

# Labour/Le Travailleur



## Notebook / Carnet

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# NOTEBOOK / CARNET

Andrew Parnaby and Richard Rennie

THIS ISSUE OF *Labour/Le Travail* contains the second instalment of the re-designed Notebook/Carnet. The Notebook/Carnet now welcomes short essays, thought-pieces, and commentaries on issues relating to labour and the working class. Politics, popular culture, current events are all fair game. The ideal length for submissions is 1,000 words or less. The snappier, the more opinionated, the more unconventional the better. Of course, we still welcome calls for papers, conference announcements, and other such notices, so keep sending them in. Submissions should be sent c/o Rick Rennie and Andy Parnaby, Notebook/Carnet, *Labour/Le Travail*, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NF A1C 5S7. Or e-mail them to [rennie@plato.ucs.mun.ca](mailto:rennie@plato.ucs.mun.ca)

## FILM REVIEW

### *Land and Freedom*

Directed by Ken Loach. Screenplay Jim Allen. Score George Fenton. Production Rebecca O'Brien, Parallax Pictures Cooperative. 1995. 110 minutes.

IN ANY DEBATE OVER revolution versus reform there's no doubt about where Ken Loach stands. As Tommy, a character in Loach's *Raining Stones* (1993) shouts while mooning a police helicopter, "You know what you want? A bloody revolution!" *Land and Freedom*, Loach's first period feature, is both a celebration of the Spanish revolution of 1936 and an indictment of Stalin's betrayal of it. The plot and political perspective will be familiar to anyone who's read George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, but in keeping with Loach's focus on working-class people, the central character is David Carne (played by Ian Hart), a young unemployed communist from Liverpool. Inspired by a party meeting where a Spanish comrade appeals for help against Franco's insurrection, David volunteers for the Republican cause. On the train to Barcelona, he joins up with Bernard (Frederic Pierrot), a

French volunteer for the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (POUM), a small left-communist party.

After some sketchy training, Carne finds himself serving with the POUM militia on the Aragon front. There he learns that the war was more than a fight against Franco and his fascist allies from Germany and Italy: it was also a struggle to consummate a revolution begun in July 1936 when workers armed by the anarchist trade union and left-wing parties had crushed the fascist revolt in Catalonia and central Spain. Within weeks experiments in libertarian communism had blossomed throughout the Republican zone as workers occupied and collectivized factories, shops, and rural estates. Loach vividly portrays the revolutionary atmosphere in the fall of 1936. A unionized train conductor overlooks David's lack of a ticket and embraces him as a comrade in the struggle against Franco. At the training depot Maite (Iciar Bollain), a former maid-servant to rich ex-patriots, steps out of the ranks and argues with the training officer. Arriving at the front, David is sharply disabused of his initial impression of the role of the women he finds there, when Blanca (Rosana Pastor) makes it clear that the women fight on equal terms with the men. The arrogance of a smartly groomed fascist officer captured during a reconnaissance patrol provides a sharp contrast to the informality and absence of hierarchy in the militias.

In the central sequence of the film, the POUM unit liberates a village and convenes a meeting at which the peasants vote to confiscate and collectivize the local landowner's estate. But when a tenant farmer objects to the inclusion of his own land in the collective, the debate turns to how to fight fascism. Did a revolutionary movement that alienated the middle classes and foreign capitalist powers endanger the objective of defeating Franco? The position of the Spanish Communist Party (CPE) was that it did. Marginal at the beginning of the war, the membership and prestige of the CPE jumped dramatically as a result of Soviet aid and its insistence on a cross-class popular front alliance. Reflecting the party line, an American volunteer, Gene Lawrence (Tom Gilroy), argues that the Spanish workers must moderate their radicalism in order to retain allies at home and attract them abroad. Bernard and Blanca respond that the communist position is unrealistic: power is in the hands of the people and any attempt to roll back the revolution will destroy the mass enthusiasm that is the republicans' main advantage.

The question is posed again in the spring of 1937 when the republican government calls for the integration of the militias into the new Popular Army, with its traditional command and disciplinary structure. After some debate, the unit votes to retain its revolutionary organization even though this means it will be denied the modern weapons controlled by the communists. David reluctantly sides with the majority, but soon after an injury from a malfunctioning, obsolete rifle underlines the strength of the communist argument. After convalescence in Barcelona, David decides to transfer to the International Brigades. But before he can leave for training, he's drawn into the May street-fighting that marked the final confrontation

between the communist-backed republicans and the anti-Stalinist left. The experience convinces David that the communist strategy amounts to a sell-out of the revolution. Tearing up his party card, he rejoins his POUM comrades on the Aragon front, where defeat and betrayal at the hands of the Popular Army soon follow.

Loach clearly intends his film to be both a correction of the historical record and a comment on left politics in the 1990s. Traditionally soft-pedalled or ignored in liberal and communist accounts of the civil war, the July revolution and its suppression have received the attention they deserve only in the last twenty years. The current relevance of the events depicted in the film is emphasized through its narrative structure. David's story is told in a series of flashbacks as his granddaughter reconstructs his Spanish experience from a cache of old photos, newspaper clippings, and letters home. As the young woman retraces her grandfather's political road, we realize that the radical alternative provided by the heroic Spanish anarchists and Marxists of 1936 is not dead. The message is particularly welcome at a time when the left is rushing to shed its socialist principles in favour of neo-liberalism. Released during Tony Blair's campaign to gut Labour's traditional commitment to public ownership, *Land and Freedom* offers an implicit critique of "New Labour" and similar developments in other left-wing parties.

Those familiar with Loach's earlier films will recognize his distinctive style in *Land and Freedom*. Filmed on a budget of only \$5 million, Loach's careful recreation of situations and reliance on improvisation give *Land and Freedom* a spontaneity usually lacking in period features. Most of the cast, including the villagers in the film's central scenes, are non-professionals, and Loach made a point of seeking out working-class anarchists and left radicals to play the Spanish, British, Italian, and French militia volunteers of the POUM. It is choices such as these that make the film work, as cinema, as history, and as politics. Five red stars.

Lawin Armstrong  
Simon Fraser University

## PROJECT: REMEMBERING THE MAC-PAPS

THE ASSOCIATION OF Veterans and Friends of the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion, in co-operation with the British Columbia Federation of Labour and the provincial government, is hard at work raising money in order to erect a monument to the BC veterans of the Mac-Paps and the International Brigades. The Association hopes to place one memorial on the grounds of the provincial legislature in Victoria and another at the CPR station in downtown Vancouver — the place where many began their journey to Spain — to commemorate the volunteers' contribution to the fight against fascism. The association's fundraising goal is \$75,000 — of which \$25,000 has already been secured. If you or your union/organization would like to make a donation to this project or require additional information, please contact Tom Kozar

at 3906 Creekside Place, Burnaby, BC V5G 4P9; phone 604-432-9762. All donations are tax-deductible (please indicate if you require a receipt) and should be made out to Association of the Veterans and Friends of the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion — British Columbia Monument Project.

## THE BUSINESS RECORDS OF THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY OF CANADA LTD., 1897-1971

IN THE FALL OF 1997 the business records of the Ford Motor Company of Canada were transferred from the Company's assembly plant in Windsor, Ontario to the archives at the University of Windsor. The records span the period from 1897 to 1971, dating from transfer of the patent and selling rights by the Ford Motor Company of Detroit, Michigan to the Walkerville Wagon Works, now encompassed within the city of Windsor.

The 1897 transfer was intended to avoid the protective tariff imposed on US-made goods by Liberal Finance Minister W.S. Fielding in response to the Dingley tariff, which had eliminated any possibility of free trade between the two countries. By establishing a manufacturing base across the Detroit River in Walkerville, the Ford Motor Company not only avoided high tariffs, but also profited from the opportunity to export automobiles throughout the British Empire. Subsequently, the Ford Motor Company of Canada was founded on 17 August 1904.

The collection consists of ledgers of the account balances of the clients of the Canadian Company; letters and memos relation to various patents and trademarks; customs drawback claims; the expense accounts of the Walkerville Wagon Company; ledgers for accounts receivable, revenue and expenses; payroll accounts for the Walkerville Wagon Company; the bi-monthly payroll for employees working at the Saint John, New Brunswick office from 1915-1917 and 1919-1921; monthly statements of all the Canadian branch operations in Toronto, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Montréal, Vancouver, London, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina and Saint John; and an inventory of all machine tools ordered by the Ford Motor Company of Canada.

A quick perusal of the collection points to its potential usefulness for labour and working-class historians, particularly the hand ledger of the payroll accounts from the early organization of Canadian operations. The bi-monthly payroll for the employees of the Walkerville Wagon Company from 10 January 1902 to the end of 1909 reveals the wage rate paid to each employee of the company, hours worked, any overtime hours over the two-week period, and deductions for lateness. Since the payroll runs over a considerable period of time, nearly five years, historians can trace wage movements, employment levels, turnover, and changes in the composition of the labour force. For historians interested in studying the family economy, patterns of seasonal employment might also be discerned. The ledger is organized according to shop, thus allowing a comparison of the earnings of workers in the various production sectors, specifically, the machine shop, the woodwork shop, the

print shop, the box department, and the shipping department. The first entry for 10 January 1902 also lists the earnings of a stock clerk, one engineer, one watchman, one fireman, and two office workers. At least one of the office workers was a woman. Her name was Grace Falconer, and she apparently was a long-time employee of the Company. The designation "Miss" before her name indicates that she was likely an unmarried woman. When the payroll ledger is compared to the production schedule, also contained in the collection, historians can obtain some indication of variations in the numbers employed to meet the demands for Ford automobiles.

The collection of the Ford Motor Company of Canada also includes the bi-monthly payroll ledger for salaried Head-Office employees in Canada for the period 15 February 1911 to 30 April 1912. Grace Falconer appears in the 15 February 1911 payroll as earning a salary of \$70 per month. Her earnings were in stark contrast to the \$200 per month that Henry Ford was drawing from the Canadian branch of his Company.

Innovations in production and the schedule of production on the "Ford line" might be studied using the ledgers from the Canadian branches and the correspondence pertaining to patents. The production schedules should provide historians with new insights into the managerial initiatives associated with the Fordist regime of mass production at the level of manufacture. An analysis of the inventories of automobile parts and the patents for improvements for automobile manufacturing will further our knowledge of the changing technologies of production.

Labour historians have long recognized the paramount significance of the Fordist regime of accumulation to the 20th-century working-class experience. The collection of business records of the Ford Motor Company of Canada will facilitate more historical study of the early innovations in mass production at the level of the workplace. New insights into workers' struggles to meet the challenges posed by the technologies of mass production both in the workplace and in the family might be gained, particularly if these business records are used alongside other sources such as union records, trade journals, city directories, and municipal tax assessment rolls.

For those interested in the records of the Ford Motor Company of Canada Ltd., access to the catalogue of holdings is available through the Internet at: <http://www.uwindsor.ca/archives/page1.htm>

Alternatively, you can contact Dr. Brian Owens, University Archivist, University of Windsor Archives, Leddy Library, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4.

Christina Burr  
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## APEC: NO PLACE FOR LABOUR

WHEN CANADA HOSTED the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) summit meeting in Vancouver in November 1997 it brought together Heads of State from 18 member economies which between them account for nearly 60 per cent of the world's output and include the economic powerhouses of China, the United States and Japan. The summit's agenda — trade and investment liberalization — was overshadowed by the gathering storm clouds which have now plunged the Asian economies into a major crisis.

APEC has been conspicuous by its absence since the summit and has proved irrelevant in putting together the packages now intended to restore stability in Asia's troubled economies. However, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) prescriptions come from the same medical kit as that used by APEC's leaders to promote their vision of the region. APEC was formed in 1989 and has recently become more active in promoting its own vision of the Asia Pacific region with the announcement of 1994 of its goal to establish free trade and investment flows in the region by 2010 for developed countries and 2020 for developing countries. As such, APEC belongs to a growing list of regional trade and investment initiatives such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Free Trade for the Americas Agreement to which Canada is also a signatory, and fits with the broader vision of economic liberalization supported by the international financial institutions.

As APEC leaders met to liberalize trade and investment, they received plenty of advice from business interests. Indeed, so concerned is APEC to ensure that business interests are the driving force that in 1995 it set up the APEC Business Advisory Council to advise governments how best to meet business' needs and which sectors to de-regulate first. There were, however, many voices and issues that APEC leaders chose not to hear or discuss.

Take, for example, the issue of international labour standards. That is, after governments have removed many of the obstacles to the free flow of investment across national borders, what measures will they be taking to ensure that this does not simply result in a "race to laxity" in which labour standards are continuously eroded? Did the APEC summitters discuss how to ensure that the International Labour Organisation's "core labour rights" — such as the elimination of child labour exploitation, the prohibition of forced labour, freedom of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, and non-discrimination in employment — are observed?

In other world and regional trading fora these issues have been on the agenda and have been the subject of hot debate. The European Union's "Social Chapter" is one attempt to ensure that the elimination of barriers to the mobility of capital does not come at the expense of labour. The political pressures in the US arising from the NAFTA led to a side agreement on labour as well as the environment. At

the World Trade Organisation meeting in Singapore at the end of 1996, inclusion of labour rights in trade agreements was a keenly debated issue. The inclusion of labour rights represents a social-democratic vision of the necessity of re-regulating capitalism and it is not an accident that where social democracy has been strongest — in the European Union (EU) — the incorporation of labour rights in trade liberalization agreements has also been the strongest. Whether or not any of these measures provides significant safeguards for workers is open to dispute but at least the issue is on these agendas. Not so for APEC.

APEC, we are told, works by “consensus” so that “controversial” issues must not be placed on the agenda, even for discussion. Some developing country APEC members view “international labour rights” as a (largely US inspired) strategy to check their export growth and as a “new protectionism.” Rather than devise ways to ensure that developing country exports are fairly treated, APEC’s response has been to refuse to discuss labour rights and thereby to sacrifice workers’ interests. This well suits many APEC members who see the discussion of labour rights as an unjustified interference in their own internal affairs. Thus, the APEC agenda is dominated by “safe” issues such as the harmonization of product standards and customs procedures, and of expedited business visas.

However, while APEC leaders hope that they are building an “open regionalism” which will spill over into other fora, it is not APEC’s commitments to, or achievements in, trade and investment liberalization that distinguish it from other regional arrangements. Its distinguishing feature is rather that it represents the minimalist position on what is required in terms of re-regulation, as the discussion of the place of international labour rights in trade agreements illustrates.

This reflects a broader problem with the conceptualization of the “Asia Pacific region” as used extensively in popular, policy, and academic discourse and epitomized by APEC. It is a conceptualization of “economies,” of goods and capital freely moving around a (now not so) “dynamic” region, an illustration of the benefits of capitalism. It has never been a conceptualization of a region based on citizenship, or on a shared identity, or moral values. Alexander Woodside has written that “in its present form, the Asia-Pacific myth mobilizes the poor of the region for economic production without representing or encouraging their political and social claims.”<sup>1</sup> APEC has simply institutionalized this in its vision of the Asia-Pacific region. So while the APEC leaders announced in November that they had taken more steps to usher in a brave new world of free trade and investment in the Asia Pacific region, we should remember that it is a world in which workers’ rights have not been considered.

Paul Bowles  
University of Northern British Columbia

<sup>1</sup>A. Woodside, “The Asia-Pacific Idea as a Mobilization Myth,” in A. Dirlik, ed., *What Is In a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Boulder, CO 1993), 24.



## SPEECH: JUST UNIONIZE IT!

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT is from a talk given to the Alberta Federation of Labour by Cicih Sukaesih, a former employee and union activist at a Nike shoe factory in Jakarta, Indonesia. In this passage she describes her experiences as an organizer and what the Nike "swoosh" — the company's universally recognized trademark — means to people employed in the factory. Portions of Sukaesih's address were originally published in the September 1997 edition of *Shift* magazine; video tape copies are available from the Alberta Federation of Labour.

"Many young people get into this idea of coolness by wearing the Nike swoosh sign. But for the people who work on the line stitching the signs — the ones you see on the back of the shoes — it means something else. They have to stand up for at least an eight-hour shift. After that, they probably get a half-hour break and then they have to start working again from 6:00 to 9:30. They *have* to do this. They are not given the chance to sit down for their lunch, so they bring their lunch to the workbench and have to eat while they keep stitching. So what the swoosh sign represents to the factory workers is very different from the idea that you see in First-World countries. We call this line the fainting line, because so many people faint from standing up too long and from malnutrition ....

From 1989 to 1993, I worked in a factory that produced Nike shoes. I was fired because I dreamed about a union. Even though we won [a] strike three days after it started, one by one we were called in by the police [for questioning] away from the factory. When I came into the room where I was to be interrogated, there was a pathetic criminal there [and] he was being tortured right in front of me. Just before I left, 10,000 workers went on a long protest march — 24 km round trip from the factories to the parliament house. This is because many companies that produce [goods in Indonesia] still don't pay the new government-regulated minimum wage ....

I'm sure that what we are doing right now is going to give a big lesson to Nike."

## CONFERENCES

THE TWENTIETH ANNUAL North American Labor History Conference will be held at Wayne State University on 15-17 October 1998. The theme of this year's conference is "Labor, Past and Present." It will feature sessions/papers on a wide range of topics as well as comparative and interdisciplinary panels on the "commonalities and differences between the United States and other countries in the practices and fate of the labor movement and labor history." For more information contact the conference coordinator, Elizabeth Faue at Department of History, College of Liberal Arts, 3094 Faculty/Administration Building, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202; phone 313-577-3330.

## LABOUR POLICY IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION of *Administrators of Labour Legislation*, comprised of federal, provincial, and territorial Deputy Ministers of Labour and Heads of Occupational Safety and Health, and the *Canadian Workplace Research Network* are co-sponsoring a one-day conference on the current state of, and prospects for, labour and industrial relations policy in the next century. The conference itself will bring leading labour policy makers together with researchers and practitioners to consider fundamental issues of labour policy in the context of the workplace and labour market changes of the 1980s and 1990s. The conference will be held in Summerside, Prince Edward Island on 23 September 1998. Deadline for submission of research proposals was 6 March 1998.

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