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Wayne Roberts

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ARTISANS, ARISTOCRATS AND HANDYMEN:

Politics and Trade Unionism among Toronto Skilled Building Trades Workers, 1896-1914

Wayne Roberts
University of Toronto

The sweating system, which today evokes a confined image of bedraggled workers huddled over an endless pile of tubercular garments, was a pervasive condition that touched the lives of many skilled workers at the turn of the century. When a government commission to investigate sweating arrived in Toronto in 1895, carpenters as well as garment workers sent their representatives. One carpenter, John Kane, complained that wage-cutting contractors and their system of piece work were rapidly becoming dominant. "The thing is growing and cannot be put a stop to too quick... We are not able to do it ourselves," he moaned. "The men had to work like slaves to make a living. You will always find it that way until a radical change is made."[1]

The traditional artisanal character of the building trades was profoundly altered in the Laurier years by a building boom of enormous proportions.[2] This upsurge in building activity resulted in a widespread system of competitive contracting and subcontracting, which downgraded skill requirements common to traditionally trained tradesmen and fed on an expanded pool of unqualified but agile handymen. It was this process that underwrote the intransigence of Casey of Casey's Paint Shop when he took on the "knights of the brush"[3] in 1901. "They could tie up the steel trust and they could tie up the CPR but they couldn't tie up Jim Casey," he boasted. He had just fired his entire staff and had them blacklisted from the Toronto trade when they resisted his new schedule of wages. For Casey no longer needed a crew

of equally well-trained painters. He designed a sliding scale of wages to meet his staff needs for a few highly skilled painters assisted by a semi-skilled back-up team. In vain did his unionized workforce attempt to enforce the conventional uniform wage-rate.[4]

In battling for this new division of wages, Casey was merely implementing a universal process of capitalist labour organization. Regardless of overall efficiency or social benefit, modernizing contractors moved to undermine the rounded and monopoly-bestowing skills of artisans in order to establish broken-down specializations, many of them less skilled and lower paid.[5] With the historic integrity and viability of their honoured craft methods ruthlessly challenged by this process, many building tradesmen suffered a relative and absolute downward spiral of wages. Even in newer trades where the loss of artisanal prerogatives did not aggravate the issue, attempts to buck the downgrading drive of employers led to a bareknuckled pattern of industrial relations. Moreover, skirmishes against wage-cutting innovations were rarely localized. The boundary lines of particular companies and trades were frequently mere scrimmage lines for wholesale battles of the organized employer class mobilized against the outstanding bastion of organized and resistant skilled labour.

This paper will attempt to trace this profound upheaval in the building industry in Toronto and assess its results in terms of labour-management relations and working class consciousness. Common problems notwithstanding, the building trades were not a homogeneous conglomeration of skills and conditions. While some artisanal occupations bore the brunt of the new age, others survived in the nooks and crannies of the industry; still other occupations were so modern as to be oblivious to any orthodoxies. To sample this diversity, I will be treating carpenters as a model of an artisanal trade under attack, plumbers and ironworkers as typical of trades fostered by the new technology, and bricklayers and stonemasons as representatives of trades still able to maintain their craft traditions. In my conclusion I will generalize from these experiences and challenge the traditional view of building trades unionism.

CARPENTERS

An artisanally-reared carpenter like John Kane was a type who strolled to work bedecked in silk-hat and top-coat.[6] His preferred mode of dealing with employers matched the pretence of his costume. His strategy, a vestige of the guild impulses that haunted most nineteenth century artisans, envisioned a corporatist style of vertical organization where workers and employers in each industry maintained their distinct interests in honourable equilibrium. It was not the wages system and the

inherent conflict between labour and capital which threatened this artisanal arcadia — the proper organization of employers and employees could ensure rewards for all. This mutually beneficial relation could be compatible with the wage system were it not for the competitive menace of the contracting system and its loathsome corollaries — the hated contractor and the "botch" carpenter.

To protest these violations of the artisanal code, the carpenter might occasionally consider selling his labour-power directly to the buyer and bypassing the contractor.[7] By 1901 however, this kind of limited resistance left carpenters smarting under wages of $10-12 per week, about one-third less than other skilled building tradesmen.[8] Looking for a more concerted counterattack, his first impulse was to block with "the industry" against these subcontracting outsiders. This mirage beckoned brightly when the Builders' Exchange itself initiated proposals for complete organization of employers and employees, since "in the present conditions of only partial organization, neither employers nor employed could enforce such rules as would give the trade a better standing".[9] This statement was welcomed on behalf of the carpenters by Tom Banton, the labour reporter for the *Star*, himself steeped in this quasi-guild tradition: "The fact is that employer and employee are coming to recognize that the real danger element is the unorganized element, which makes chaos instead of science of business".[10]

Although employers were not able to live up to these proposals, hope lingered among the carpenters. In 1903 they suffered a crushing defeat when the unflinching Builders' Exchange withstood a 46 day strike to enforce employer insistence on a three level pay scale.[11] For three years they endured Builders' Exchange arrogance, trying everything "short of crawling before the high and mighty contractors of the Exchange to avoid this trouble". They could only come to the conclusion that an open shop drive sponsored by the hated Employers' Association lurked behind the Builders' Exchange continued refusal to negotiate. Bitter over the past and fearful for the future, 1450 carpenters and 350 sympathizers struck solid for a week.[12] In response a Masters Carpenters Association was formed, specifically designed to meet the demands of the strikers and recognize their rights to organize. A tourniquet was applied to carpenter illusions and the Association was greeted as an end to tension in the industry.[13]

But the "real danger element" of "hammer and saw carpenters" did not vanish with this round of skirmishes. As early as 1902 intensive subcontracting had irrevocably shifted the skill base of the trade by opening the door to handymen. Migrating from Europe or the Ontario countryside, these handymen could frequently complement or even substitute for the skilled carpenter and joiner of seven years apprentice-

ship with $100-200 worth of equipment. Even as rough frame buildings gave place to buildings of better quality, and the skill of this untooled and inexperienced carpenter gradually increased, this layer of unorganized and semi-skilled carpenters undermined the established basis of wage-price stability. They were used to redefine the socially necessary labour costs of carpentry, driving wages down to the level of unskilled labour.[14]

Thus, wages dwindled to 33 cents an hour, despite rapid union growth after the 1906 show of force.[15] The situation worsened in 1908-09, when the market for highly skilled carpenters who worked on middle and upper income houses shrank and unemployment rose to affect 40% of the trade.[16] Contractors were inclined to hire "Tom, Dick and Harry" while tradesmen had to "compete with carpenters, alleged and real, from overseas, to whom $2.50 per day looks like picking money from telegraph posts".[17] In the eyes of the union leadership, Toronto had become "the dumping ground for anything and everything that can scrape up the price of a steering passage and the union carpenter suffers accordingly . . ."[18]

It was only a new set of spirited organizing drives that began to shift the balance of forces in favour of the union after 1910. A voluntary employer offer of a 35 cent hourly base rate was enough to forestall some of the older, skilled craftsmen who hoped it would establish a minimum standard. But it only whetted the appetite of the young English unionists who agitated for 40 cents an hour and were embittered by the employers' refusal to negotiate.[19] Amidst complaints that wage rates were as low as for unskilled labour, an organizing drive doubled union membership and finally won the goal of 40 cents.[20] Animated by the rising cost of living, carpenters began to pace their wage demands to the general prosperity of the industry in 1913.[21] Unable to see "why they should not enjoy a more generous share of the present prosperity", close to 2000 union carpenters overwhelmingly endorsed strike action in June when their wage demands were rejected.[22]

Conduct of the strike was aggressive. Although strikers welcomed early capitulations by some contractors, they maintained active pickets geared to recruiting new members.[23] Stung by a sharp attack from the Master Carpenters who charged them with being lazy and second rate, the striking carpenters replied in kind. They concluded from the "gratuitous insult of the Exchange" and their record of hiring cheap men that "the mistake of the men for years has been in trying to negotiate with the Builders Exchange".[24]

The strike developed strong political overtones when a visit by Conservative Premier Whitney to a Parliament Building construction site led to a wage reduction.[25] The government was charged with being the executive council of the manufacturers' association.[26] "It is a fact

that workers have to go hat in hand asking the very people whom they vote into power for union wages," charged Charlie Donovan, a Brotherhood official. A mass protest meeting on the issue was marked by "the manner in which remarks of different speakers about political action of workers were received", one reporter noted.[27]

Before the 2500 members still striking in mid-June voted to settle, the union policy of active pickets had to encounter "police magistrates and police officials . . .extremely prejudiced and narrow in their views concerning industrial disputes."[28] Despite the fact that strikes were legal, policemen "continue to act towards strikers and picketers as though they were as much criminals and lawbreakers as a burglar." Police behaviour had been so notorious that a formal complaint was laid and a provincial enquiry promised. It was noted however that "investigation of this kind usually does not go very deep."[29]

Carpenters' grievances retained a political dimension even in the aftermath of this strike. Carpenter delegates to the local labour council protested the hiring of non-union labour by the government-endorsed and supposedly philanthropic Toronto Housing Company. The "hot discussion" they provoked led to complaints about the city's financial backing of the project. Even labour alderman Robbins came under the gun for attending a corner stone laying ceremony.[30] Later in the year, carpenters were "up in arms" that government harbour work would pay less than the union rate. One spokesman charged that the contractors dictated the rate of wages to the Fair Wage officialdom.[31] Again in 1914, the Ontario government was charged with "a callous neglect of labour" for taking advantage of the recession to reduce wages on government building sites.[32]

The militant and political quality of these later disputes was the logical culmination of the carpenters' inability to organize by the orthodox methods appropriate to the highly skilled artisan. These anachronistic methods had failed and the carpenters were forced to adopt militant organizing drives as the only avenue of advance. Their efforts inevitably involved politics. Unable to enforce union wages on civic work by union power alone, for instance, they had to resort to political muscle. Carpenter representatives were frequent petitioners at Board of Education and Board of Control meetings. As late as 1913 they could not convince the Board of Education to pay the union rate unless they could also establish that it was the prevailing rate.[33]

This interaction of standard unionism and political endeavour was probably repeated in other areas. Frequent victims of industrial accidents, they were presumably profoundly affected by the political controversy surrounding workmen's compensation in these years. The immigration question was an issue that must have impelled them to pan-Canadian political considerations. Their frequent unemployment, a

normal stimulant to radicalism among skilled workers,[34] undoubtedly brought them into contact with electrician E. Drury, whose socialism led him to moonlight as a leading organizer of the unemployed.

At the same time, their politicization was more profound than a sly but narrow use of electoral leverage. An occupational analysis of activists associated with the revolutionary minded *Western Clarion* and *Cotton's Weekly* or the more reformist but still radical Independent Labour Party reveals carpenters to be the most involved and committed tradesmen.[35] They outranked even the notoriously political printers. The trade in Toronto produced such political leaders as John Tweed, frequent ILP candidate, and Wilfrid Gribble, a major figure in the Socialist Party of Canada.

Their rapid and militant politicization after 1910 partly rested on a legitimized tradition of broader concerns. In 1903, for instance, a Toronto carpenters' local had advocated a spate of reforms in virtually every area of life. Their political proposals included abolition of the ward system in city politics (a measure designed to remove power from corrupt wardheelers), adoption of the Hare Spence system of voting (a system favouring minority parties), and abolition of the Senate. Under the banner of moral reform, they honoured Ruskin's "fortifying virtues" and advocated curfew hours for children, restrictions on entrance to pool halls and prohibition of the manufacture of cigarettes. On more strictly labour matters, they endorsed compulsory arbitration, a legally enforced eight hour day and public works by day labour.[36]

A prize-winning carpenter-essayist, Mr. Hayden evoked another facet of this tradition in his essay on "the ambitions of a Canadian mechanic". Since Hayden believed that labour produced all wealth, he bitterly resented the fashionable condescension of the middle class toward mechanics. "Today it is almost impossible for a man who carries a bag of tools on his back to be more than tolerated in certain circles, and it is this treatment that embitters so many good thinking men and drives them toward extreme socialism", he explained. Low wages, "the comparative small returns that the mechanic gets for the outlay of his capital, viz. labour" made it impossible for him to "rank". Given this proprietary sense of his job, he could only urge that a mechanic's ambitions include "sufficient remuneration for his work to be able to live on an equality with the non-producer. Do not mistake me, I am not talking Socialism, only plain justice." Other ambitions included independence of partyism and the triumph of independent thought in politics.[37]

These documents suggest a strong trace of artisanal ideology among carpenters. The moralizing efforts of Ruskin were well directed to the nineteenth century artisan whose artistic pride in craftsmanship and whose sense of propriety and rectitude as a moral and producing

citizen was matched only by his hostility to the caste prejudice of the non-producing elements of society. While artisans exercised a relatively conservative trade union strategy, and while they almost certainly did not entertain notions of politics as the method of resolving class antagonisms at the level of state power, they frequently welcomed "independent politics" suitable for citizens not swayed by corruption or caste privilege.

The political awareness of carpenters also had a decidedly British twist to it. Gracing the local labour council with another example of the breadth of their concern, carpenters were responsible for the passage of a resolution condemning Czar Nicholas in the aftermath of the 1905 Russian Revolution. The resolution concluded with an appeal to all Canadians "to take heed of events in Russia and be true and loyal to brotherly love...which alone is the true foundation of the British Empire".[38] Sensitivity to the norms of British unionism featured more than sentimental nostalgia for Ruskin or the illusions of a British Empire based on brotherhood. British immigrants were reportedly quick converts to unionism[39] and their British connection received direct and on-going expression through the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, a British-affiliated international to which the immigrant carpenters were intensely loyal.

Even granting the importance of these congealing artisanal and British influences, it is unlikely that the fundamentals of carpenters' political development were shaped by these heritages. In fact, both had to be essentially repudiated in the course of the unions' advance. Even the positive attributes of artisanal unionism could not be sustained in a trade where craft homogeneity and continuity were destroyed by a chaotic labour pool. There is little indication that any substantive behaviour was governed by artisanal norms. Although the integrity of the craft was ravaged by subcontracting in this period, there were no strikes directed at retaining the artisanal prerogatives of workers' control. All their strikes centered on wages and hours. The conditions of the trade failed to generate fraternal social activity. Unlike the printers, carpenters did not have bowling leagues, memorials on key anniversaries or well-attended funerals for trade union brethren.[40]

Apart from lingering thoughts, the semblance of an artisanal echo was purely contrived. They did design an educational programme to involve the union as "a means to uplift to a higher plane of general all-round efficiency as workman and mechanic and in every way to become a better man and citizen". However, a certain modern cynicism distinguished this project sharply from the artisanal apostles of self-improvement. They were, as their journal correspondent put it, making use of the professors who enjoyed assisting them along educa-

tional lines. "The educational side of our movement always appeals to them and the notices in the daily press are also valuable as advertisements. Our goods must be kept before the public if we are to be successful, just as the merchants are".[41] Likewise, the active program of concerts and smokers they developed had a pragmatic side, aimed at recruitment rather than the expression of organic craft solidarity. One successful smoker and concert was applauded because "this method of enjoyment is very successful in getting new members as other unions have found out."[42]

Likewise, the British background of many carpenters did not impart disproportionately British-radical impulses to the overall development of carpenters. In fact, the British Amalagamated not only collaborated closely with the AFL Brotherhood,[43] it had to borrow many a leaf from them in union aggressiveness. After all, the British workmen who had fashioned the Amalgamated techniques were conventionally straightlaced and reserved: they even stigmatized the Brotherhood's walking delegates as unsavory Yankee firebrands. Finally resorting to the device themselves in an attempt to get some "push" into their own organization, they could not bring themselves to shift without dignifying the office with proper British grace—they changed the name to "business agent".[44]

Collaboration with the Brotherhood did not result in amalgamation for the simple reason that the Amalgamated provided excellent benefit features.[45] This attachment to their organization led the British carpenters to repudiate overwhelmingly all Brotherhood inspired efforts at merger. Intense rivalry broke out in 1912 following a third merger attempt, after which the AFL intervened and moved to have the Amalgamated excommunicated from the labour movement. Despite spirited debates that came close to fist fights on the floor of the local labour council, the "fight to the finish" spirit of the Amalgamated toward the uncommon arrogance of the AFL evaporated when the top officers of both Internationals agreed to a "Yalta" that kept the Amalgamated out of North America.[46]

However, it was not the jurisdictional outcome of this purely factional rivalry that reduced the influence of British-style unionism. The norms of the staid and stolid Amalgamated had already been disrupted by the industrial environment of Toronto. More important than the heat of the jurisdictional battle in 1912 is the light shed by the 1910 struggle between old and young members of the Amalgamated. The older members were willing to accept minor concessions which would set a minimum standard to safeguard their higher wages. The young members demanded a major increase in wages and union power. It is likely that this division between Britons was repeated in other areas.

Toronto carpenters—whether artisans or handymen, whether

British or Canadian—took part in a great political and organizational offensive in the years before the first World War. Although they could draw some valuable insights and traditions from the past, they had to create their new militant methods from their own experience and failures. They had seen their traditional craft methods crumble, unable to control the labour pool or restrain employers. To overcome these weaknesses, they had to overcome the past. Their efforts did not go unrewarded: relative to 1901 wages, they won a whopping 57% increase, the highest in the entire building industry.[47]

It was this 'pragmatic' Canadian experience that was decisive in their development. And, while a spate of jurisdictional disputes testify to the rough edges in their class consciousness, their growth toward a class understanding was among the most rapid and pronounced in the city.

WOODWORKERS

Woodworkers, operating in internationally cost competitve industries, make a revealing comparison with the carpenters. Surprisingly, the thousand or so workers involved in these occupations retained more pronounced artisanal characteristics and conditions than their fellow craftsmen in the building trades. They did not experience the radicalizing effects of organizing a labour force that had broken the mould of orthodox standards.

Raised on traditions of craftsmanship verging on the norms of artistry,[48] woodworkers were loathe to part with their familiar intimacy and separatism. Their lingering craft pride in workmanship was carried over into an exclusive concept of membership in the union. "Initiations every meeting night and the qualifications of each candidate are rigidly enquired into. We have regard to quality more than quantity," a Toronto union correspondent boasted.[49] The same impulse reinforced the fragmenting impact of increased specialization in the trade. One writer noted how "the inroads of machinery, and the rapidly succeeding changes which have brought about altered conditions of the trade have had a greater effect in dislocating established lines than in some other trades". Disunity, secessions and mindless jurisdictional disputes became chronic.[50] A wide-ranging and festive associational life, with countless labour day marches, gala smokers, musical evenings and excursions which they were pleased to note were a credit to their respectability, boosted the closeness of their trade.[51]

A marked artisanal character distinguished their strikes. It was only a quick compromise settlement that kept strikers from calling out the foremen under their control in a 1901 strike-lockout.[52] When 1500 unionists walked out of two firms in 1903, they were spontaneously

joined by 300 sympathizers. A short walkout was enough to block a later wage reduction.[53] They outsmarted themselves in one instance however. When, in the course of a 1904 strike, the Employers' Association discovered that the men were already making more than the negotiated rate by illicit means, the men returned to work on the old basis.[54] They found a strike of young unorganized workers less embarassing: the union came to the pious conclusion that by crossing the picket lines they could teach the youth a pointed lesson about the advantages of formal union membership.[55] Another short strike in the spring won a wage increase and the retention of a fired employee.[56]

The most serious strike took place in the fall of 1906 after the workers asked for a conference to arrange abolition of the contract system, regulation of apprentices and the closed shop. Although the employers were willing to grant a wage increase, they turned matters over to the union-busting Employers' Association, with the aim of breaking the union. "The strike is on and must be waged to its final determination" the union correspondent urged. "The question is whether the employees of the Toronto piano industry shall become slaves to their employers or whether they shall remain free, independent and forsooth intelligent citizens of the Dominion of Canada". He felt confident that the Toronto piano workers "are men in the full sense of the word; they will not sell themselves to Mammon".[57]

Although most of the men had obtained work elsewhere by the end of the month, a riot took place in October which routed the disreputable scabs working in two Toronto Junction shops. According to the union journal, some 250-300 workers had skirted the police who were protecting scabs in the plants and "when the din of battle ceased", the scabs "came out of the fight with many a black eye, bruised face and torn or muddy attire".[58] In resorting to this, they were not carrying out insurrectionary direct action: on the contrary they were acting on their responsibilities as gentlemen and respectable citizens. The strikebreakers had been insulting pickets with "epithets too vile to appear in public print" for some time.

> *The strikers for weeks bore these insults with equanimity. This only seemed to make the strikebreakers more bold. Men thought to be strikers, passing the strike-bound factory, were subjected to the grossest insults. This aroused a sentiment of resentment among the citizens of Toronto Junction many of whom had suffered at the hands of the strikebreakers, being mistaken for strikers .... A majority of the strikers, or about 400, have their homes in Toronto Junction. The strike has been a matter of great interest to the Toronto Junction residents, the strike having seriously*

> *affected the business interests of the merchants. When therefore, Heintzman and Co., who had received special privileges from the Corporation time after time, refused to in any way consider the complaints of their employees and in the way of answer scoured the slums of Europe, Canada and the United States for strikebreakers, to mingle with the respectable citizens and their families and to take the place of the strikers, it needed but little fuel to bring matters to an open rupture. This fuel was supplied by the imported riffraff, the strikebreakers. It must be admitted that the strike has been conducted in a gentlemanly manner. The strikers have behaved themselves, every one of them, like gentlemen. No trouble would have arisen had the Heintzman company desired to or been able to throttle the vile tongues of their despicable strikebreakers.*

Finally under the pressure of lost business, the manufacturers were forced to recognize the union.[60]

All these strikes revealed the insignia of an artisanal union—the sense of responsibility as citizens; the inclusion of foremen in the union; the exclusion of less skilled workers; the immediacy of response to a strike call; the powerful appeal to an aroused manhood. The power of an artisanal worker over his work process is perhaps typified by his ability to deceive employers over his work schedule. This jealously guarded power accounted for the hostility to the classic indices of deartisanalization like the contracting system and the erosion of apprentice norms. It also accounted for the intervention of the unified Employers' Association, a common practice in industries where artisanal prerogatives had to be smashed as a precursor to "modernization".

Activity was more sporadic in the other woodworking trades. The woodworking machinists were generally thought to be poorly organized although they had two strikes in 1901 and 1902, one for wages and hours and another because they thought the union was being discriminated against.[61] Cabinet makers were even more poorly paid than woodworking machinists, but did not strike until 1913.[62] There were 5 brief strikes of picture frame workers between 1903 and 1913, all but one were for wages and hours. The exception was one over the abolition of time sheets.[63]

The conditions of the woodworkers would seem to be a standard recipe of trade union activism. Yet, despite their factory setting and their hardy artisanal origins and strikes and despite the interference of unified Employer Associations, the woodworkers outside the building trades made little substantial contribution to the labour movement as a

whole. They produced only one labour spokesman of any significance, J.E. Virtue, and he left shortly after 1906 to homestead in the west. There is one reference to a member running in municipal politics: he announced his talents at the tail-end of a union meeting, overshadowed by members who gave recitals of "Gentleman Dick of Greys", an exhibition of clubswinging, and solos on the autoharp and harmonica.[64]

The absence of woodworkers from the councils of those concerned with broad labour questions can probably be explained by reference to their diverse industrial situations. Pianoworkers felt strong enough to retain their concept of craft hierarchy and proper relations with their employers without recourse to innovative union or political tactics. The strike was sufficient. The less successful woodworkers, on the other hand, were so atomized, fragmented and isolated that unified action and linkages with the labour movement as a whole were impossible.

The contrast between pianoworkers and carpenters could not be sharper. On the one hand we have artisans; on the other modern wage-workers, totally alienated from their skill and workmanship. On the one hand we have respectable citizens; on the other outcasts. On the one hand, we have sporadic disturbances with employers; on the other we have sustained, embittered organizing. On the one hand we have almost pure craft consciousness; on the other, something approaching class consciousness. The comparison can only highlight the centrality of conditions in the building trades as the generator of carpenter radicalism.

PLUMBERS

The modernization of building technology introduced a number of specialty trades to the industry. Youthful exuberance, unfettered by experience or artisanal proprieties, gave the unions in these trades a brusque hardness. But, tested against an onslaught of anti-union drives, this hardness proved somewhat brittle, lacking the resilience of an off the job fraternity that strengthened artisanal unions. Unshackled by old artisanal nursery stories, these unions had no traditions either to repudiate or overcome. But, lacking that initial brooding reformism of respectable tradesmen, they had to work out their philosophy on the run, untrained in organic world views. Their development was therefore quite different from that of carpenters.

The grasping unionism of plumbers was unorthodox from the start.[65] To the horror of labour spokesmen consumed with legitimizing collective bargaining, they took advantage of the 1902 upsurge in building activity and broke their four year contract, insisting on a new one that was not "forced from us" when "taken by the throat". Because of the boom, the master plumbers had "to bottle up their righteous indignation for some more opportune occasion".[66] In 1905 the industry was

rocked by scandal. The union was involved in an illegal combine which controlled the bids and contracts of members, and enforced a 25% profit margin. In return for a union boycott of non-member employers, the association granted union rates and conditions in their own shops.[67] The exposure of this combine occasioned a moral crisis among the Toronto labour leadership. In essence, the plumbers' agreement expressed the strategy of artisanal consciousness, stripped of its moral vision. The proper outrage of most local leaders was thus highly ambiguous.

Robert Glockling, a longstanding eminence in the labour world, agreed with the desirability of employer self-organization and condoned the arrangement between plumbers and masters. He only condemned the use of the union as a lever to raise prices. Printing trades official Ed Randall was angered that unions were used as a tool to boost prices but nevertheless believed "the closed shop from both sides" to be "an ideal arrangement". Lou Gibbons, business agent for the machinists, thought that all branches of industry should be organized on these lines. He did not object to a union boycott of non-association employers.[68] Business agent Storey of the plumbers simply opined that collective bargaining was better for workers than individual bargaining.[69]

No one charged the plumbers with the unheard of insult—class collaboration. Union leaders were all eager to practice a laundered form of it. Since it was commonly believed that exploitation derived from excessive and unfair competition, rather than the expropriation of surplus value from the labour of the worker, union leaders strove intuitively for vertical organization to restrain competition. The purpose, of course, was to allow all classes to live "like men" and not to "hold up" the public. The whole public would benefit if both parties to industry could come to agreement.

Tortured union activist, Tom Banton, was himself an advocate of the complete organization of employers to facilitate collective bargaining. He knew that the non-unionist—employer or employee—was the real danger to industrial harmony. He nevertheless used his labour column in the *Star* to roast the union for collusion aimed at raising prices. This was immoral, illegal and deprived unionists of the moral authority to criticize trusts, he charged. Given his understanding of economics, his advocacy was not contradictory. He did not think that high wages gained through a united front of the industry would lead to higher prices. Entertaining a view not unlike Social Credit theory, he believed that higher wages created higher demand for goods and a consequent shared prosperity for everyone.[70]

Because all trade union leaders of this "old guard" school shared

this model of vertical organization, they could only denounce the plumbers' combine on disingenuous moral grounds. Failing to understand the labour theory of value and the inherent appropriation of surplus value from the worker, they could not see that graft and corruption were the only cement that could hold antagonistic classes together in vertical combination.

Plumbers were saved from resolving the roots of this moral crisis by the turn of events. Although by 1907 they enjoyed reasonable wages and exercised enormous job control which verged on featherbedding,[71] the bargaining year opened ominously. When 40 unionists quit a firm which hired non-unionists in out of town work, the company insisted it could get along without them.[72] By May the Employers' Association was involved in the negotiations with Toronto's 450 union plumbers. On behalf of the master plumbers, the strident Employers' Association spokesman Merrick issued warlike pronouncements, revelling in the abundance of skilled but unemployed immigrant plumbers who couldn't afford the entrance fee into the union. An agent was sent to England to scour the country for more.[73]

On May 15, open shop notices were posted by all major employers and 500 plumbers struck.[74] The struggle immediately effected a revolution in the plumbers' attitude to the unorganized. Fees were lowered to permit mass recruitment. New members were immediately given strike pay as well as a bonus for joining.[75] Strike leader, James Richards, saw the necessity of recruiting the flood of British immigrants, most of whom were sympathetic to unionism. "Their need is great and the temptation to go to work correspondingly great. Our only course has been to take them into the union and so hold them". With this orientation they recruited 450 new members by September. "Some members of the UA would let these men go to ---" Richards claimed, "but we know the position here and are quite aware that had we not taken them in, we would have had very many of them working in unfair shops and we would have been beaten to a pulp".[76] This local initiative was maintained despite continuous badgering from a parsimonious international leadership concerned only with technical violations of the constitution.[77]

The two forces locked in combat for a year, employer intransigence insured by a heavy bond to the Employers' Association.[78] The strike was marked by the importation of scabs, scuffles on picket lines and at train stations where scabs disembarked, legal battles over the Alien Labour Act and voluntary sympathy strikes in the building trades.[79] Although individual employers sporadically conceded throughout the year, relations were so strained that a meeting between the union and organized employers was not possible until February

1908. Finally, on the partial initiative of the union, a new Master Plumbers and Fitters Association was formed. It immediately signed a two-year agreement with the union guaranteeing union shops and rules.[80] By June, the Employers' Association masters had disbanded.[81]

But this was no rout of the employers; in balance the strike could be considered only a marginal victory for the union. In a major no-holds-barred test of union-employer strength,[82] union plumbers stayed the hand of a concerted, well-timed offensive of the viciously anti-union Employers' Association. Yet, irretrievably on the defensive, the workers were forced to make some concessions. In the early period of the strike, half the membership found work outside the city while another 300 members worked in Toronto and donated 25% of their wages to sustain the 245 men still on the strike role.[83] With the winter recession, however, unemployment was severe even for those employed in fair shops: they had to sustain a swollen membership of strikers, many of whom had considered themselves lucky to pick up odd jobs.[84] As a result, the union's funds were quickly consumed, forcing the termination of strike pay in 1908. In this setting, the union lacked the resources to consolidate its position. When the city's largest employers, the "Big Seven", spitefully continued to resist unionization even after formal termination of the lockout and the dissipation of the Employers' Association, returning strikers began to drift back "driven to that step by sheer need". The union had no alternative but to accept this as long as the firms conceded union rates and conditions.[85] The strike-lockout was at best a pyrrhic victory for the plumbers.

With such an ambiguous end to such a bitter and exhausting fight, the union was demoralized in the following years. Organizer Bruce reported, after a tour of some Toronto sites, that "the indifference of the old members of our local is hard to understand. Ever since the memorable strike of 1907 things have gone hard with us in this city. The large number of men working under any condition for the sake of a job is hard to conceive." This situation was worsened by the secession of a group of steamfitters.[86]

Even the good humoured Richards was feeling overworked[87] and resentful. He began referring to members as prototypes of those who during the strike "paid nothing in but took out all they could."[88] When the 1912 membership only increased by 60, he commented that the Toronto men were "for the most part a bunch of cheapskates."[89]

Richards continued to plead with the International to send in an organizer to help them, and in one letter added, "Our members are growing restive under what a good many believe to be the indifference of the UA... It would be a possible calamity to have that feeling

extend much further."[90] Although the International was slow to send an organizer, they were quick to deal with members who fell behind in their dues. Richard's correspondence was peppered with harassed pleas about the spirit and law of the constitution. "We have been and still are taking in old members at reduced rates, not because we wish to violate the constitution but because circumstances and conditions are such that we are compelled to do so to keep up the fight...", he explained.[91]

The challenges before the plumbers were great. Their failure to rise to them was no tribute to the state of grace common to their sheltered industry, nor to their inclusion in the labour aristocracy. The failure was partially of leadership, although this was most conspicuous at the international level. Bruce understood the need to extend the organization to meet the power of centralized contractors hiring large numbers of skilled and unskilled workers. Both Bruce and Richards were Independent Labour Party activists. The failure of the rank and file to follow them in either endeavour reflects most probably on their exhaustion and demoralization.

IRON WORKERS

Ironworkers had the greatest romantic appeal of the new specialty building trades. Working with the most modern of techniques and machines, employed by large and highly capitalized companies, they were at the same time "floaters" of the type common to the nineteenth century, who relied on sheer "guts" and absolute trust in the physical capacities of their fellow workers on the job. Caught in the contradiction of these uneven developments, the ironworker was to miss receiving his due.

Employers marvelled at their curious mixture of modernity and ancient prowess. "It is a study in sheer nerve and unshaken coolheadedness to watch the score of men aloft on construction work," an *Industrial Canada* reporter marvelled in watching the breakneck construction work of a Canada Foundry gang in Toronto. "They step along narrow beams, girders and ties a hundred or so feet above the ground as nonchalantly as if they were treading the sidewalk on Yonge Street. Fear? They know nothing of it." The foreman even had to warn the men to be careful. The reporter could see a man balancing on a temporary floor "heating rivets at a portable forge. He catches the glowing pieces of iron out of the fire with a pair of tongs and throws them unerringly to the riveters, who connect up the columns at the corner and sides of the building. Every rivet reaches the spot for which it was destined....The aim of these chaps would shame that of a first class ball player."[92] Their awesome choreography did not win the iron workers much respect. Recognizing that the fearless workers

dreaded Mondays, the reporter noted: "The employers throw the blame not on Mondays, but on the previous day off."[93] Nor was the danger of the work recognized in matters of compensation. An employee who sued for damages after falling two flights was denied a claim for failure to use a ladder.[94] Nor were their wages high: replying to their 1911 strike demands for 40 cents an hour, Merrick of the Employers' Association was defiantly negative. "What they have is plenty of muscle; they had better join the police force . . . the uniform wage scale they want is only an excuse to give lazy men as much as skilled labour."[95]

The qualities promoted by the job did not prepare them for their battle with the large companies they faced, such as the anti-union Canada Foundry. The constant danger they faced cultivated certain "macho" virtues. As one ironworker-poet put it:

We had quite a mishap on our job here today,
The gang went to roll a beam out of the way,
It came over on my foot, which started to swell.
Oh, you've got to be spry on Fred Mossop's Hotel.

Each day as it passes, we have all sorts of fun;
Tommy Wells is our superintendent here and keeps us on the run
While Coburn, the cart horse pokes fun at 'Taff' Bell,
Oh, there's lots of good sport here on Mossop's Hotel.[96]

Likewise, it could create a certain fatalism, as reflected in the poetic tribute to a business agent who fell off a bridge to his death:

We cannot tell who may next fall
Beneath those heavy beams,
Someone must be first, but let us all
Prepare to meet our God.[97]

Their solidarity was built on mutual reliance, admiration and the self-help norms of floaters, rather than on the class struggle. A "bridgeman's wife and lover of the sturdy boys who raise the iron and steel" wrote, "I am not a good floater, as travelling makes me ill, so you see I have to stay home. My husband has worked on the Quebec bridge. From there he went to Seattle, Washington and worked for five months, when he was injured. Oh, I do thank the brothers for sticking the way they do, for they took splendid care of him until he was able to come home."[98]

On the job, this spirit translated itself into hard teamwork and exclusiveness. The policy of the Toronto members, it was reported, "is to dig and show their employers that they are worthy of their hire and with the assistance of bosses that are up to date, and who will not

keep a man that will hinder the progress of another, this will undoubtedly make it easier of giving their employers satisfaction...." But when the foreman was short of riveters and hired a gang of low priced men who had been working for an English firm, the unionists gloated that this gang "just lasted a half hour with 'Lou' and we saw their backs. They were Bronchos, and were willing to join the rank and file but did not qualify."[99]

Unlike the carpenters and plumbers, they were unwilling to give up their exclusiveness and organize immigrants and relatively less skilled "competitive" workers. One member suggested the idea of rounding "these people up and get them into a union by themselves, even though they are not getting the union rate; we would work with them until they were in a position where they could get in. At present they are afraid to come into our organization for fear of losing their jobs."[100] Unfortunately for the iron workers, the industry had the same structure as painting and carpentry—it required a few highly skilled men and great numbers of semi-skilled. As their business agent complained to the Board of Education: "Some of your contractors pay their foremen and one or two others the union rate of wages and hire foreign labour to do the balance of the work. These firms doing school board work have not employed over 6% of union men during the past year."[101]

The union conducted four strikes in the period from 1902 to 1910, all of a sympathetic or standard wage and hour nature.[102] They began to fight in earnest in 1911, when 250 struck for 40 cents an hour. Scabs brought in from Montreal provoked a sympathy strike by carpenters and bricklayers; as the scabs could speak no English, the men feared working under the unannounced toss of their hot rivets. The union won its demands after a month.[103]

In 1912, 42 struck in protest against the hiring of incompetent workmen with whom they feared to work. The company claimed that they really wanted a closed shop and refused to be the first union shop. The strike ended with the hiring of scabs and the return to work of some fifteen of the strikers.[104]

In 1913 there was a bitter two month strike over a wage increase. It looked for a while as though there might be a general strike in the trade and in one instance there was a riot, complete with broken heads and flying bricks. The men returned, generally having won the increase.[105]

At times their unionism had a certain rough and ready syndicalism to it. Headstrong individualists, their journal refers to many who just walked off the job. The Toronto business agent, Sam Gamble, was tried for destroying steel rope with acid after the Hamilton Bridge Company sparked a walkout by refusing to discuss a wage increase.[106]

Their journal correspondent thought that the way to deal with the "unmeasurable greed of the capitalist grafter who never earned an honest dollar by the sweat of his brow in all his miserable life" was to build a "tough" union.[107]

But they never overcame the narrow and self-defeating bias toward other men in their occupation. Nor did they play any role in the local labour council. Theirs was the tightly knit solidarity of isolation and marginality. It did not lead to a strong union, to collaboration with the union movement or to cosmopolitan conceptions of strategy. On the contrary, it was malignant with the cancer of exclusivism.[108]

STONE AND GRANITE CUTTERS

Bricklaying and related trades were relatively removed from the problems that plagued other sections of the building trades. A high level of irreplaceable skill allowed them to retain their artisanal prerogatives and outlook as well as a healthy wage-rate.

The practitioners of both the granite and stonecutting trades were relatively new to Toronto. Many stonecutters were rovers who came to Toronto in the nineties to work on the court house and rebuild the University after a fire.[109] Granite cutting was brought to Toronto in 1890 by a solitary Scotsman.[110]

Both groups jealously guarded the integrity and wholeness of their work. The stonecutters resented the intrusion of architects into the building industry and complained that the city hall would be well underway "excepting the architect's desire to be different from all other people...Can not this man be made to drop this Caesar business and go on with the much delayed work?"[111] They were quick to enforce work rules. When an inspector added two men to a workline, they charged him with speeding up and struck.[112] It was on their own initiative that they decided to alter the union's constitutional prohibition of working on machine-cut stone:[113] previously they had been successful in halting it. When six men went on strike protesting the use of imported stone, pre-cut by scabs, the contractor conceded and they returned the next day. Fifty-two stonecutters enforced the rule again in 1905. The strike ended in two days when the company withdrew the machines.[114] The issue was involved again in a 1907 strike.[115] By this time, however, the men were trying to accommodate to the new technology while retaining their traditional job-control.[116] They argued that the International should eliminate these restrictions on machine work since they caused too much trouble.[117]

Their artisanal fraternity bustled with a far-reaching congeniality. There were excursions, baseball games,[118] socials and banquets that showed "the men around here can do more than cut granite".[119] Their care of members extended into death. With tender compassion they

took responsibility for a member who died in New York. Guarding the sad news from his ailing wife, they sent him to the next world with a resolution commending his loyal unionism.[120] Their concept of the integrity of the trade, their unionism and their upright sense of "manhood" were closely interlocked. Several "practical and interesting" speeches were made at one stonecutters' meeting showing that "by a united effort, members of organized labour could always command the respect of their fellowmen".[121] Lamentably, even a granitecutter could sometimes defile this creed of self-worth. The only reason they had any opposition at all was the occasional union man "ready to sell his birthright at any price. It seems strange that in this age when it is so necessary for the toiling masses to unite in their common interests that so many... are prepared to sell their manhood and independence to the highest bidder".[122] No beer-quaffing "manhood", theirs; it was stonecutter Isaac Mills who carried their standard of unalloyed integrity as Toronto's leading labour-prohibitionist of the 1980's.

Their political views, to the extent they were expressed, were carried with an artisanal sense of distinct but not antagonistic classes operating in equilibrium. The labouring class would not achieve legislation in its interest, a granite cutter declared,

> *"until they get brains enough to get into politics themselves and send men of their own class to represent them. Lawyers and capitalists are alright, but their interests are not identical with ours, and we must not expect them to look through our spectacles. We have plenty of thinkers in our own ranks, so let us look beyond the wage question and take our unionism seriously enough to unite for the common betterment of our class."*[123]

In trade matters, the stonecutters were well situated to enforce their wage demands. Although their wages slipped in the slump of the nineties,[124] they were working well above scale by 1901.[125] Their 1902 demand for 41 cents was granted.[126] In 1908, they signed an agreement for 50 cents an hour, with a clause pledging them to no sympathetic strikes.[127] In 1913 the 500 stonemen won 55 cents.[128] The granite workers fared well despite opposition from one of the major firms. Indeed, they virtually drove that firm to bankruptcy by withholding their services from it.[129]

BRICKLAYERS

The bricklayers were also fortunate enough to have irreplaceable skills in an undersupplied job market. Despite the increased use of concrete, which they protested,[130] their skill retained its high value. As one contractor explained, the higher quality of material in use required

more trowel work and greater mechanical skill. So did the more stringent building regulations and supervision of architects.[131]

They were probably the only union in the trade to send a business agent to welcome 60 immigrant bricklayers as a relief to the labour shortage.[132] Once, when asked to send men to Buffalo or Philadelphia, they replied that they did not have enough men to fill vacancies in Toronto.[133]

Bricklayers were able to protect and enhance their job prerogatives and wages. They were early winners of the eight-hour day and jealously guarded control over such matters as inspection.[134] They struck successfully over such issues as firing of foremen or employment of stonemasons for bricklayers work.[135] Their wages rose steadily following the slump of the mid-nineties, when they had to gracefully accept a reduction.[136]

In 1899, they launched their first strike in nine years and won a compromise one-year agreement at 37.5 cents an hour, after a two week walk-out.[137] By 1902, when they conducted a one day strike in holiday spirit, they commanded 42 cents an hour.[138] In 1904 they walked out in sympathy with the labourers, partly out of solidarity with their battle against the Employers' Association, and partially because they could not operate without labourers.[139]

In 1905 they signed a three year agreement prohibiting wildcat or sympathy strikes and granting them 47-50 cents an hour.[140] By 1914 they were organizing for 60 cents but did not have to fight since the firms who offered any opposition employed less than 10% of their over 1500 members.[141]

The well-being of bricklayers was, however, often tenuous. Their work was seasonal. The problem of old age was a serious one in such a strenuous trade. An older worker could only look forward to a pared-down wage scale, specially negotiated for members over 60—a not entirely gratifying way to end a life of labour.[142]

However, their prosperity was sufficient to reinforce their rather notorious craft exclusiveness. As late as 1907 they refused to join the AFL.[143] They did not join the Trades and Labour Congress until 1910.[144] They even opposed the creation of the district labour council, seeing it as a threat to their autonomy[145]: a stance that was widely interpreted as a cover for narrow selfishness.[146] Although they sent three representatives to the Peoples Party,[147] and had at least one prominent and active socialist in their ranks, the comment of a bricklayer to one interviewer is probably more representative: "Oh yes ... socialism is all right enough, but those fellows over there just clearing up and choring around the building, would get about as much as I

would, and their work is not skilled work anyway."[148] The bricklayers' skills offered them a certain shelter whereby they could maintain their interests from a narrow, non-reform, and non-class perspective. They were the closest the building trades had to an aristocracy of labour.

CONCLUSION

The turbulent industrial and political history analysed here does not conform well to the classic portrayal of building trades unionism. The discussion of building trade unions has thus far been monopolized by two self-appointed watchdogs of the industry—industrial relations experts revelling in the stability of labour relations in the 1950's, and "public-spirited citizens" bemoaning the illicit combinations, "hold-up unionism" and even gangsterism that have plagued the industry. In this scenario, building is seen as an industry which is sheltered from national and international competition and which is conducive to new small specialty shops which encourage high labour social mobility. This unusual blunting of class antagonisms has isolated the labour force from the problems of other workers and led to a variety of occupational traits which range from narrow, craft, local and apolitical business unions to labour management relations aimed at stability and reciprocity. [149]

This view fails to come to grips with any of the realities confronted by construction workers. If the Toronto experience is at all typical, the lack of national or international competition did not provide shelter; it left room for cutthroat operators thriving on high competition among workers. Destruction of the skill base and prerogatives of largely artisanally trained and minded workers was only one essential facet of this prescription.

Sharing this objective condition forced on most workers, they also shared their consciousness. Business-unionism did not come naturally to them. Of course, for teleologists who derive satisfaction from tracing the roots of business unionism to the revealing insight that some workers enjoy higher rates of pay, subtle distinctions are not required. But by placing building trades workers in the context of the working class movement of the time, it becomes immediately apparent that they approached their industrial condition with the same outlook, prejudices and predispositions of other artisanally trained workers. Like printers, machinists, cigarmakers and others, they had to make a painful adjustment. Until they overcame their old methods, self-definitions and strategies, building trades workers nursed many a hangover in their efforts to roll back the unfolding process degrading their craft. When this was successful, as was the case with carpenters and to a

lesser extent with painters, it resulted in a high level of class and radical consciousness.

In their efforts to uphold and advance their living standards, they offered the location for dramatic clashes between organized labour and capital. Because any form of labour organization could thwart a wagecutting drive, there was a strong tendency for wage issues to be transformed into sharp confrontations over fundamentals. Thus, sheetmetal workers became a *cause célèbre* of the entire labour movement as a result of their rather inauspicious strike against the Metallic Roofing Company. Fearing any limitation on management privileges, the company firmly resisted union recognition and thus won the sympathy of the organized capitalist class when they "reasonably refused to turn over their factory" to the union. When the unsuccessful strikers initiated a union boycott on the firm, the company moved to secure an injunction against the boycott. Immediately the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, with the assistance of the Employers' Association, lined up against the organized labour movement in a major legal battle to test whether union strike action could be held accountable for a company's losses. The union was found guilty in 1905 and fined $7,500, an ominous ruling that was confirmed in the Court of Appeals in 1907. In 1908 the union won a reversal at the Privy Council, winning a landmark decision in the right to strike, a "Taff Vale" of Canada. [150]

While the attempted victimization of sheetmetal workers in particular was probably coincidental, the choice of a building trades union for this kind of battle was not. Carpenters, painters and plumbers among others could vouch that the search for labour's jugular was congenital to the industry. As the most powerful, organized and aggressive section of the labour movement, the building trades were frequently chosen as a battleground to test the relation of forces between capitalists and workers and probe and puncture the weaknesses of the entire labour movement. Because of the strength of the building trades unions, this invariably required the intervention of the Toronto-wide organization, the viciously anti-union Employers' Association. This in turn inevitably meant prolonged and bitter strikes which involved the entire community. These strikes brought everything from law to immigration policy to the fore. It was for this reason that the building trades were not a school for localized self-interest. It was virtually impossible for a building trades union to be an island unto itself. That is why—along with the garment workers—they were the most politicized and radically inclined of the trade groupings in Toronto. [151]

Nevertheless, despite the powerful impulses toward unity and homogeneity, the building trades remained a crazy quilt rather than a synthesis of conditions. No easy postcard image of their objective or

subjective condition is possible. The industry was diverse enough to destroy some artisanal patterns while allowing others to persist; equally, it was innovative enough to have trades with no artisanal tradition. Mirroring this diversity in objective condition, we can find certain trades which cast off their craft prejudices in favour of militant organization and in some cases political class consciousness: in others, for a variety of reasons, workers clung to more exclusivist norms. Not only did this differential rate of "modernization" generate diversity of condition, the dispersal of the workforce into a variety of temporary work sites tended to reaffirm this fragmenting tendency. This tendency was magnified by the business agents, a social group with some interest in this dispersion. Robert Christie refers to them as the key to the conservatism of the building trades, comparing them to medieval barons who would surrender all living comforts to construct huge and dismal castles.[152]

Thus, although the building trades were strike prone—news of trouble was like a harbinger of spring, one writer noted—these tradesmen were not able to overcome the fragmentation and generate collaboration on a significant or sustained level in the industry as a whole. As one activist put it, "if the angel Gabriel were to administer affairs of the building trades, he could not please all parties." Jurisdictional disputes were as likely as sympathy strikes. Indeed, all of the attempts to construct cross-trade organizations which could sponsor coordinated action were dismal failures.[153]

This profound limitation on the fighting capacities and the industrial consciousness of building trades workers was not an outgrowth of the sheltered nature of the industry or a reward for prosperity. On the contrary, for all the power that isolated strikes seemed to confer, the skilled building tradesmen were unable to maintain in 1913 the standard of living they "enjoyed" at the turn of the century.[154] Ironically, when released from these industry-imposed restrictions, building trades workers were able to express a broader outlook in politics. Their generally high degree of political interest and activism was no doubt a response to common problems they all shared. The extremely high accident rate in the industry made government inspection of safety and workmen's compensation important matters for all. Likewise they all shared a common interest in union rates for public construction, a persistent theme of Toronto's successful labour municipal slates.

Despite the inability of the building trade workers to transcend and extend the occupational basis of their solidarity in the union field, the need for a reasssessment of the nature of building trades unionism remains compelling. It is crucial to see the problems of the building trades in the context of the problems faced by the working class as a whole. It is likewise important to see many of its impulses as they

relate to the common tendencies of the labour movement as a whole, particularly in this period in terms of a widely-held artisanal strategy. Yet it is necessary to see the unevenness of their development as it relates to factors ranging from relative privilege to ability to control the labour pool. It is in this context that one must judge the range of world views that the industry could produce. On an international scale, they go all the way from George Meaney, a one time plumber who expresses one extreme tendency in the labour movement, to *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, a world-famous socialist classic that came directly from the painting trade. Today, as building trades workers struggle for full employment and union autonomy for Canadian locals, as they collide with business and government cutbacks and the arrogance of the U.S.-appointed roadmen, perhaps they will lay claim to the traditions of their industry in the not-so-distant past.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Canada, Sessional Papers, 1896, No. 61, *Report Upon The Sweating System In Canada*, p.50.

[2] 1905 building figures were a 448% advance over 1900; 1910 figures jumped 104% again and climbed another 28% by 1913. *Toronto, Canada, Facts and Figures*, compiled by the Board of Trade of the City of Toronto, June, 1914; see also *Globe* Jan. 2, 1899; *Labour Gazette* (henceforth LG), Feb., 1905, p. 812; WS Dinnick, *Tremendous Toronto*, (Dovercourt 1914).

[3] The term is used in *Industrial Banner* (henceforth IB) Feb. 23, 1914.

[4] *Star*, July 16, 1901; *Mail and Empire* (henceforth ME) July 24, 1901; *Globe*, July 31, 1901; *Star*, July 26, 1901; *Globe* July 26, 1901; The painters experience is roughly similar to that of the carpenters. See their journal, *Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers Official Journal* and coverage in the daily press, especially in the spring of 1902, the spring and summer of 1903 and the spring of 1910.

[5] H. Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital, The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, (New York, 1974) *passim*.

[6] B.McEvoy, "Technical Education in Canada", in *Canadian Magazine*, (November 1899), p. 11.

[7] *Star*, May 13, 1903.

[8] *LG*, June 1901, pp.580-1; C. Heron and B. Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: The Contours and Context of Industrial Unrest in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914" forthcoming, gives comparative data.

[9] *LG*, May 1901, p.468; *ME*, April 25, 1901 and April 29, 1901.

[10] *Star*, April 27, 1901.

[11] *Star*, Jan. 23, April 17, May 1, May 8, May 20, May 23, June 24, July 16, July 18, 1903.

[12] *Star*, April 21, July 21, 1906; *LG*, Sept. 1906, p. 298; *Star*, August 10 and 11, 1906.

[13] *LG*, September 1906, p.299; *Star*, August 18, 1906.

[14] *Star*, April 12, 1902.
[15] *Star*, April 27, 1907.
[16] *The Carpenter*, November, 1907, p.25; *Star*, September 14, 1907; *The Carpenter*, June 1908, p.41; February 1909, p.26; *Star*, May 23, 1908.
[17] *The Carpenter*, November 1910, p.6.
[18] *Lance*, January 22, 1910.
[19] *Star*, March 10, 1910, and April 22, 1910.
[20] *Star*, March 23 and February 3, 1912; *Lance*, April 20, April 23, 1912; The organizing drive is covered in *Lance*, March 16, October 5, May 11, 1912; *Star*, February 24, May 18, November 25, 1912; *Lance*, April 13 and December 28, 1912.
[21] *Star*, February 15, 1913.
[22] *Lance*, March 1, 1913; *IB*, May 16, 1913.
[23] *I.B.*, May 16, 1913; *Star*, June 2, 1913.
[24] *Star*, June 3, 1913.
[25] *Ibid.*, June 6, 1913.
[26] *Ibid.*, June 14, and June 16, 1913.
[27] *Ibid.*, June 8, 1913.
[28] *I.B.*, June 6 and 13, 1913.
[29] *Star*, July 5, 1913.
[30] *Ibid.*, July 14, 1913.
[31] *Ibid.*, December 11, 1913; see also *Star*, December 12 and 18, 1913.
[32] *Ibid.*, March 6, 1914.
[33] *Ibid.*, July 29, 1913.
[34] M. Zeitlin, *Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class*, (New York, 1970), pp.55,64.
[35] *The Western Clarion* for 1908 and *Cottons Weekly* from 1909-1912 listed names of activists, subscription hustlers, etc. The *I.B.* listed members of the Labor Educational Association which I took as a gauge of activism in the Independent Labour Party. Checking these names in street directories gives a very limited sample but still the best available.
[36] *Toiler*, September 4, 1903.
[37] *Canadian Courier*, September 20, 1913.
[38] *Star*, March 3, 1905.
[39] *Ibid.*, October 12, 1907.
[40] There was one reference to a two day work stoppage in honour of a brother who fell to his death in *Lance*, May 4, 1912.
[41] *The Carpenter*, April 1911, p.24.
[42] *Lance*, November 19, 1913; for other references to recreation see *Star*, March 1, 1913; *I.B.*, February 14, 1913; *Lance*, November 13, 1912; *Star*, February 25 and March 4, 1911.
[43] *Star*, December 20, 1902; April 23, 1904; April 1, 1905.
[44] *Ibid.*, April 23, 1904.
[45] *Ibid.*, June 8, 1912; April 22, 1905; April 21, 1906; July 7, 1906; July 25, 1912.
[46] *World*, November 3, 1911; *Star*, September 6 and November 11, 1912; May 19 and December 13, 1913; *The Carpenter*, June, 1913, p.36.
[47] C. Heron and B. Palmer, *op.cit.*, worked out these statistics on the basis of a computation of *L.G.* figures.
[48] *Star*, August 15, 1908.
[49] *The International Woodworker*, March 1901, p.32.
[50] *Star*, January 4, 1902; see also *L.G.*, July 1901, p.10; December 1900,

p.146; *Star*, December 13 and December 20, 1902; November 23, 1901; *International Woodworker*, February 1903, p.16; *L.G.*, January 1901, p.208; *Star*, April 20, 1901.

[51] *Telegram*, December 1, 1896; January 6 and February 9, 1897; *Citizen and Country*, August 31, 1900; *International Woodworker*, August 1902, p.87; *M. & E.* October 29, 1902; *Star*, January 13, 1906; *Globe*, February 8, 1901.

[52] *Star*, April 20, 1901; *L.G.* December 1901, p.333; *International Woodworker*, December 1901, p.134; *M. & E.*, November 21 and December 3, 1901; *Globe*, November 26, 1901; *Star*, December 2, 1901; *Globe*, December 4, 1901; *M. & E.*, December 16, 1901; *Globe*, December 19, 1901; *M. & E.*, December 23, 1901; *Star*, December 23, 1901; *M. & E.*, December 24 and December 27, 1901; *LG*, January 1902, pp. 407-8, 413; *Globe*, January 1, 1902; *Star*, January 2, 1902; *International Woodworker*, January 1902, p.3.

[53] Some of the evidence here is contradictory. *L.G.*, June 1901, p.1034; *Piano and Organ Workers Official Journal*, (henceforth *Piano*), August 1903, p.16; *Industrial Canada*, (hereafter I.C.) December 1903, p.288.

[54] *L.G.*, November 1904, pp.462, 510; *I.C.*, November 1904, pp.273-4.

[55] *L.G.*, April 1905, pp.1146-7, 1066; *Star*, March 11, 14, 18, 25 and April 15, 1905; *L.G.*, June 1905, p.1322; *Piano*, April 5, 1905, p.16.

[56] *Star*, April 28, 1906.

[57] *Piano*, September 1906.

[58] *Ibid.*, October 1906.

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] *Ibid.*, September 1906; *Star*, October 27, 1906; *Piano*, October 1906; *I.B.*, November, 1906; *Star*, September 29, November 3, 1906; *L.G.*, November 1906, p. 480; *Star*, November 17, 24, 1906; *L.G.*, December 1906, p. 696; *Star*, December 8, 1906; *L.G.*, January 1907, p. 791; *I.B.*, February 1907, p. 3. These reports may have been overly optimistic as to the conclusion of the strike. See *Star*, August 3, 1907.

[61] *L.G.*, January 1901, p. 208; *Star*, April 20, 1901; *L.G.*, June 1902, p. 763; May, 1902, p. 646; *Toronto District Labour Council*, (henceforth T.D.L.C.) *Minutes*, December 1, 1904, (PAC)

[62] *Lance*, May 24, 1913; *I.B.*, May 16, June 13, June 20, July 4, 1913; *L.G.*, August 1913, p. 9; *Star*, July 19, June 28, April 18, 1913; Earlier references are in *M. & E.*, July 5, 1901; *L.G.*, April, 1903; *Star*, February 28, 1902.

[63] *L.G.*, May 1903, p. 925; March 1904, p. 937; April 1904, p. 1030; May 1907, p. 1300; *Star*, April 29, May 9, 1907; *Lance*, July 19, 1913; *L.G.*, August 1913, p. 199.

[64] *International Woodworker*, December 15, 1900, p. 145.

[65] Early material on the trade can be found in *Star*, March 31, 1902; January 24, 1901; *M. & E.*, January 25, 1901; *Star*, February 2, 1901; *Globe*, March 30, 1901; *Star*, March 30, 1901; *L.G.*, November 1901, p. 266; *M. & E.*, December 10, 1901.

[66] *Globe*, June 18, 1902; *Star*, April 19, June 18, July 5, 1902; see also *Telegram*, March 10, 1902; *Globe*, June 10, June 18, June 28, 1902; *Star*, July 3, 1902; *L.G.*, August 1902, p. 108; *Star*, June 20, 1902; *Monetary Times*, July 11, 1902.

[67] *Star*, October 17, November 25, 28, and 29, 1905.

[68] *Ibid.*, October 17, 1905.

[69] *Ibid.*, November 25, 1905.

[70] *Ibid.*, October 21, 1905.
[71] *Saturday Night*, May 18, 1907.
[72] *Star*, March 18, 1907.
[73] *Ibid.*, May 11, 1907.
[74] *Ibid.*, May 15, 1907.
[75] *Ibid.*, July 19, May 16, and May 17, 1907.
[76] Richards to Dooley, September 16, 1904, p. 244; *Letterbooks, United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry*, 1905-1912, PAC. (henceforth *Letterbooks*)
[77] *Letterbooks*, Richards to Ribbles, January 18, 1908; Richards to Love, January 2, 1909, p. 673; Richards to Dooley, February 1, 1908, pp. 506-9; Richards to Alpine, April 4, 1908, pp. 531-3.
[78] *Letterbooks*, November 22, 1907, p. 413; *I.B.*, February 1908.
[79] *Star*, May 30, June 1, June 14, June 26, July 29, Sept. 26, and Sept. 27, 1907.
[80] *Letterbook*, May 13, 1908, p. 563; *Star*, May 9, 1908; *Letterbook*, April 21, 1908, pp. 545-6.
[81] *Letterbook*, June 8, 1908, pp. 570-1.
[82] *IB*, March 1908.
[83] *Star* July 23, 1907; *LG* August 1907, p. 229.
[84] Richards to Dooley, *Letterbooks*, Feb. 1, 1908, pp. 506-8.
[85] Richards to Harris, *Letterbooks*, June 25, 1908, pp. 595-9.
[86] *Plumbers and Steamfitters Journal*, Dec. 1911, p. 20; Dec. 1908, p. 15.
[87] *Letterbook*, June 21, 1909, p. 725.
[88] *Ibid.*, Sept. 9, 1909, p. 744.
[89] *Ibid.*, March 4, 1912, p. 929.
[90] *Ibid.*, Richards to Burke, April 18, 1910, p. 799.
[91] *Ibid.*, Richards to Burke, August 18, 1910, pp. 818-9. See also *Plumbers and Steamfitters Journal*, August 1913.
[92] *I.C.*, September 1910, pp. 142-3.
[93] *L.G.*, 1910, p. 1067.
[94] *Ibid.*, February 1908, p. 1023.
[95] *Star*, May 2, 1911.
[96] *Bridgemen's Magazine*, April 1907, p.211.
[97] *Ibid.*, October 1911, pp.691-2.
[98] *Ibid.*, March 1907, p.147.
[99] *Ibid.*, November 1906, pp.16-7.
[100] *Ibid.*, October 1908, p.692.
[101] *News*, February 10, 1912.
[102] *L.G.*, July 1902, p.52; *Star*, March 31 and June 7, 1902; *L.G.*, June 1903, p.1033; *Star*, May 8, 1903; April 26, 1907; *M. & E.*, June 3, 1907.
[103] *Star*, May 1, 15, 20, 22, and June 1, 1911; *L.G.*, June 1911, p.1351.
[104] *L.G.*, May 1912, p.1108; March 1912, p.900; *Lance*, February 24, 1912; *Star*, February 17, 1912.
[105] *Lance*, May 24, and May 10, 1913; *Star*, July 19, 1913 and October 1, 1913; *L.G.*, August 1913, p.198.
[106] *Star*, August, 13, 1913.
[107] *Bridgemen's Magazine*, February 1906, p.28.
[108] This aspect of a socially isolated workforce is only one feature that is overlooked in the Kerr-Siegel hypothesis on the inter-industry propensity to strike. For a summary of this thesis and a general demolition, see E. Shorter and C. Tilly, *Strikes in France 1830-1968*, (Cambridge 1974).

[108] *M. & E.*, May 1, 1899; *Star*, May 1, 1899.
[110] *Granite Cutters Journal*, (henceforth *G.C.J.*) May 1911, p.17.
[111] *Telegram*, February 19, 1897.
[112] *Globe*, October 1, 1897.
[113] *Globe*, July 30, 1901; *L.G.*, August 1901, p.127. *Star*, August 3, 1901; *Stone Cutters Journal*, (henceforth *S.C.J.*) January 1903, (report of 1902 convention); *Star*, July 27, 1901; *M. & E.*, July 27, 1901.
[114] *Star*, November 6, 1905; *L.G.*, December 1905, pp.632, 670; *M. & E.*, November 7, 1905; *Tribune*, November 11, 1905.
[115] *L.G.*, July 1907, pp.99, 102-3; May, 1907, p.1299; Eighth Report of the Bureau of Labour, in *Sessional Papers*, 1908, vol. 11, pp.237, 240-1.
[116] *Star*, July 13, 1907.
[117] Stonecutter's Convention, 1908, p.8. I do not know the effects of accepting these conditions. It has been reported that dust diseases led to death within eight years; *Hamilton Spectator*, August 25, 1887, which Bryan Palmer brought to my attention.
[118] *S.C.J.*, August 1902, p.7.
[119] *G.C.J.*, January 1909, p.18; February 1910, p.9.
[120] *Ibid.*, March 1906, p.9.
[121] *Telegram*, January 9, 1897.
[122] *G.C.J.*, May 1907, p.10.
[123] *Ibid.*, January 1912, p.19.
[124] *M. & E.*, May 1, 1899; *Star*, May 1, 1899.
[125] *M. & E.*, April 19, 1901; *Globe*, April 19, 1901; *L.G.*, May 1901, p.468.
[126] *L.G.*, May 1902, p.646.
[127] *Star*, February 22, 1908.
[128] *Ibid.*, February 11, 1913.
[129] Their trouble with this firm, complicated by a union secesion movement, can be traced in *L.G.*, February 1906, p.923; *G.C.J.*, March 1906, p.9; May 1906, p.9; June 1906, p.8; September 1906, p.10; August 1909, p.8; September 1907; March 1909, p.8; February 1908, p.8; March 1911, p.17.
[130] *Globe*, December 7, 1904; *Star*, November 15, 1905.
[131] *Ibid.*, December 14, 1901.
[132] *Ibid.*, October 12, 1904.
[133] *Star*, July 9, 1902.
[134] *M. & E.*, August 21, 1901.
[135] *L.G.*, May 1903, p.926; September 1903 *Star*, August 15, 1903
[136] *Telegram*, April 22, May 1, May 9, 1896.
[137] *M. & E.*, May 1, 1899; *Globe*, April 24, 1899; *Star*, May 13, 1899; *Globe*, May 1, 1899.
[138] *Star*, March 15, 1902; *Globe*, March 19, 1902; *Star*, March 12, April 29, May 1, May 2, 1902, and May 3, 1902.
[139] *L.G.*, October 1904, p.398; T.D.L.C., *Minutes*, September 8, 1904.
[140] *Star*, April 29, 1905.
[141] *Ibid.*, April 18, 1913; May 19, June 12, June 17, and June 24, 1914.
[142] *Ibid.*, April 18, 1914.
[143] *M. & E.*, July 29, 1907.
[144] *Star*, October 15, 1910.
[145] *Ibid.*, April 27, 1901.
[146] *Ibid.*, July 19, 1902.
[147] *Ibid.*, October 20, 1900.

[148] C.L. Shaw, "A Day With the Workingman", in *Canadian Manufacturer*, vol. 20, p. 255.

[149] R.E. Montgomery, *Industrial Relations in the Chicago Building Trades*, (Chicago 1927); G.W. Bertram, *Consolidated Bargaining in California Construction: An appraisal of twenty five years experience*, (Los Angeles 1966); F.L. Ryan, *Industrial Relations in the San Francisco Building Trades* (Norman 1935); G. Strauss, "Unions in the Building Trades, a case study", in *University of Buffalo Studies*, 24, 2 (June 1958); "The plumbers—job conscious unionism" in J. Seidman, *The Worker Views His Union*.

[150] *Globe*, March 15, 1901; *Star*, May 11, 1901; *Globe*, June 28, July 5, 1901; *M. & E.*, July 6, July 9, 1901; *Star*, July 3, July 13, 1901; *L.G.*, June 1906, p.1321; *Star*, May 18, 1912; *L.G.*, May 1914, p.1341; *Sheet Metal Workers Journal*, September 1914, pp.325-6; *L.G.*, July 1914, p.127, *Star*, August 27, September 10, 1902; *Globe*, August 28, September 4, September 12, 1902; *Star*, October 11, November 16, December 6, 1902; *Toiler*, April 9, 1903; *Star*, November 18, October 28, 1905; *Tribune*, January 13, 1906; *I.B.*, December, 1907; *Star*, April 22, 1907, October 26, May 5, 1905; *M. & E.*, April 23, 1907; *Star*, July 16, February 8, July 18, 1908; *I.C.*, November 1902, p.204.

[151] The computation was drawn up on the same basis as for the carpenters, only substituting trade for occupational categories.

[152] R. Christie, *Empire in Wood*, (Ithaca 1956) pp.66, 101.

[153] This discussion draws on: *Telegram*, March 10, 1896; January 12, 1897; *M.E.* December 10, 1901; *Star* March 1, 1902; *Globe* March 11, 1902; *Star* June 1, 1903; *L.G.* January 1905, pp.742-4; *Star*, February 1, March 10, April 19, 1905; December 1, 1906; February 25, 1911; *Lance*, November 23, 1912.

[154] C. Heron and B. Palmer, *op.cit.*, based on compilations from *L.G.*, shows stonecutters increasing their wages by 24% from 1901-1913; bricklayers by 24%; carpenters by 57%; painters by 23%; plumbers by 45%. Meanwhile the cost of living had increased by 45.1% and rents went up 66.9%.