike Issues

	Improved Earnings	Control	Not Classified
1901	20	6	0
1902	29	11	1
1903	28	10	1
1904	21	16	0
1905	26	11	2
1906	29	8	1
1907	29	12	3
1908	14	6	0
1909	12	9	0
1910	8	4	2
1911	16	4	1
1912	21	7	4
1913	23	9	0
1914	4	2	1
Totals	280	115	16

century generally involved craftsmen seeking a firm hold within the congealing structure of monopoly capitalism.[20] The experience of the workers of the Maritimes may have been somewhat different, for the craftsmen did not account for most of the control strikes, nor did traditional craft issues (such as limitation of the number of apprentices) loom very large. The heartland of the control strike was the coalfields. Of the 115 "pure" control strikes, 41 were fought in the coalfields, 30 involved labourers, 13 factory workers, 22 craftsmen, and 9 other workers.

Finally, some assessment should be made of the success rate of the strikers. Table Five outlines the essential data on a yearly basis. The strike was clearly something of a gamble, and the chance of winning varied with the business cycle. The bottom had fallen out of the workers' movement in the recession of 1908, for example, when 55 per cent of the strikes were defeats. When we analyze the successes of workers by occupation, we find two distinct patterns. For the coal miners and the skilled craftsmen, the strike often paid off. Coal miners won 35 per cent of their strikes outright, and lost 23 per cent; the corresponding statis-

20 David Montgomery, "The 'New Unionism' and the Transformation of Workers' Consciousness in America, 1909-22", in *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 98.

Table Five
The Results of Strikes

Year	Workers Succeed	Employers Succeed	Com-promise	Inde-terminate	Unknown
1901	4	4	8	5	5
1902	12	11	8	2	8
1903	8	11	8	0	12
1904	13	14	4	1	5
1905	12	17	3	0	7
1906	11	12	7	1	7
1907	12	17	8	2	5
1908	5	11	1	2	1
1909	2	8	2	0	9
1910	2	4	2	2	4
1911	8	4	2	0	7
1912	7	8	8	1	8
1913	9	8	7	1	7
1914	1	3	2	0	1
Totals	106	132	70	17	86

tics for craftsmen were 34 and 26 per cent respectively. For less well-protected workers, however, the failure rate was crushing. Labourers lost 38 per cent of their strikes, winning only 19 per cent outright; factory workers lost 37 per cent and won 19 per cent; and miscellaneous workers lost 41 and won only 17 per cent. However, these estimates may be somewhat misleading, because they do not register variations over time. The most dramatic change was experienced by the most powerful workers, the coal miners. Before 1907 the coal miners endured only eight defeats, a failure rate of just 15 per cent; after 1907 they lost 19 strikes, including the 22-month strike in Springhill, for a failure rate of 55 per cent. These strikes illustrated the rapid ebb and flow of working-class power, especially in an age in which the state aggressively restructured labour relations and capital mobilized with resolute swiftness to keep the coal mines working.

The workers of the Maritimes clearly responded with tremendous force to the new realities of monopoly capitalism. Apart from places where no large proletarian population existed, the strike was at home everywhere: in the mines, on the docks, in the factories. The statistics reveal a differentiated working class making a wide range of demands. In order to grasp their full meaning and the structures underlying them, we need to consider closely the transformation of

the labour market and the revolution in the workplace which were the preconditions for this pattern.

Economic historians have established that a marked consolidation of capital took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, evident in the "nationalization" of Maritime banks and the "internationalization" of stock promotions. It has been less frequently observed that the same period witnessed a consolidation of the labour market of equal scope and significance. The capitalist labour market, whose emergence in central Canada in the 1850s and 1860s was analyzed so brilliantly by H.C. Pentland, had not really demolished regional and national barriers between various local labour markets in the 19th century.[21] The massive expansion of the economy in the early 20th century demanded just such a demolition of barriers to the free circulation of labour power. Employers might debate the exquisite intricacies of incidental protection and unrestricted reciprocity with great enthusiasm, but on the subject of the need for a free labour market they were united to a man.

Centralized production and the interpenetration of finance and industrial capital made it possible for employers to gain access to far larger labour pools, within the region and outside it. This creation of a much larger labour market destabilized the working-class world, but at the same time it created new opportunities for mobilization. In the new economy, workers were informed about the going rate in the region and the country as a whole and were quite prepared to demand it. The broadening of the labour market provided them with a rapid education in the new "rules of the game", and employers were soon complaining, with perennial inconsistency, that the workers were playing very capably in the impersonal world of the capitalist labour market. One of the most important victories of the workers was the large increase in wages secured in the major coalfields in this period — a wage increase which took account of the rising price of coal. What was most impressive about this was that for the first time the PWA had bargained for a wage increase in a unified way, a dramatic break with the somehwat uncoordinated activities of the union in the 19th century.[22]

Workers could use the new structure to their own advantage. Many of the defeats of unskilled construction labourers have to be placed in the context of the high international demand for their services. Like 19th century Irish railway navvies, the Italian labourers who worked at Loch Lomond near Saint John on

21 For economic consolidation see James Frost, "The 'Nationalization' of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1880-1910", *Acadiensis*, XII (Autumn 1982), pp. 3-38, and Christopher Armstrong, "Making a Market: Selling Securities in Atlantic Canada before World War I", *Canadian Journal of Economics*, XIII (August, 1980), pp. 438-54. Pentland's major work is *Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650-1860* (Toronto, 1981).

22 The wage struggles of the PWA are documented in the *Amherst Daily News*, 4 January 1901, *Sun*, 1 January 1901, *Chronicle*, 1, 2, 4, 7 January 1901; J.R. Cowans to M.R. Morrow, 17 April 1900, Exhibit H/33, Record of Proceedings, Rex v. Cowans and Dick, Vol. 328, Series "A", RG 21, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; John Moffatt, *Coal Cutting Rates in Nova Scotia* (Stellarton, n.d.).

the city's new waterworks extension endured conditions of unimaginable hardship — often they worked with cold water up to their knees and lived in primitive shanties — and they fought, along with "Galicians" and other unskilled labourers, many unsuccessful strikes. But while their situation was one of dire helplessness in some respects, it in fact provided them some power. As the *Globe* reported, the labourers believed themselves to be "masters of the situation" because of the project deadlines and the contractor's concern that rains might jeopardize the project. Even more to their advantage was the existence of many jobs throughout North America in a period of rapid urban development. After one strike, the Italians were reported to be bound for "Boston, Montreal or any other place at which they have reason to believe work may be obtained", and the project was left looking for more workers. Such labourers would come, go on strike (often with a hint of violence), and leave: the "defeats" of their strikes were spurs to their rapid departure. Austrians and Italians at work on the Fredericton sewers merely returned to the immigrant "colony" in Quebec or to Boston; as they informed the *Gleaner*, there would be no trouble in obtaining work elsewhere. These foreigners embodied the ambivalence of the international labour market, which brought them harsh conditions but also opportunities for direct action. But emigration was not the prerogative of itinerant workers alone. St. George granite cutters left for employment in Newfoundland during their strike in 1902; Halifax moulders, from the anti-union Hillis Foundry, emigrated to Haverhill, Massachusetts, during a strike in 1905; when Sackville moulders emigrated to the United States, a reporter lamented that Sackville would thereby lose "a number of good citizens", thanks to the participation of Enterprise Foundry in an open-shop drive. For many skilled workers, one of the great attractions of holding a card from an international union was the flexibility it allowed in such times of trouble. Coal miners found employment in other coalfields during strikes; miners in the Joggins coalfield complained during the long strike of 1909-11 in Springhill that Springhill miners were flooding the local labour market. Many coal miners went west when big strikes shut down the Nova Scotia industry.[23]

The new conditions of the labour market gave the workers advantages as well as undermining their traditions of local protection. In a minority of strikes the working class can be seen trying to restore such local protection by means of excluding workers of other races and nationalities, or by aligning with other classes against "outsiders". Maritimers faced daunting problems of fragmentation, and it would be unrealistic to believe that class allegiance automatically overcame deeply-rooted ethnic and religious divisions. Blacks were not proportionately represented in the crafts, and it is probable that the practice of the closed shop served to perpetuate their exclusion. Saint John machinists, for

23 *Globe*, 7 September 1905, 11 July 1905, 23 May 1905; *Gleaner*, 18 June 1906; *Sun*, 17 June 1902; *Herald*, 2 November 1905; *Amherst Daily News*, 21 September 1905; *Herald*, 28 August 1909; *Herald*, 15 September 1909.

example, went on strike at one foundry in the city to force the discharge of a black man, who later commented that "he was a British subject and proud to live under the Union Jack, but . . . the action of the foundry hands had made him almost ashamed that the Union Jack floated over St. John". A later strike of woodworking employees in Saint John in 1913 raised the same issue of ethnic division, although in a different way. The city's carpenters were faced with the problem of whether they would work with non-union materials coming from the woodworking factories. Although some of them supported this act of solidarity, and the international union gave its blessing to a sympathy strike, the local carpenters demurred and the woodworkers' strike was subsequently broken. As the local correspondent of the *Labour Gazette* saw it, one weakness of the strikers had been ethnic division: "The strike was not popular with native workmen. The leaders were principally new commers [sic] to the city (englishmen) labor agitators".[24] The waterfront was particularly prone to this kind of division. The divisiveness of the Saint John waterfront was legendary: divided along geographical, religious and economic lines, the city's longshoremen typified the survival of localism. Labour struggles in Pugwash pitted unionized full-time longshoremen against non-union farmers who were supplementing their normal income. The workers of the Miramichi responded with violence to the incursions of millmen and other labourers from Saint John.[25]

Even in the coal and steel centres one finds strikes which suggest ethnic and other divisions. About 300 Italian labourers went on strike in Sydney in March 1903 against the Dominion Iron and Steel Company, alleging that they were not treated as well as native workers and that the latter were given the preference in the allocation of work. The labourers also charged that they had been brought from Montreal on the understanding they were to receive $1.50 per day; their actual pay had been reduced to $1.35. A crowd of agitated foreigners armed with heavy clubs, picks, shovels, and iron bars assembled at both the open hearth and coke oven entrances. As native workmen passed the strikers, the Italians began to shout and lift their weapons threateningly: "The police waited no longer and started to disperse them by force. After the police did considerable clubbing and arrested one or two they succeeded in quelling the crowd". Some Hungarians and Newfoundlanders had joined the agitation, but the majority of the native workers did not take part. Nor did they protest when the Italian ringleaders of the strike, who had waved a red flag and claimed membership in an "Italian union", were dismissed.[26] Ethnic divisions also surfaced in the mines: when Newfoundlanders demanded the same pay as experienced miners but failed to get it; when coal miners in Dominion No. 6 mine com-

24 *Sun*, 25 April 1907; report of Fraser Gregory, Vol. 302, file 13 (67), RG 27.

25 McGahan, *Port of Saint John*, pp. 180-187; *Amherst Daily News*, 16 August 1907; *Sun*, 17 May 1904.

26 *Daily Post* (Sydney), 3 March 1903; *Amherst Daily News*, 3 March 1903; *Chronicle*, 3 March 1903; *Herald*, 5 March 1903.

plained that longwall positions were unfairly given to outsiders in preference to native workmen; when the miners of Reserve complained that "Old Country" miners had been given all the best places in the mine; and in the separate strike waged by Newfoundlanders against an increase of board for the "big shacks" of the Dominion Coal Company. When the miners of Golden Rule Lodge attempted to secure the closed shop for the PWA in Bridgeport, they encountered serious resistance from the "old countrymen" and Newfoundlanders, in surprising contrast with immediate support from the Italians.[27]

But there was another aspect to the growing prominence of immigrant workers. The immigrant often helped to bring Maritimers in contact with new ideas. At the most modest level, immigrants (or Maritimers returning from a stint outside the region) imported standards for jobs and wages. When Halifax electrical workers, during their strike of 1907, reported themselves to be in touch with "Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal", where standards were far better than in Halifax, they merely confirmed a pervasive regional pattern. Coal miners were fond of comparing their wage rates with those of the western coal miners (not always mentioning in the same analyses the higher western cost of living). The strike of Halifax boilermakers in 1907 provided a classic instance of the unintended consequences of importing workers. Confronted with a determined union anxious to enforce shop rules, the employers turned to England for a foreman and some new workers. John O'Toole of the boilermakers gave as the reason for the strike, "Men being imported from England to break our rules...". But the English workers, discovering that Halifax rates and standards were lower than those in England, promptly joined the union and fought to bring Halifax standards up to an English level.[28]

It would probably be a mistake to insist too strongly on the divisive consequences of ethnic divisions. Acadian workers from Memramcook and other points in New Brunswick aroused considerable public sympathy when they went on strike in the Halifax rail yards in Richmond in 1912, and they fought side by side with local men. The case of the Scottish girls brought to work for the Christie Fish Company in Dartmouth became a *cause célèbre* in reform circles in Nova Scotia. A reporter for the Halifax *Daily Echo* found that the girls (who were required to gather seaweed, periwinkles, and cord wood, nail boxes, and perform other tasks from 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. for $4.00 per week) lived under close supervision and were forced to do without coal. The Chief of Police and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty managed to win somewhat better conditions for them. Immigrants also became members of the PWA, and Scottish, Belgian and Welsh miners distinguished themselves in the long struggles for the UMW. It would appear that the "vertical" consciousness of some workers, who defended their position in the labour market by erecting barriers to strangers,

27 *Maritime Mining Record*, 27 April 1904; *Herald*, 13 June 1906; *Herald*, 2 May 1906; *Maritime Mining Record*, 17 April 1901; *Herald*, 21 March 1907.

28 *Herald*, 4 July 1907; Vol. 295, file 2997, RG 27.

was of less significance than an emergent "horizontal" consciousness based on a common class position.[29]

Perhaps the most visible sign of the new economy of labour was the pervasive influence of strikebreaking, which represented the forceable breaking down of barriers to a free labour market. The emergence of mass strikebreaking presupposed a certain consolidation of employers, who could blacklist employees, oppose restrictions to the hours of labour, and collaborate in setting prices. Strikebreaking represented a logical outcome of the consolidation of capital, because the massive scale on which it was practised in this period required both companies big enough to have access to large pools of labour, and the active involvement of the state. The recruitment of strikebreakers was not altogether a new phenomenon; at least as early as the 1880s one reads of the importation of men for the purpose of taking strikers' jobs. But there is nothing in the 19th century to compare with the scope of the strikebreaking drive in the early 20th century.[30]

For many unskilled workers, of course, automatic replacement by others in the course of a strike was an unavoidable fact of life. The gas-house employees who went on strike in Saint John in 1905 for a modest wage increase included employees of 31 years standing. The management had no qualms about replacing such old employees by unemployed labourers thoughtfully recruited by the Saint John police department. Countless strikes could be given the epitaph of a Saint John labourers' strike of 1902: strikers fired, "men hired indiscriminately". "Others have taken their places and the work continues without any interruption", was the description of the termination of a railway labourers' strike near Sydney Mines. Such strikers faced the brutal dehumanization of the capitalist labour market.[31]

But the new mass strikebreaking represented an effort to generalize their condition to all the workers and remove the worker's proprietary interest in his job. In this age it was systematized and perfected, not "naturally", but by an active process in which the key element was physical force. Systematic, mass replacement of a striking workforce was attempted in 23 strikes. No strata of the working class were protected: the skilled were as jeopardized as the unskilled, and may indeed have sustained heavier losses. Thus the record of strikebreaking includes threats of replacement against Saint John ship carpenters, the replacement of Halifax carpenters by men from outside districts during a strike in the summer of 1903, and the replacement by American strikebreakers of Saint John tailors in 1904. The printers of the two port cities faced tough employers, and

29 *Herald*, 30 August 1912; *Daily Echo* (Halifax), 30 April, 2 May 1910; for the admission of immigrants to the PWA, see Minutes of Holdfast Lodge of the PWA, Joggins, 29 August 1896, Dalhousie University Archives.

30 For an example, see Robert Drummond, *Recollections and Reflections of a Former Trades Union Leader* (n.p. [Stellarton] n.d. [1926]), p. 39.

31 *Sun*, 27, 31 May 1905; *Sun*, 22 April 1902; *Daily Post*, 3 May 1902.

Montreal strikebreakers were used against Saint John printers of the *Telegraph* and *Times*; advertisements for strikebreakers were inserted in newspapers as far away as London and Manchester. Fredericton plumbers were replaced with men imported from Quebec, Saint John machinists by renegade craftsmen from Amherst, and Halifax plumbers by English plumbers who came to the city via Montreal.[32] Workers in the mills and factories suffered the same fate. Employers were generally attracted to recruitment of foreign or Québécois workers, because such men would be desperate enough to agree and because they could not easily communicate with the strikers. This tactic was not foolproof. Italian strikebreakers brought in to break the Sydney steel strike in 1904 were met at the gates by Italian members of the PWA. Given the past record of the Sydney Italians, who earlier had posted notices that anyone going to work would be killed, one imagines many spirited conversations at the entrance. The management of the pulp mill in St. George, New Brunswick enjoyed greater success in recruiting strikebreakers ("anything and everything . . . that might pass for a man", wrote the spokesman for the union), particularly from Weymouth, Nova Scotia.[33]

Throughout the region strikebreaking threatened militant workers and brought home the lessons of the new labour market. But the coalfields and the docks were in a league by themselves. Strikebreaking on the waterfront was facilitated by the presence of crew members, who could be coerced or cajoled into doing the work of the longshoremen themselves. Longshoremen in Saint John in 1905 derived a certain amount of enjoyment from watching the awkward efforts of crew members unloading a valuable cargo of bricks:

> The Longshoremen who were on the McLeod wharf yesterday morning when the crew of the Alcides were trying to get some bricks unloaded were much amused when one after another the contents of three tubs were emptied into the harbor, owing to the awkward manipulation of the unloading apparatus. These bricks were worth seven cents apiece, and about forty-five dollars' worth went over the side of the vessel.
> The longshoremen are talking of making information against these men for throwing refuse into the harbor.

This was a light-hearted moment in an otherwise difficult war. Like all other employers, the steamship lines could exploit ethnic divisions in strikes on the waterfront (although Halifax blacks refused to play along in 1902 and Italians were to prove difficult in Saint John in 1905). But they enjoyed additional

32 *Sun*, 17 March 1902; *Labour Gazette*, August 1903, p. 106; *Sun*, 24 May 1904; *Sun*, 6, 9 April 1908; Vol. 299, file 3507, RG 27; *Standard*, 28 October 1912; *Chronicle*, 27 June 1914 and Vol. 303, file 14 (17), RG 27.

33 *Herald*, 4 June 1904, *Chronicle*, 2 March 1903; Christopher Wren to F.A. Acland, 9 September 1912, Vol. 298, file 3341, RG 27, and *Standard*, 8 June 1911.

advantages thanks to the integration of the Canadian transportation system, which allowed them easy access to the vast casual labour market of Montreal. This was the key factor in the smashing of the Saint John strike in 1905. The Shipping Federation, with its headquarters in Montreal, used the services of The General Labor Company, Limited, a professional strikebreaking outfit, and this company recruited men for a period of two weeks or longer. Since the negotiations were generally carried out in English, many of the foreigners were not fully aware of the function they were really performing. The Saint John longshoremen were highly creative in their response, putting up many of the strikebreakers as guests and encouraging many others to quit work, but the strikebreaking tactic ultimately did succeed in defeating them.[34]

The coalfields provided the most unforgettable instances of the new economy of labour. There was no precedent for the importation of 3,000 strikebreakers into Cape Breton and several hundred into Springhill. Once again Montreal-based companies secured the services of a strikebreaking outfit, this time the Reliance Labor Exchange, housed, appropriately enough, on St. James Street. Once again the employers advertised far and wide for men, and company recruiting agents scoured Newfoundland. One was unwise enough to look for recruits in Cumberland County, and was relieved of 25 strikebreakers in Amherst by UMW sympathizers and encouraged to leave Springhill by a crowd of between 200 and 300 men. Further problems were presented by English miners who baulked at living in prison conditions behind the barbed-wire fences provided for the strikebreakers in Cape Breton. The general manager at Springhill, J.R. Cowans, had rhapsodized about the wonderful future his company would face if only he could get rid of his rebellious workers and replace them with Europeans or Chinese; his strikebreakers, who arrived in 1910, proved to be disappointingly preoccupied with fighting among themselves.[35]

Strikebreaking involved such difficulties and problems, and it was a tactic guaranteed to escalate labour disputes into miniature civil wars. Like the Saint John longshoremen, the Cape Breton miners commented on the shoddy work of the men who had replaced them. When Dan McDougall, president of the United Mine Workers of America in Nova Scotia, was asked how he thought the imported workmen compared with the striking miners, he replied, "I don't consider them in the same class with our men, either physically or morally. The men on strike, by the company's own admission, comprise the pick of skilled Cape Breton miners, and it is practically impossible to duplicate them anywhere".

34 For a discussion of the 19th-century pattern, see Judith Fingard, "The Decline of the Sailor as a Ship Labourer in 19th Century Timber Ports", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, II (1977), pp. 35-53; *Sun*, 25 November 1905; *Herald*, 3 April 1902; *Sun*, 29 November 1905; *Sun*, 24, 25 November 1905.

35 *Herald*, 13 July 1909; *Herald*, 27 July 1909; *Herald*, 18 August 1909; *Herald*, 4 July 1909; *Sun*, 10 December 1909 and *Herald*, 21 April 1910. For disturbances among the strikebreakers, resulting in the death of one man, see Peter Owen Carroll, *Life and Adventures of Detective Peter Owen Carroll* (n.p., n.d. [c.1924]), p. 68.

Such men would fight strikebreakers with determination. One report from Cape Breton in 1909 dramatized the battle for control over the labour market:

> There is a steady tug of war between the Dominion Coal Company and the U.M.W. as to who is to control the new-comers looking for work. Tonight the U.M.W. rounded up one hundred men for a Moncton contractor and shipped them off to Sydney in a special car. The car had just left the big town when a special train from Louisburg came in over the company's road with over one hundred men who are ready to work at daylight. The U.M.W. pickets claim that they will have half of these by tomorrow night and it is only a matter of time until they get the others. U.M.W. pickets are stationed at all points and it is practically impossible for a stranger to enter town without being held up, and once it is learned he is looking for work the U.M.W. and the company representatives both endeavour to get control of him and it is a case of the best men winning.

Besides such mass mobilization in the streets, the UMW sent representatives to Newfoundland to counteract the recruiting efforts of the company and published advertisements (later the subject of criminal proceedings) in the Montreal French-language press. J.B. McLachlan of the UMW even wrote to Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor to persuade him to write to the leaders of Belgian labour to stop strikebreakers from leaving that country.[36]

Workers also appealed to the law. Saint John printers appealed to the Alien Labour Act, which had been passed in 1897 in retaliation against American alien labour legislation. The city's longshoremen attempted to take advantage of the labour licensing system which imposed a tax of $7.50 on outsiders who came to the city to work. Had this embodiment of local protectionism served their purposes, mass strikebreaking would have been expensive indeed. In the 1907 longshoremen's strike, however, the shipping companies managed to have their investment in the labour licences returned. Against the efforts of the Canadian Shipping Federation, the Trades and Labour Council and the *Eastern Labor News* continued to fight for the licensing system, seeing in it an element of protection against the new labour economy, but that system had clearly failed to protect the longshoremen from the army of strikebreakers the shipping companies held in reserve. Similarly, Halifax electrical workers cited municipal bylaws governing the certification of wiremen, and plumbers reported to the Board of Health those strikebreakers lacking proper qualifications. There were really very few laws, however, which could stand against mass strikebreaking, and the trend of legislation was running strongly in the other direction.[37]

36 *Herald*, 28 March 1910; *Herald*, 9 July 1909; for attempts to stop Belgian strikebreaking, see Gompers to Bergmans, 30 March, 1 April 1910, Gompers to J.B. McLachlan, 1 April 1910, National Union Files, Reel No. 7, AFL-CIO Library, Washington, D.C.

37 *Sun*, 18 July 1908; *Sun*, 9 January 1902, 29 July 1904, 26 December 1906, 10, 20 February 1908;

Strikebreaking was very successful, and all the workers' efforts to combat it failed. From the pacific tactics of the PWA in the 1904 steel strike, during which union sentinels were posted in Truro, Halifax, Saint John and other points to watch stations and report upon incoming labourers,[38] to the legal challenges mounted by the Saint John longshoremen and the Halifax craftsmen, the record of failure was consistent. Strikebreakers were given the protection of the militia and police, and in the four great strikes dominated by hundreds of strikebreakers, nothing could match the combined force of capital and the armed servants of the state.

Monopoly capitalism entailed far-reaching changes in the labour market, but it also entailed a dramatic transformation of the labour process. Tables Three and Four have already suggested the broad range of issues which sparked strikes, and established that by both liberal and conservative measures, strikes over questions of job control were central to the pattern as a whole. Such "control" struggles took place in the context of dynamic new philosophies of work, which might broadly be subsumed under the heading "scientific management".[39] As a specific ideology and practice associated with F.W. Taylor and his disciples, scientific management had very limited relevance to the Maritimes, where so many workers were employed in such unsuitable industries as longshore and coal mining. But taken in its broadest sense, scientific management — a systematic effort to obtain greater productivity from workers by exerting greater managerial discipline — had great relevance to the region, and its impact can be seen in many of the workers' struggles. We can explore the struggle for control more fully by examining several crucial dimensions of such control struggles, particularly hiring, discharge, supervision, and production techniques, as well as more general issues of control.

The ability of workers to influence the labour market through placing limits on hiring was possibly the most crucial. In the 19th century the vital battleground for this kind of struggle was the enforcement of apprenticeship rules. Although the painters of Saint John were able to defend apprenticeship traditions in 1903, one has the distinct impression that apprenticeship had long since ceased to be an effective safeguard against the dilution of the crafts. The experience of the moulders of Sackville is instructive. The moulders of the Fawcett Foundry failed to win any of their demands regarding shop management, and

Sun, 4 December 1907; *Eastern Labour News*, 12 August 1911, 26 October 1912; *Eastern Labour News*, 27 May, 28 October 1911; *Herald*, 5 July 1907.

38 *Herald*, 4 June 1904.

39 For discussions of scientific management, see Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1974), and Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1978), among many other titles. Michael Burawoy provides an exciting analysis of the literature concerning the workplace in "Towards a Marxist Theory of the Labour Process: Braverman and Beyond", *Politics & Society*, VIII (1978), pp. 247-312.

their employer filled the shop with apprentices. On the other hand, coal miners managed to enforce a form of apprenticeship through safety legislation which imposed a waiting period on new miners before they could advance "to the picks" and become fully-fledged miners. They were not able, however, to impose effective legal restrictions upon the new machine runners who played an important role in the Cape Breton mines.[40]

A second sort of control over entry to the labour market was the demand for union recognition and the related (but not identical) insistence upon the exclusive employment of union members (the "closed shop"). The craftsmen of the Maritimes were rather surprisingly not prone to press closed-shop demands. Such strikes were mounted by Truro painters in 1904, Saint John painters in 1905, and the Halifax building trades in 1914 (in sympathy with plumbers faced with strikebreakers), but with mixed results. The most dramatic failure occurred in the Halifax printing trades, when the composing room staff of the Halifax *Chronicle* and *Echo*, from the foreman to the boys, went on strike to protest the employment of a non-union machinist on their monolines. This strike failed, as did an attempt by Saint John carpenters to enforce the city-wide closed shop in 1907. This record seems to correspond with other evidence suggesting a weakening of the craftsmen's position in the region during this period.[41]

By contrast, both longshoremen and coal miners made significant advances. In 1907, Halifax longshoremen scored a signal victory when they went on strike to lend some weight to a "distinct understanding" that non-union men were not to be employed. Their success in this strike marked the culmination of a sporadic campaign to control hiring that went back to 1884. The coal miners in the PWA staged an impressive province-wide struggle for the closed shop from 1905-1907 — a campaign which strengthened the union immeasurably after its defeat in Sydney in 1904. In Westville, for example, the coal miners simply posted notices about the works to the effect that they would not work with non-union men after 5 November 1906. As a result of the notice, 100 non-union men joined Ladysmith Lodge of the PWA. A similar struggle in Chignecto (which began as a wage dispute but escalated into a demand for the closed shop and union recognition) forced the resignation of the general manager, James Baird.[42]

Secondly, workers defended their rights to job control by limiting management's right to dismiss employees. Some of these strikes were poignant reminders of the helplessness of many organized and unskilled workers in the face

40 *Sun*, 23 April 1903; *Amherst Daily News*, 3 May 1902, *Herald*, 12 July 1902. For an analysis of the weakening of the miners' resistance to the employment of machine runners without the training period, see Donald Macleod, "Miners, Mining Men and Mining Reform: Changing the Technology of Nova Scotian Gold Mines and Collieries, 1850 to 1910", PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1981, pp. 538-45.

41 *Herald*, 19 July 1904; *Sun*, 1 June 1905; Vol. 303, file 14 (28) RG 27; *Sun*, 6 August 1902; *Sun*, 28 March 1907 and Vol. 294, file 2838, RG 27.

42 *Herald*, 7 August 1907; Vol. 295, file 2989, RG 27; *Herald*, 5, 12 February 1907; *Herald*, 7 November 1906; *Herald*, 11 April 1906.

of arbitrary employers. The boys who worked at the Victoria Bowling Alley in Saint John went on strike to protest the dismissal of another boy who had had the misfortune to get sick. About 300 workers at the Nova Scotia Car Works in Halifax went on strike in 1911 after the management fired their unofficial representative, who had tried to interview the employer about new rules being enforced by the company. Gold miners at the Boston-Richardson mine in Goldboro were incensed when the management fired miners who had had the temerity to take time off to vote in an election, but the workers were not reinstated. In such situations, the unorganized workers were at the mercy of the employers.[43]

Once again, the heartland of control lay in the coalfields, the antithesis of the authoritarian world of the unskilled labourer. It seemed, to weary newspaper editors and irate mine managers, that the coal miners would protest if anyone was ever discharged from a coal mine. There was criticism of the miners of Westville, for example, who tied up their mine from 3 April to 25 April 1905 over a discharge of a man accused of improperly grooming the horses. Should a major industry be tied up by so trivial an issue? But for the miners the issue concerned not only whether the hostler involved should be fired but whether the union could claim him as a member. As the men's committee explained its position: "The company say there must be discipline, the men say granted, but let it be tempered with mercy". The employee was reinstated.[44] So often in the coal mines of this period we find the clash of two irreconcilable rights, the right to independence and work, and the right to discipline and fire. As the press noted with regard to a strike of boys in Springhill in 1906, "With the company it is a question of regulation, and with the boys it is a question of upholding the right of a person to keep his own job if he so desires provided there is no breach of discipline". But where did the boundaries of just discipline lie? In 1906, according to the coal boys of Springhill, they did not enclose such vital issues as dismissal or the allocation of work within the mine. In November of that year they went on strike because a trip runner formerly on the 2,600-foot level was moved up to the 3,200-foot level, and the runner from the latter level placed at inferior employment. This was considered unjust. They also insisted on the reinstatement of a loader who had been dismissed for loading boxes without the proper weight. The strike ended in a compromise which suited the boys, and prompted the general manager to comment, "We own the works, we pay the wages; we have some right to say where and how our employees shall work". These strikes by the lowliest workers of the mine suggest the industrial freedom its other workers must have enjoyed, in marked contrast to the harsh discipline of so many factories and construction sites.[45]

43 *Eastern Labour News*, 5 February 1910; *Eastern Labour News*, 9 September 1911; *Evening Mail* (Halifax), 19, 22, 25 March 1904.

44 *Herald*, 10, 12, 25 April 1905.

45 *Herald*, 29, 30 November 1906; see also *Amherst Daily News*, 7 December 1906, and *Herald*, 15 December 1906.

The question of supervision surfaces with frequency in the record of the strikes. The selection of foremen was generally conceded to be the exclusive prerogative of management, and only in the case of the printers and a few very minor officials in the coal mines were supervisors included within the union. But workers occasionally influenced the selection process. The Intercolonial trackmen of Saint John and district forced the resignation of their sub-foreman as an act of solidarity with their brothers on the Canadian Pacific system. This subforeman had worked as a strikebreaker during a recent strike, and the unionized trackmen described his appointment as an insult. There was something of a tradition of this in Charlotte County. Workers in Milltown appealed to an entrenched local hostility to the foreign owners of the cotton factory when they fought the selection of a new foreman in 1902. Since the arrival of the new foreman, an American, a number of local overseers had been discharged and their places filled with newcomers from other mills. The community and employees were outraged. The community felt that the company was betraying an informal agreement that it would give preference in promotion to citizens of Milltown, an offence which seemed particularly heinous in light of the large tax concessions made to the company. Workers urged that the Alien Labour Law be applied against the "small army" of men and women who worked in the New Brunswick mill from Calais, Maine. The upshot of this agitation was the resignation of the "Arrogant Yankee Cotton Mill Superintendent" and his replacement by a native of Milltown, whose elevation was said to have given "very general satisfaction among all classes". Two months later, however, weavers at the same mill went on strike against the dismissal of a popular overseer in the weave room, which suggests the debate over foremanship had not been completely resolved. Even in Ganong's candy factory in St. Stephen, that fortress of paternalism, women workers fought against the appointment of an unpopular supervisor.[46]

Workers throughout the region fought a surprising number of strikes against the dismissal of popular foremen, and this suggests the pivotal (and ambiguous) role the foreman was asked to play in the transformation of work. Sydney machinists went on strike on behalf of a foreman who had merely had a fistfight with the superintendent. Cotton factory workers in Saint John, car workers in Amherst, and coal drivers in Glace Bay all fought strikes on this issue. Workers in fact did influence the foremen whose day-to-day supervision placed them on the front lines of any transformation of work. The way in which supervision was carried out was often cited as an issue in strikes. Halifax boilermakers cited the constant "nagging" of supervisors in the Halifax Graving Dock Company as one of the primary reasons for the strike of 1907; they were continually being told to hurry up and hated what they called the "continual fault-finding" with their work. The pipefitters in the employ of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company at Sydney Mines went on strike for overtime on Sundays, but they

46 *Sun*, 11 September 1901; *Sun*, 12 January, 9 February, 14 March 1903; *St. Croix Courier*, 13 April 1911.

cited the quality of supervision as an important contributing factor. "The men also claim that there were too many bosses over them, the majority of whom did not understand their business", noted the Sydney *Daily Post*. The coal mines provided the classic location for such foremanship struggles. Coal mines could be thrown into an uproar by an official who disregarded longstanding traditions or treated colliers in an offensive manner. A strike at Dominion No. 2 in Glace Bay was caused by the peremptory decision to change the basis on which drivers had been paid, a case, noted the *Herald* correspondent, "of dissatisfaction among employees that on the appointment of a new official, sweeping changes may be looked for, and which are generally so distasteful to them as to result in a strike . . .". Similarly, the abrasiveness and lack of courtesy of supervisory staff at the Springhill mines were a crucial factor in the town's many labour battles.[47]

Often the workers' dissatisfaction with working conditions crystallized in attacks upon individual foremen, and the more general debate over the nature of work was thereby overshadowed. Yet there were such general debates. While no major figure in the Maritimes came forth to advocate a fully-fledged programme of scientific management, the creation of Dominion Coal in 1893 was based on the assumption that local coal producers would attain American standards of efficiency. Local mining men, faced with the pressures of high demand and growing concentration in their industry, had every incentive to reduce their costs of production and increase productivity. While they could turn to mining machines and greater efficiency in the bankhead, most of the classic solutions of scientific management theory were wholly inappropriate for the mining environment. Many of the struggles over authority in the workplace were related to "scientific management", and stemmed from a largely frustrated attempt to make the mines into efficient factories.[48] In Springhill, for instance, coal miners and management fought each other implacably over such issues as the proper weight of a box, how much the company should penalize workers for loading stone in the boxes, whether the amount of coal produced by the worker should be measured at the top of the chute or on the surface — all issues which detailed investigation shows were connected with a broadly-conceived modernization programme. Nobody outside the coal mines really grasped why the town was so frequently engulfed in conflicts over such arcane issues, but both labour and

47 *Herald*, 23 October 1902; *Globe*, 4 December 1902; *Amherst Daily News*, 14 January 1904 and *Herald*, 15 January 1904; *Maritime Mining Record*, 18 June 1902; *Herald*, 24 October 1907;*Herald*, 23 September 1905 and *Daily Post*, 21 September 1905; *Herald*, 11 February 1904; *Herald*, 17 June 1905. The question of foremanship is discussed effectively in Joseph Melling, " 'Non-Commissioned Officers': British Employers and Their Supervisory Workers, 1880-1920," *Social History*, V (May, 1980), pp. 183-221.

48 See Hugh Archbald. *The Four Hour Day in Coal* (New York, 1922), Carter Goodrich. *The Miner's Freedom: A Study in the Working Life of a Changing Industry* (Boston, 1925), and Keith Dix, *Work Relations in the Coal Industry: The Hand-Loading Era, 1880-1930* (Morgantown, W. Va., 1977).

capital realized their importance for the miners' wages and the management's development programme. When labour legislation required the intervention of third parties, the imbroglio was complete — mystified judges were hardly able to catch up on the intricacies of coal mining in a few days. Coal miners knew the mining context inside out, and nothing could be more comprehensive than their critiques of past mismanagement and their programmes for reform. A good example is provided by the coal miners of Inverness, who outside the heroic years of 1909-11 were relatively quiet. Yet pushed into a strike by the institution of a new dockage system in 1906, they produced an impressive ten-point programme for the reform of their mine, which included new rates for track-laying, pushing boxes, shovelling down coal in heads and balances, brushing roof, and shot-firing. It was a "bread-and-butter" strike, but the mine management correctly interpreted it as an attempt to tell them how they should run the mine.[49]

The coal miners were in the vanguard of such general assaults on managerial authority. Much of this had to do with the particular circumstances of their work. Safety strikes loomed far larger in the coal mines than elsewhere. Coal miners were convinced that their own safety standards were at least as rigorous as those of the state or management. The miners of Chignecto, for example, refused to go down into their pit unless the company agreed to send down their picks together in the morning instead of leaving it up to each man to take down his own. Middle-class commentators thought this was a prime example of mindless militancy, the demand being "so trivial . . . that outsiders cannot believe a settlement will be long delayed". Such comments reflected ignorance of mining conditions in Cumberland, where steeply-pitching coal seams made carrying picks a tricky and sometimes even fatal business. The miners of Joggins were equally stubborn in waiting to re-enter their mine until they were guaranteed that a recent fire had been extinguished, and those of Port Morien in refusing to go back unless ventilation was improved. Since the miners had a written code of safety regulations and a secure trade union, they could more often wage struggles for safety that lay beyond the reach of other workers — who were left struggling, with some effect, for workmen's compensation and factory inspection.[50]

Scientific management is a sub-text of the history of strikes in this period, and rarely surfaces explicitly, either in resistance to new time-keeping measures or mechanization. Workmen at Cushing's mill at Union Point fought against a new time-marking machine in 1903, principally because it caused such crowding and crushing of men that the "strong got ahead of the weak"; it was noted that "dislike of the scheme has grown intense". J.B. Snowball told his mill workers in Chatham that they could easily be replaced by a new carrier system, and hod

49 *Chronicle*, 3 December 1903, *Amherst Daily News*, 2, 3 December 1903; *Sun*, 4, 7 December 1903 detail one such Springhill dispute; *Herald*, 19 March 1906.

50 *Herald*, 14 January 1904; *Herald*, 1 February 1904; *Chronicle*, 24 January 1903.

men were replaced with a steam carrier in a Saint John dispute in 1907. Far more common were new methods of calculating wages which entailed speeding up the performance of work. A classic instance of this was the strike at the Hartt Boot and Shoe Company in Fredericton, sparked by the attempt of an American manager to introduce piece work for the cutters. It appears that this "reform" was successfully resisted. A new bonus system was the cause of a strike at Pender's nail factory in 1911, and nailworkers also protested the adoption of the system at the Maritime Nail Works in 1914.[51] Other workers were incensed by production speed-ups, which often contradicted well-established notions of "a fair day's work". In Chatham workers refused to work in gangs of six instead of seven, arguing that "the work is heavy enough as it is with seven". Perhaps the most interesting struggle against intensified working schedules — and incidentally the one documented case of a "strike on the job" in this period — comes from the workers of a cotton factory in Saint John:

> The weavers state that they are paid by the piece, or cut, as it is technically called, getting from 37 to 45 cents per cut. A cut, in the past, was sixty yards, and on this basis the men were paid. Some time ago the manager of the mill increased the cut to sixty-five yards, and as no action was taken by the men, a further increase of five yards was made more recently. The weavers state that they were thus expected to make seventy yards of cloth for the same money as they had previously received for sixty yards . . . They say that they objected to this increase in the length of the cut, and complained, but as no remedy was provided, they of their own accord cut the cloth at the old sixty yard mark. This was discovered, and the men were warned to desist.

The strike resulting from this conflict lasted only one hour, but it was obviously part of a protracted struggle through which the workers had sabotaged the company's speeding up of production.[52]

We find a general attempt to change old rhythms of work, to speed things up and get more effort from workers. Steelworkers in Sydney, ferry engineers in Dartmouth, coal miners everywhere suggested that this was the new reality they faced. In a rare attempt to spell out the general implications of this question, a commentary on a strike of Springhill coal boys against dockage linked this very particular struggle to more general debates over the intensity of labour: "The men, and many of the most thoughtful ones too, consider that a workman should do a fair day's work and make a fair day's pay, but when he works early and late, and slaves between to produce big pay, they consider him unreason-

51 *Globe*, 6 March 1903; Vol. 294, file 2913, RG 27; *Labour Gazette*, VII (1905), p. 951; *Daily Gleaner*, 13, 31 May 1909, *North Shore Leader* (Newcastle), 4 June 1909; Vol. 298, file 3436 and Vol. 303, file 14 (36) RG 27; *Sun*, 28 May 1907 (Chatham).

52 *Sun*, 7, 8 March 1905.

able, and an enemy to his fellows, because he has created conditions which an average steady worker, who properly respects the constitution God has given him, cannot produce the amount he should receive".[53]

David Montgomery has observed that the struggles waged by workers in the United States in the early 20th century to establish collective control over their conditions of work were less richly rewarded in their long-term effects than such general campaigns as that for the eight-hour day. Workplace issues were hard to generalize. Only in some of the coal strikes did workers take their demands for workplace reforms and transform these into demands for workers' control of industry. Such writers as Carter Goodrich have recognized the distinction between "negative" responses to new systems of work and "positive" demands for general workers' control.[54] Most of the control struggles of this period were defensive. Many were sparked by the workers' dislike of bad manners, high-handed autocracy and favouritism. Among the many items on the indictment brought against J.R. Cowans of Springhill by his workmen were his absolute lack of tact and his inability to "receive a committee of men in a gentlemanly manner". As one Halifax bricklayer explained in a strike for the eight-hour day: "What we object to . . . is the autocratic way in which the bosses grant the eight-hour day when they like and refuse to grant it when they don't like". There was a general social critique in such remarks. As the miners of Springhill argued: "The manager in charge at Springhill cannot appreciate that a man working in his mines at Springhill is STILL A MAN, and after 18 years of experience has not yet learned that the miners are rational, intelligent, human beings, with more than ordinary amount of general information, and education, and while they are amenable to reason, will not be dogged or driven". "It's not money they want", James Pender wrote of his militant workers in 1911, "they want to browbeat us, in other words, want to run the show". Not many employers would have shared his alarm, but in the coalfields some would have agreed with him. Struggles for job controls, if conducted in a certain way and in a disciplined manner, did carry the risk of developing into battles for workers' control. As one Springhill miner urged in 1909, the struggle for the workplace could be expanded into a critique of all autocracy: "[A] time comes in the life of nations, it comes in the life of communities, and in the life of organizations when THEY CANNOT ENDURE ANY LONGER THE IMPOSITIONS FORCED ON THEM BY AN AUTOCRATIC AND OVERBEARING SPIRIT".[55]

The questions remain, what difference did the strikes of 1901-1914 really make to the evolution of regional society? Did they really represent a moment of

53 *Chrinicle*, 2 October 1903; *Evening Mail*, 24 June 1908; *Amherst Daily News*, 29 March 1901; *Herald*, 4 July 1906.

54 Montgomery, "New unionism", p. 98; Carter Goodrich, *The Frontier of Control: A Study in British Workshop Politics* (London, 1975 [1920]), p. 258.

55 *Herald*, 2 November 1909; *Herald*, 6 May 1908; *Herald*, 22 August 1907; Vol. 298, file 3436, RG 27; *Herald*, 17 August 1909.

possibility for critics of capitalism? Why was the system able to contain them? What do they tell us about the working class of the region and the level of working-class consciousness?

There can be no doubt that workers struggled against heavy odds and suffered crushing defeats. The coal miners, after nearly two years and expenditures nearing a million dollars, were denied the union of their choice and returned to work under humiliating conditions. Millmen in Saint John and moulders in Moncton and Sackville had suffered reverses. No strong regional labour movement emerged and workers were still without political representation. If the strike movement could be seen as a social challenge, this challenge was contained.

But we need to examine more closely the way in which this containment took place. This means looking more closely at the place of politics, and at the measures taken by the state. It must be remembered that workers enjoyed certain natural advantages in struggles with capital. A crowd of strikers could be assembled in a picket line that could stop production; sympathizers could make life intolerable for strikebreakers; workers could go on strike without warning to obtain redress for their grievances — which in many industrial contexts, particularly coal mining, meant that the companies either gave in or ran the risk of losing their investment. Nothing had happened in the labour process which had destroyed many workers' capacity for autonomous action. All of these considerations lead us to the state as the crucial new force which contained labour's challenge to capital.

The strike was frequently represented as a threat to public order and civilization itself, but violence was extremely rare and confined to very particular circumstances. Of the 22 strikes which were reported to involve some physical force (fist-fights, stone-throwing, riots), 15 involved foreign workers. No one was killed as a direct consequence of labour disputes, which suggests the generally peaceful character of strikes in the region as compared with many parts of the United States. The Saint John *Sun* "explained" the foreigners' violence by referring to the "passionate and unreflecting races from southern and south-eastern Europe," but it is more plausibly viewed as the logical response of isolated construction workers, who saw forceable action as the only means of negotiating with contractors. "Collective bargaining by riot", to use E.J. Hobsbawm's useful phrase, was a predictable consequence of their conditions of employment.[56] At Hubbard's Cove in 1902, Italians employed on the Halifax and South Western Railway surrounded the house occupied by the timekeeper and started to burn it down, but were discouraged by their foreman. Later the same day the workers, armed with revolvers and axes, approached the house and began to demolish it. Once they obtained the timekeeper's books and confirmed their suspicion that they had been cheated of their wages, they dispersed, having been promised the wages due them. New Brunswick rang with large disturb-

56 *Sun*, 3 June 1904; E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Machine Breakers", in *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1974), p. 16.

ances mounted by railway labourers in this period. Near Moncton, Italian, Austrian and Bulgarian workers demanded a wage increase. They paraded behind a "huge red flag", carrying clubs and firearms. They marched to the offices of the Grand Trunk Pacific in Moncton, where three were arrested. More than 800 Italians near Campbellton mounted a similar protest, also flourishing weapons and a red flag. Railway labourers working near Windsor Junction sent their foreman to hospital in 1904, and Hungarians labouring at the steel mill demolished the residence of a strikebreaker.[57] Apart from these construction disturbances, so reminiscent of the 19th century, disorder was found in the two major tramway strikes in Halifax (1913) and Saint John (1914), the Sydney steel strike of 1904, and the three large strikes in the coalfields in 1909-11. In Cape Breton in 1910 company police and UMW supporters clashed, shots were fired, and two men were injured. Ten arrests were made, five on a charge of unlawful assembly and five for carrying concealed weapons. The front porch of Robert Simpson, manager at Reserve Mines, was blown up; responsibility for this act was never fixed. There were also clashes between strikebreakers and strikers in Springhill.[58]

Condensed in this way, it may appear that the record of strikes was highly violent, but given the much larger number of peaceful strikes, the absence of fatalities, and the presence of armies of detectives and militia, one is left wondering why so few disturbances occurred. Part of the reason appears to have been labour's consistent policy of non-violent protest. The PWA in 1904, facing the mass mobilization of Sydney steelworkers, hastened to reassure Nova Scotians that the strike would bear no resemblance to strikes in Europe and the United States, where "lawlessness, growing out of ignorance and vindictive spite, reign supreme". When non-unionized Italians attacked a policeman, the PWA appointed a committee to assist the city police in maintaining order among the immigrants living near the steel plant. The union dramatized its devotion to law and order by giving the militia hearty cheers on its return to Halifax, and "soldiers just as heartily returned the cheers". The PWA was pleased to announce that it had done "all they could to save the country the disgrace of having the riot act read", and the *Herald*, drawing the intended moral, remarked that "Such behavior is certainly not that of men imbued with the spirit of lawlessness and brute force".[59]

For a strike lasting 22 months and broken with troops and strikebreakers, the great Springhill strike of 1909-11 was a triumph of law and order. The strikers knew the propaganda value the company would extract from a show of disorder. (Four years earlier J.R. Cowans had described the beginning days of a strike as an "orgy" and the "biggest drunk ever witnessed in Springhill", although no-

57 *Herald*, 24, 29 December 1902; *Sun*, 3, 4 August 1908, and *Amherst Daily News*, 5 August 1908; *Sun* , 12 August 1908; *Herald*, 9 August 1904; *Herald* and *Sun*, 3 May 1904.

58 *Herald*, 11 January 1910; *Herald*, 17, 28 July 1909; *Sun*, 1 March 1910.

59 *Herald*, 28 June 1904; *Sun*, 16 June 1904; *Herald*, 12 July 1904.

body else seems to have noticed any disturbance). The UMW collaborated with the mayor to protect the town against fire, and urged members not to give the company "a point against them, but still maintain the same silent and determined struggle they have carried through for over a year". Victory would come only through endurance, patience and self-control. The records of the local UMW document the union's preoccupation with keeping the peace.[60]

The labour movement advocated non-violent and passive strikes. But both the state and capital championed far more aggressive and forceful approaches. Troops, detectives, spies, special constables: on a scale never before imagined, these were the *dramatis personae* of these years. Employers used spies in Halifax in 1907 during a longshoremen's strike, and detectives and company police were everywhere in the coalfields. It was difficult to tell where the public police stopped and capital's private army began. Saint John police refused to arrest strikebreakers who attacked strikers in 1905, and even helped to recruit strikebreakers on another occasion. Such modest efforts paled beside the great show of force brought to bear upon the strikers in the coalfields. Those who watched the scene thought instinctively in military metaphors, as we find in one sensitive portrait of Glace Bay's deserted company houses:

> When a man is evicted from his house by the Dominion Coal company, because he has refused to work, no time is lost by the officials in putting their mark upon the empty dwelling. White boards are nailed tightly over the glass. No pains are taken to do the job artistically. All that is wanted is to make the job secure. So all over town are seen those windowless houses, not the sign of martial encounters, but the mark of an industrial struggle unparalleled in the determination of the contending armies to fight to a finish and which, tho' bloodless, is no less fierce than if the march of warlike men were seen and the roar of artillery heard.

Nobody could quite understand why the troops had been brought in, nor why they came with such fire-power. Nearly a quarter of Canada's fighting men were in Cape Breton by July 1909. Puzzled citizens wondered at the necessity of a "force which is of greater dimensions than many a punitive expedition against African tribes", combined with seven or eight hundred special constables. If all this were primarily an "aid to the civil power", it seemed odd that the representatives of civil power most concerned, the mayors of Springhill and Glace Bay, were against the coming of the troops.[61]

60 *Herald*, 21 June 1905; *Herald*, 12 August 1910; Minutes of UMW Local Union 469, Springhill, entry for 6 January 1910, Angus L. Macdonald Library, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, indicates the miners' active interest in suppressing drinking and disorder.

61 John Bell, ed., "On The Waterfront: A Glimpse into Company Espionage", *Bulletin of the Committee on Canadian Labour History*, I (1976), pp. 8-9, documents the use of spies in Halifax; *Sun*, 28 November 1905; *Herald*, 20 October 1909; *Herald*, 14 July 1909. For the use of local spies at Acadia Coal, Westville, see John Higston to C. Evans, 30 May 1913, RG 21,

The troops were not required to preserve public order, but they were needed if the strikebreakers were to continue to keep the mines open. They were the embodiment of the new economy of labour, the free labour market carrying a gun. The state, through violence, safeguarded the achievement of the new consolidated economy of labour and prevented workers from erecting effective barriers against it. It also moved decisively to change the terms of power within the workplace.

Trade unions of this period enjoyed few formal rights, and many doubts existed as to what they could or could not do. Incorporation of trade unions, legislation on arbitration, and their daily participation in local communities, all provided trade unionists with a certain legitimacy, but without many guaranteed legal rights. The dominant trait of Canadian labour law was an emphasis on "fire-fighting", that is, asserting "the public interest" strictly at the point of actual or apprehended conflict (and not at the point of maintaining trade-union rights in bargaining nor making sure the bargain was kept once arrived at). The Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (1907), the most important piece of federal legislation in this period, was intended to operate in utilities, railroads and coal mines, and required compulsory investigation before a strike or lockout began. The terms of employment would be frozen, and an attempt to reach an agreement was to be made by a conciliation board; if this didn't work, the board's report became public and both workers and employers were restored to their common-law rights and duties. No protection was given to unions, and even a collective agreement reached under the Act had no status in law.[62]

The IDIA is often seen as a fairly mild act, which may even have narrowed the possible scope of state intervention by hiving off a particular sector of the economy for special treatment. From the point of view of the Maritimes, however, the IDIA appears to have been a major revolution in the region's most militant workplaces, the waterfronts and the coal mines. The Act must be placed within the context of the state's use of massive displays of force to crush strikes. The Act provided no guarantees that employees would not be dismissed before or after the period of compulsory investigation, and thus ensured that employees could be victimized with impunity. Especially in the coal mines, the results were dramatic: miners could no longer conduct their swift strikes on control issues, which had won them so much direct power in the period 1901-1907; instead, they had to wait and give management as much time as it required to undermine dissidents by any number of means. Workers lost the advantages of speed and sur-

Series "A", Vol. 39, No. 38, PANS. The company was kept abreast of developments within the UMW by the Thiel Detective Agency. For a general interpretation, see Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power: The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order", *Canadian Historical Review*, LI (1970), pp. 407-425.

62 A.W.R. Carrothers, *Collective Bargaining Law in Canada* (Toronto, 1965), p. 32; the emergence of the IDIA is described by Paul Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State 1900-1911* (Toronto, 1980).

prise, but employers lost no real power whatever. Ideologically, the IDIA was a heaven-sent weapon for capital. Manipulating the near-universal respect for the law, which the non-violent character of the labour movement reveals so well, the Act cast a suspicion of illegality and unreason over the pursuit of collective rights. The long history of conciliation in Springhill from 1907 to 1909 confirmed the usefulness of the Act for management, as board after board tried to understand mining issues, contradicted one another, issued confusing judgments, and muddied the issues beyond belief. The management broadcast far and wide the decisions of boards in its favour, but when one board (for once including some knowledgeable mining men) criticized the treatment of the coal miners, the company treated its finding as a joke. When a conciliation board ruled that the miners of Springhill had no right to affiliate with an international union because this would imperil local interests, its ruling was popularly seen as an edict based on the law itself, and not the verdict of a few opinionated individuals.[63]

The example of the dispute in Inverness, the second of the three great strikes of 1909-11, highlights the effects of the new legal structure. The mine at Inverness was controlled by those archetypical creatures of the new age, Mackenzie and Mann, and employed 600 men. In a referendum leading up to a split within the PWA, supporters of the UMW numbered only 96, but the international union gradually won over three-quarters of the mineworkers. The PWA had negotiated a check-off of union dues with the company in 1906, and the company refused to stop the collection of dues for the PWA even after a majority of the miners turned against the old union. Then the company circulated typewritten cards to individual miners, which ostensibly allowed individuals to stop the deduction of PWA dues from their pay, and many miners signed these cards. Then, one by one, the company discharged every miner who had done so. Despite appeals from the UMW, it refused to change its policies, and on 9 July 1909 the coal miners came out on strike. Two days later the troops arrived, to protect new strikebreakers and the small number of "loyal" workers. Now the real genius of the IDIA was revealed. Although the miners had been individually fired and the "strike" called by the union was very much only a formal recognition of their dismissal, the union had not taken the precaution of consulting with the Department of Labour and going through the conciliation procedure. The coal miners' strike was therefore illegal. The UMW could be prosecuted for providing food for the strikers' families, since under Section 60, Chapter 20 of the Act, supplying provisions to a striker prior to reference of a dispute to a Board of Conciliation and Investigation was illegal. The Supreme Court of Nova

63 For the confusion surrounding conciliation in Springhill, partly caused by a complex decision by a judge who interpreted his own ruling differently than everybody else — and announced his revision after a strike of two and a half months — see *Amherst Daily News*, 20 October 1907; criticisms of the conciliation process were made by workers (*Herald*, 7 October 1907) and newspaper editors (*Sun*, 24 October 1907); for the use of the conciliation board reports by the company for propaganda, see the *Herald*, 23 October 1909.

Scotia, which heard the case on appeal, thought it self-evident that giving food to hungry strikers fell within the sphere of prohibited support under the Act. "It is difficult to conceive any more effectual means of aiding strikers than those found in the present case", noted the Court. "It is of course precisely the aid wanted to enable tthe [sic] strikers to live during the pendency of the strike, and it hardly needs comment to show that the defendant as an agent of the United Mine Workers of America so gave the aid with the express and sole purpose of enabling the strikers to stay out until their demands were complied with". The "conciliatory" legislation of 1907 had revealed its coercive essence: under the IDIA the company was allowed to train the physical weapon of starvation and distress against its employees and their children. It was small wonder that coal miners despised the Act.[64]

The IDIA was only one aspect of the legal offensive against labour. Great progress was made in the art of issuing injunctions against picketing and in applying the doctrine that trade unions could be held liable for economic costs imposed on employers. In another case, defendants against whom no evidence had been brought, were nonetheless forbidden to "watch and beset", because the "balance of convenience" dictated that "No injury surely can be suffered by defendants by being restrained from committing alleged illegal acts which they deny". Canadian labour law was profoundly influenced by such cases as "The Cumberland Railway and Coal Co. v. McDougall et al.", which helped place the injunction at the centre of reactions to strikes.[65]

As a force for labour peace, the IDIA was a disaster. As a response to the dependence of an increasingly interconnected economy upon fossil fuels, and as a fillip to the emergence of an aggressively authoritarian state apparatus, the Act was a stroke of genius. Combined with the existing laws against combination and disorder, and the para-military paraphernalia of barbed-wire compounds and armed strikebreakers, the IDIA served to guarantee the preservation of the free labour market. At the same time it removed most important direct powers from the coal miners. It thus represented a victory for capital in both the new labour market and in the subordination of labour in the workplace.[66]

64 *Herald*, 10 July 1909; "Rex v. Neilson" (1910), *Eastern Law Reporter*, Vol . IX (1910), pp. 210-213.

65 "Dominion Coal Co. Ltd. v. Bousfield et al.", *Eastern Law Reporter*, Vol. VIII (1909), pp. 145-149; "Cumberland Railway and Coal Co. v. McDougall et al.", Nova Scotia *Reports*, Vol. XLIV (1909-1910), p. 544. The importance of this latter case was underlined by A.C. Crysler, *Labour Relations and Precedents in Canada: A Commentary on Labour Law and Practice in in Canada* (Toronto, 1949), p. 32. For a less famous court case, in which a PWA lodge was held to have violated the rights of an individual by insisting upon the closed shop at Westville, see *Maritime Mining Record*, 26 August 1903.

66 The dramatic regional impact of the IDIA is revealed in the estimate of F.A. Acland of the Department of Labour, that three-fourths of the miners of Nova Scotia in 1909 were working under terms recommended by a conciliation board, or arranged while a conciliation board was being established: Department of Labour, *Report of the Deputy Minister of Labour on*

In Springhill and Cape Breton, the limits beyond which the pursuit of conciliation and consensus no longer applied were unforgettably exposed. On 31 July 1909, large numbers of UMW men and their supporters gathered at the Athletic Grounds in Glace Bay. They were about to march to Dominion to protest against the coal company. They marched peacefully, carrying the Union Jack. As they neared a Catholic church at the boundary of Glace Bay and Dominion, they were startled by something new: a machine gun nest and a group of artillerymen, who seemed ready to mow them down if they tried to proceed to their destination. As they returned to Glace Bay, the marchers must have reflected on the new realities of state power and the limitations these imposed upon public assembly and freedom of speech. Whatever William Lyon Mackenzie King's impenetrable doctrines of conciliation amounted to, they barely concealed the crucial fact that, in defence of capitalism, the state was prepared to kill.[67]

However we evaluate the social challenge represented by the strikes of these years, we should remember that the state regarded them with utmost seriousness. Maritime workers failed to remake their society, but they faced very powerful enemies at a time when their awareness of themselves was only just developing. The system did not survive only through the creative response of the state. Workers themselves were not prepared to endorse a coherent alternative to the system. In the great coalfields' strikes women turned out *en masse*, but only a small minority of women workers ever fought strikes, and there was little challenge to traditional family roles in the working class. Only occasionally did strikers make connections between industrial actions and politics. Many pointed critiques of bonussing, for example, were made during the course of strikes, and sharp words were directed against state subsidies by the men who fought the steamship lines. Local politicians were subject to sharp criticisms during some strikes, but only in Cape Breton in 1904 (when a labour party was formed immediately in the wake of the defeat of the steel strike) and in the coalfields in 1909-11 (that "harvest time for socialists"), can we make a direct connection between strikes and radical ideological shifts. Part of the ambiguity was the ability of the mainstream politicians to absorb radical rhetoric and even concede working-class demands. There could be no better example of this responsiveness than the progressive policies followed by the Nova Scotia Liberals, who constructed an alliance with the PWA to help consolidate their long hold on provincial political power.[68]

If we measure class consciousness solely by the number of socialist ballots

Industrial Conditions in the Coal Fields of Nova Scotia (Ottawa, 1909), p. 32. The IDIA was also used to settle disputes of Halifax freighthandlers, Halifax plumbers, and Saint John longshoremen.

67 See Danny Moore, "The 1909 Strike in the Nova Scotia Coal Fields", unpublished research essay, Carleton University, 1977, p. 97, for a good description of this incident.

68 For the aggressive tactics of women in coal strikes, see the *Herald*, 7, 13 July 1909; for an attack

cast, the workers of the Maritimes appear to have made only slight gains in this period. Yet this pessimistic view is too static, especially in any description of something as fluid and dynamic as consciousness. The evidence of the strikes reveals a more complex portrait. One of its most interesting aspects is the evident interest taken by workingmen in religion. It is a commonplace of Canadian social history that the first decades of the 20th century witnessed the emergence of the "social gospel" as a theological response to industrialism, but from the evidence of the strikes one gains an impression of workingmen themselves fighting for the social gospel and bringing pressure to bear against their churches. The *Eastern Labour News* covered the emergence of the new theological positions with energy and competence. Maritime workers were adamantly Christian, notwithstanding the heroic efforts of Marshall Govang, the region's first labour historian, who lectured car workers in Moncton on the benefits of Free Thought.[69] When Cape Breton mining families withdrew their children from Sunday School classes taught by company officials, or when the Salvation Army chaplain denied use of the church to strikebreakers in Springhill, they were taking important and dramatic steps. Letters to the *Herald* bristled with quotations from John Bunyan and Isaiah and demanded the Presbyterian church denounce the system of modern industry and its selfishness of spirit. We find clergymen taking emphatic steps to support local strikes. That a minister who sided with capital faced mixed reviews was illustrated by Rev. R.W. Norwood of Springhill, who denounced workers of Springhill for listening to revolutionary socialists. Not coincidentally, it was his valedictory sermon. He was attacked mercilessly by workingmen in the press. We confront a large array of evidence which suggests that workers were seeking a reconciliation of their religious beliefs with the realities of industrial conflict. In 1909 the *Herald* carried a dramatic story which illustrated this difficult situation. When a number of the wives of the strikers in Cape Breton were prevented from "interfering" with the strikebreakers and had no other way of manifesting their opposition, "they knelt down on the road and appealed to God with genuine fervour to cause the rocks in the pit to fall upon the objects of their hatred". Everywhere we find indications like this, of men and women looking for something — some confusedly, others entirely lucidly — a theological framework suited to the changed condi-

on steamship subsidies by a supporter of the longshoremen, see the *Herald*, 29 May 1907; the political impact of the 1904 steel strike is discussed by Ronald F. Crawley, "Class Conflict and the Establishment of the Sydney Steel Industry 1899-1904", M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1980, pp. 121-2; the PWA/Liberal relationship is explored by Joe MacDonald, "The Roots of Radical Politics in Nova Scotia: The Provincial Workmen's Association and Political Activity, 1879-1906", B.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1977; Frank and Reilly, "Socialist Movement," pp. 99-101, discuss the political impact of the strike of 1909-11 in Springhill.

69 Colin McKay, the region's first radical sociologist, published important essays on the social gospel in the *Eastern Labour News* (see, for example, his study of new theology in the issue of 1 February 1913); for Govang and the Moncton Truth Seekers Association, see *Eastern Labour News*, 24 April, 1, 8 May 1909.

tions of social life.[70] It is not a portrait of religious stagnation that emerges from this evidence, nor can we infer political stagnation from the continuing hold of old parties without knowing more about the concessions they offered and the political imagery that they used.

The record of strikes cannot give us a portrait of the class, for there is a vast amount of additional evidence to consider before any definitive judgements are made about the general contours of Maritime working-class history. But insofar as this partial evidence allows us to reach some initial hypotheses about class consciousness, one can easily see that it undercuts the stereotype of "regional conservatism". The slow development of regional labour historiography denies us the pleasure of criticizing a "traditional interpretation" of Maritime workers. But one can well imagine what such a "traditional interpretation" might amount to. Denied large-scale immigration and demoralized by high levels of unemployment, the argument might run, Maritime workers inhabited small, isolated worlds, where paternalist employers provided the focus of life. Growing up in the isolated and stagnant communities of a traditional region, workers would not demand many changes in a time-honoured way of life. Cut off from the main traditions of North American trade unionism by their own isolation and the domination of the PWA, that "company union", the workers of the Maritimes lived in a social as well as economic hinterland, and only a few immigrants or peripatetic organizers helped to alleviate the "feudal" conditions of their oppression.[71]

The interpretation of working-class mobilization in 1901-1914 offered here contradicts such analysis. Nothing seems backward about the workers of the Maritimes in this period — not their struggles for job control, their eagerness to press for such general objectives as nine (or even eight) hours, their rethinking of religious traditions. Most of the issues raised in the workplaces of the Maritimes could as easily have been raised in England. Whatever the scope of paternalism in the 19th century, it was a waning force in this period. Living in a dynamic region with an abundance of jobs in construction, coal mining, and manufacturing, workers were making new contacts with their brothers in North America. Even more crucially, they were painstakingly developing a regional framework of class awareness, as seen in the new regional labour press, the work of Maritimes-based organizers in other parts of the region, and the inspiration drawn by workers from other regional strikes. When pulp workers in St. George, New Brunswick tried to justify their three-year struggle to themselves, they thought

70 *Herald*, 31 July 1909; *Herald*, 15 April 1910; *Herald*, 17 July 1909; *Herald*, 4 September 1909; *Herald*, 31 July 1909.

71 An interpretation which comes close to this stereotype is that of John Mellor, *The Company Store: James Bryson McLachlan and the Cape Breton Coal Miners, 1900-1925* (Toronto, 1983); see the effective critique by Don Macgillivray, "Cultural Strip-Mining in Cape Breton", *New Maritimes* (September 1983), p. 16.

of the long battles waged by the miners of Cape Breton and Springhill.[72]

One comes away from the strikes of 1901-1914 with two conflicting impressions. The first is that of monopoly capitalism reshaping the region and the working-class world, of a remorseless and inexorable process of consolidation. The second is that of a dynamic working-class movement, posing a real challenge to capital and to the traditional ruling classes of the Maritimes. It was a period of both defeat and awakening, a period in which both capital and labour were attaining greater strength. Perhaps this evidence suggests that working-class traditionalism in the Maritimes, like many other regional traditions, is of relatively recent vintage — a product of the economic collapse of the 1920s.

In Springhill in 1910, the workers displayed all the contradictory features of the new age. On 10 August 1910, a parade and picnic were held to mark the end of the first year of the Great Strike. It was a sign of the harsh defeats faced by workers in this new situation: on the very day of the parade, the company hoisted 641 tons of coal by using strikebreakers protected by the state. It would take another ten months to break the strike completely, but already the workers were fearing the worst. But was it not also a sign of the new consciousness and new discipline of labour? The procession formed up at Pioneer Hall, which had once rung to the mass meetings of the PWA, and then started down Main Street. First came the town band and a body of miners, then the band of the 93rd regiment, and then the children from the Socialist Sunday School, carrying small red flags. They were followed by another delegation of socialists, numbering about 100, who carried a large red flag. As the parade wound through Springhill, it passed house after house bedecked with red flags and banners. The parade finally reached the picnic grounds, where more than 4,000 people were gathered.[73] We know the marchers were also moving toward defeat, but their parade suggests the hopes of men and women, high in one colliery town, for a new social world. By raising high the banner of the modern enlightenment, they live on in our minds, symbols of an age of struggle and aspiration.

72 Christopher Wren to F.A. Acland, 9 September 1912, Vol. 298, file 3341, RG 27.

73 *Herald*, 11 August 1910.