

The International Labour and Radical History Pamphlet Collection at Memorial University of Newfoundland

Michael Lonardo

Volume 34, 1994

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/ilt34rr03>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Lonardo, M. (1994). The International Labour and Radical History Pamphlet Collection at Memorial University of Newfoundland. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 34, 211–215.

The International Labour and Radical History Pamphlet Collection at Memorial University of Newfoundland

Michael Lonardo

IN THE SPRING 1990 issue of *Labour/Le Travail* Greg Kealey alerted readers to the existence of a radical pamphlet collection at the University of Prince Edward Island.¹ The pamphlets had arrived at the University Library as part of its purchase in 1970 of the stock of the Blue Heron Bookstore in Toronto. It was suggested that the collection had remained unorganized during the succeeding years because the Library's interest had been primarily in the literary titles. Perhaps it is not surprising therefore that subsequent to Kealey's visit the University Librarian at UPEI approached his counterpart at Memorial University and offered to sell the Tim Buck titles included in the collection. I was asked to prepare a response to the offer and I recommended the purchase, noting that it represented a rare opportunity to acquire a significant body of the work of a leading member of the Communist Party of Canada, spanning almost 40 years. By summer 1991 the Queen Elizabeth II Library had acquired the Buck pamphlets (along with an indication from the UPEI University Librarian that the Library would be willing to part with the rest of the collection as well) and by fall 1991 they had been catalogued and placed in the Rare Books area of the Library.

The collection consists of 64 titles, plus five duplicates. Two of the titles acquired, that do not appear in Weinrich's bibliography of Buck's work,² are published platforms of the Labor-Progressive Party, each of them containing a

¹Gregory S. Kealey, "Radical Pamphlets at the Library of the University of Prince Edward Island," *Labour/Le Travail*, 25 (Spring 1990), 199-200.

²*A Better Canada, to Fight for, to Work for, to Vote for: Electoral Platform of the Labor-Progressive Party* (Toronto 1945); *Canadian Independence and People's Democracy: Program Adopted by the National Committee of the Labor-Progressive Party, February 1952* (Toronto 1952); Peter H. Weinrich, *A Select Bibliography of Tim Buck, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Canada* (Toronto 1974).

Michael Lonardo, "The International Labour and Radical History Pamphlet Collection at Memorial University of Newfoundland," *Labour/Le Travail*, 34 (Fall 1994), 211-5.

foreword by Buck. Another item consists of a single issue of the *Marxist Review* (December 1959) that includes the keynote speech by Buck at the 16th National Convention of the Communist Party. In total the Library at Memorial now holds 61 of the 99 titles, other than periodical titles and broadsides, listed in Weinrich. Of these, Weinrich notes that 22 are scarce, 15 are uncommon, and three are rare. In *Tim Buck Answers Critics* (1942), the text of an address by Buck on the occasion of the 71st birthday of A.E. Smith, the General Secretary of the National Council for Democratic Rights, is reprinted. The NCDR had been formed by the party after the Canadian Labor Defence League had been banned in June 1940, to lobby for the release of interned members and the removal of the ban on the party. In his address, Buck praised the release of all the internees, but one, called for the lifting of the ban, as recommended by a Special Parliamentary Committee, and answered critics who felt the ban should be kept in place partly because of the opposition of the Catholic Church to the communists. In a *Letter to the Party* (1948), Buck urged party members to prepare for the upcoming federal election by launching a summer campaign against the King government on the issues of peace, price control, higher wages, and democratic liberties. He also advocated a united front with the CCF and labour-farmer organizations, and enunciated the party's policy of concentrating its campaign on seats it felt confident of winning, namely Toronto-Trinity and Montréal-Cartier. In *Canada's Opportunities* (1958), a reprint of Buck's report to the National LPP Committee, he criticized both the Liberals and the Conservatives for their "subordination of Canada's economic development and foreign trade to the insane obsession with war which characterizes US imperialism." Instead, he advocated independent economic and political policies based on "peaceful co-existence" with the socialist countries.

As important as the Buck pamphlets are, however, they represented only a fraction of the total collection at the Robertson Library. In the summer of 1992, therefore, I made a trip to Prince Edward Island to examine the rest of the pamphlets. They totalled about 2,700-2,900 titles (including two dozen monographs and scattered issues of periodical titles), the overwhelming majority published between 1920 and 1970. After recommending its purchase, the collection was shipped to the Queen Elizabeth II Library a few weeks later.

On first examination of the collection in Prince Edward Island it was obvious that a significant part of it could not be characterized as "radical" material. The first task, therefore, was to go through the entire collection deleting those titles. (Although not forming part of the collection, they will be added to the Library's general collection). While publications offering the words of individuals like Mackenzie King and George Drew could hardly be considered radical, it is clear why these items, praising the allied war effort, might make it into such a collection in the years after 1941. Nevertheless, it was decided that including mainstream material that happened to be in agreement with the radical position at the time would make the collection potentially unmanageable, since it is envisioned that the collection will be added to over the years. Nevertheless, much of this material

remains as an important supplementary source to the radical pamphlet collection itself.

What remains is about 2,200 pamphlets representing what may be broadly characterized as leftist opinion, including communists of various stripes (Stalinists, Trotskyists, Maoists, government publications of the Soviet Union, China, North Korea and Vietnam), socialists, liberal reformers, trade unionists, civil libertarians, and anti-war activists. Into this political spectrum fall authors like Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Mao, Earl Browder, William Kashtan, Sidney Webb, Bertrand Russell, Ramsay MacDonald, and James Endicott, with socialists and communists represented in greater numbers. While the majority of titles were published after the Russian revolution, there are about seventy items from the earlier period, many of them publications of the Fabian Society. And although there are some titles in French, German, or Spanish, the bulk of the material is English-language, including a significant number published by the Foreign Languages Press in Beijing and the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow.

While only 10-15 per cent of the titles have Canadian content, obviously, for anybody studying Canadian radicalism, all of the titles are relevant. Of the non-Canadian titles, the countries of origin are primarily the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain, and China. Topics represented in the collection include socialist theory and practice, critiques of capitalism, war and peace, labour and the role of unions, life and politics in the Soviet Union and China, international communism, numerous reports, platforms, and resolutions of various Communist parties, anti-Trotskyist literature, the split between China and the Soviet Union, the war in Vietnam, African-Americans, and Third World liberation.

In addition to the works by Buck, leading Canadian communists whose writings appear in the collection include Stewart Smith, *Has Chamberlain Saved Peace?* (1938); Stanley Ryerson, *Why be a Doormat* (1948) and *Which Side Are You On? A Question for Messrs. Coldwell, Lewis and Millard* (1949); William Kashtan, *Why Canada Should Quit NATO* (1969); Leslie Morris, *New Jobs Through New Markets* (1962) and *The Story of Tim Buck's Party* (1939); Dorise Nielsen, *Democracy Must Live* (1940); Nelson Clarke, *Two Nations, One Country* (1965); Jacob Penner, *The Crisis in Municipal Government* (1960); and Sam Carr, *The True Face of the Enemy* (1943). Also included are a few "anti-radical" titles such as a pamphlet by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce entitled *How Communists Operate! A Brief Memorandum on Communist Tactics* (1948).

International radicals represented in the collection include Daniel DeLeon, *Two Pages From Roman History* (1915); Earl Browder, *The 1940 Elections: How the People Can Win* (1939), *Traitors in American History: Lessons of the Moscow Trials* (1938), *Unemployment Insurance, the Burning Issue of the Day* (1935); William Z. Foster, *World Capitalism and World Socialism* (1941), *A Message to America's Coalminers* (1947); Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Woman's Place in the Fight for a Better World* (1947); Carl Ross, *Let Freedom Ring for Earl Browder* (1942); Jacques Duclos, *La lutte pour une democratie veritable* (1965); Betty

Gannett, *The Communist Party and You* (1947); Pettis Perry, *The Communist Party: Vanguard Fighter for Peace, Democracy, Security, Socialism* (1953); Georgi Dimitrov, *Working Class Unity—Bulwark Against Fascism* (1935); James Cannon, *Leon Trotsky: Memorial Address "To the memory of the old man"* (1940); Howard Fast, *Three names for Fascists* (1947); Vyacheslav Molotov, *Thirty-one Years of the USSR* (1948); Sergei Eisenstein, *The Soviet Screen* (1939); Harry Pollitt, *How to Win the Peace* (1944); Anna Louise Strong, *Modern Farming—Soviet Style* (1930); James Ramsay MacDonald, *Protocol or Pact: The Alternative to War* (1925); Petr Kropotkin, *An Appeal to the Young* (1925); Grace Hutchins, *Children Under Capitalism* (1933); and Anna Rochester, *Profit and Wages* (1932).

Other titles of interest include Paul Robeson, *Forge Negro-Labor Unity for Peace and Jobs* (1950), a reprint of the text of an address to the National Labor Conference for Negro Rights in which he criticized Truman for the oppression of African-Americans in the United States as well as the use of the Marshall Plan abroad. In *Spain and Peace* (1952), American author Howard Fast, the 1954 winner of the Stalin Peace Prize, applauded the 1951 general strike in Barcelona and criticized the Truman administration for its alliance with Franco. Also included in the collection is a pamphlet detailing the indictment, evidence, speeches, and verdict in the case of Francis Powers, the U-2 spy pilot shot down over the USSR in 1960—*The Powers' Case: Material of the Court Hearings in the Criminal Case of the American Spy-Pilot Francis Gary Powers* (1960). And in a 1932 pamphlet entitled *Spying on Workers*, Robert Williams Dunn offered an account of the use of government and company spies in the ranks of labour, as well as the use of stool pigeons by union officials against militants.

Over the years the Queen Elizabeth II Library has acquired a number of individual items and microform collections of radical/left literature to support teaching and research. For example, the Library has purchased *Pamphlets on Socialism, Communism, Bolshevism, etc. 1849-1931* (Library of Congress, 1968) consisting of 164 items in English, French, and German by authors such as Marx, Engels, Eugene Debs, Upton Sinclair, and Emma Goldman. Other collections purchased include *British Labour History Ephemera: 1880-1926* (World Microfilms Publications, 1973-1977), containing more than 1500 pamphlets devoted to topics as diverse as anarchism, the Paris Commune, critiques of capitalism, the poor laws and working conditions by authors like Edward Aveling, William Morris, J. Keir Hardie, and Edward Bellamy, and the *Labour Research Department: Books and Pamphlets 1916-1984* (World Microfilms Publications, 1977). The Department was founded in 1912 by the Webbs as a research organization to publish books and pamphlets on contemporary issues that concerned the labour movement. Finally, the *Socialist Party of America Papers 1897-1964* (Microfilming Corporation of America, 1975), includes about 400 pamphlets distributed by Socialist organizations, primarily dating from the period 1900 to 1940.

In the last few years the Library has continued to acquire material which have added depth and breadth to its holdings. Unquestionably, the most important acquisition has been the purchase of a virtually complete run of the theoretical journal of the Communist Party of Canada, *National Affairs/National Affairs Monthly/Marxist Review/Marxist Quarterly/Horizons* (1944-1966). In conjunction with the acquisition of this collection, the purchase of the UPEI collection, including the Buck pamphlets, gives the Library an important source for the study of radical politics in the twentieth century, certainly the best in the region. Furthermore, the size of the collection and its international focus, in addition to making it a valuable collection in its own right, also makes it an important complement to the Robert S. Kenny collection at the University of the Toronto, and collections at the National Library and National Archives in Ottawa.

For those interested in the radical pamphlet collection, access to the catalogue of holdings is available through the Internet. In order to connect to the catalogue, TELNET to "mungate.library.mun.ca" and type "mungate" (in lower case) as your login id. After entering your terminal type (usually VT 100) you will be connected to the Library's catalogue, POLIO. From the list of files available, choose the "International Labour and Radical History Pamphlets". Alternatively, Memorial University's Library catalogue is available through many Campus-Wide Information Systems (CWIS).