

## The Mill: A Worker's Memoir from 1945 to 1948

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## The Mill: A Worker's Memoir from 1945 to 1948

Alfred Edwards

Introduction by Craig Heron

### *Introduction*

ALFRED EDWARDS IS BACK! Readers of this journal will recall his fascinating story of working-class life in southern-Ontario factory towns in the later 1930s and early 1940s. His tale ended with his enlistment in the Canadian Air Force in 1943. This time the skilled chronicler picks up the story with his return from active service at the end of the war and carries us through the immediate postwar years, during which he became a central figure in his local union in Hamilton. Once again, his reminiscences bring back the small details and the large issues of a worker's experience in this important transitional period.

When Edwards stepped down from a bus in Hamilton in September 1945, he was one of the thousands of demobilized servicemen who had to pick up the traces of their former civilian lives and to assess the changes that had taken place in their absence through the lenses of their military experience. As he tells us, there were many men from the Canadian Air Force who were troubled and upset by what they found. A lot had changed, but a lot was still the same. Full employment in the war economy had apparently not massively improved the standard of living of the families left behind. In the factories, hours were still extremely long, and, in the textile industry where Edwards got back his old job as a knitter, skilled workers still had to try to get the best work out of aging machinery. Much of the prewar popular culture had been curtailed during the war. One former airman was particu-

Alfred Edwards, "The Mill: A Worker's Memoir from 1945 to 1948," *Labour/Le Travail*, 43 (Spring 1999), 171-94.

larly bitter that he had been better treated in the armed forces than in the mills and on the streets of working-class Hamilton. Some of these men were clearly prepared to organize themselves to improve their social and economic life in the city. The meeting of veteran airmen that he describes would find louder echoes in the city's major strikes the next year.<sup>1</sup>

Edwards' memories are particularly sharp about the changes in the relations of production. To his surprise, he found a union well-established in the mill where he had played a leadership role in getting one recognized back in 1938. Yet, although it had freedom to operate openly without fear of management attack, it seemed weak and too closely controlled by company officials for Edwards' comfort. It operated independently from any of the national or international organizations, and its leaders in the mill knew nothing about the larger labour movement. The existence of such a compromised local union in 1945 suggests what gaping holes still remained in the famous wartime collective-bargaining legislation, PC 1003, through which employers could continue to exercise effective control over their employees' organization.<sup>2</sup> Edwards tells us that the company also toyed briefly with the much-vaunted union-management Production Committees to pull the union even closer into its orbit.<sup>3</sup>

Because of his previous experience, Edwards was recruited almost immediately to an executive position in the local union. He was soon swept up in the exhilarating mood of labour confrontation that erupted in working-class Hamilton during 1946. With the dramatic strikes at Stelco, Westinghouse, and the *Spectator* as backdrop, the independent union at the National Knitting Mills became Local 860 of the Textile Workers' Union of America, an affiliate of the industrial-unionist Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) and of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the United States - a move that Edwards applauded and facilitated, on the basis of his prewar experience with the All-Canadian Congress of Labour.<sup>4</sup> We get

<sup>1</sup>See Robert Henry Storey, "Workers, Unions, and Steel: The Reshaping of the Hamilton Working Class, 1935-1948," PhD thesis, University of Toronto 1981; and "The Struggle to Organize Stelco and Dofasco," *Relations industrielles*, 42, (1987), 366-85. Wayne Roberts, ed., *Baptism of a Union: Stelco Strike of 1946* (Hamilton: Labour Studies Programme, McMaster University 1981); Wayne Roberts, ed., *Organizing Westinghouse: Alf Ready's Story* (Hamilton: Labour Studies Programme, McMaster University 1979); Craig Heron *et al.*, *All That Our Hands Have Done: A Pictorial History of the Hamilton Workers* (Oakville: Mosaic Press 1981).

<sup>2</sup>See Aaron McCrorie, "PC 1003: Labour, Capital, and the State," in Cy Gonick, Paul Phillips, and Jesse Vorst, eds., *Labour Gains, Labour Pains: 50 Years of PC 1003* (Winnipeg/Halifax: Society for Socialist Studies/Fernwood Publishing 1995), 15-38.

<sup>3</sup>On the general interest in production committees, see Peter S. McInnis, "Teamwork for Harmony: Labour-Management Production Committees and the Postwar Settlement in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, 77, (September 1996), 317-52.

<sup>4</sup>By 1945 several unions were competing over jurisdiction in the textile industry. The oldest, the United Textile Workers of America, was affiliated with the American Federation of

several indications that Edwards and his workmates benefited from this new connection to a larger labour world. Management at the mill was less patronizing, and some longstanding issues seem to have been worked out in a more orderly fashion, including the use of the new grievance-arbitration system.

The story that Edwards tells about the relations between the new Hamilton Textile Joint Board of the international union and the workers at the National mills, however, confirms many historians' impressions of a struggle between bureaucratization and local control. We can see some familiar features of postwar union culture taking shape in the three years after the war that Edwards covers here. First, the international's full-time official took control of negotiations, and all communications with the company began to by-pass the shop-floor leaders. Yet there was plenty of evidence that the full-time union officials, who had never worked in a knitting mill and, in Edwards' words, had organized only "a miniscule number" of the locals, were out of touch with the real world of the shop floor (issues around "cleaning time," for example, concerned machinery not workers' hands). Moreover, the full-time official in charge of the joint board could also be sensitive to challenges from the union local, as Edwards discovered in 1948 when that official apparently began plotting to unseat him as union president.

Second, the international, through the joint board, was pushing for industrial-wide terms of employment. It hoped these could be set through pattern bargaining with the same collective agreement in each mill. The Hamilton workers were expected simply to endorse this strategy, and, in the face of resistance from the international's representative, had to use the pressure of a unanimous membership vote to force into the agreement a hard-won clause that required management to pay them at least four hours pay if they showed up for work (the Hamilton workers' victory was eventually spread through the rest of the union). As one of Edwards' workmates discovered, this industry-wide strategy could make the international insensitive to important individual grievances in the mill, and local leaders might have to sit through lectures from the union staff on the fine management the men had at the National mills.<sup>5</sup>

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Labor (AFL) and the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC), and had a large membership in Québec. An independent Canadian union of roughly the same size, the United Textile Workers of Canada, had 16 locals in central and eastern Canada and was directly chartered to the TLC. An attempted merger of the two organizations in 1945 fell apart. Over the next year, however, the independent Canadian union was drawn into the fold of the International Textile Workers Union of America, a CIO affiliate not previously active in Canada, along with two other smaller Canadian organizations — the Textile Workers' Organizing Committee and the National Union of Textile Workers. The Catholic labour movement in Quebec also had a substantial textile workers' federation. H.A. Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning* (Toronto: Macmillan 1948), 228-31.

<sup>5</sup>Donald M. Wells explores these issues in the autoworkers' union in the same period in "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model of Industrial Relations: The United Auto Workers in Canada and the Suppression of 'Rank and File' Unionism, 1936-1953," *Canadian Journal*

Edwards illuminates a third issue in this period of union building - the culture of the union convention. He has vivid memories of his participation in the 1947 CCL convention in Toronto. We catch a glimpse of how exciting this trip could be for workers who had seldom had real out-of-town vacations, let alone subsidies to cover their daily expenses (half a century later, this is still an important dynamic in large union conventions). He still remembers in mouth-watering detail how well the delegates ate at their hotel. But, even more important, he watched, apparently with some consternation, as the social-democratic leadership of the Textile Workers' Union led the attack on the leadership of the Communist-led unions, especially the United Electrical Workers.<sup>6</sup> We can feel him squirming in his chair as a non-aligned socialist who had listened sympathetically to local Communists in the late 1930s, and this was still only the mid-point in the rising crescendo of Cold-War anti-communism in the Congress, which would reach its shrill peak two years later with the expulsion of UE and all other so-called "Red" unions.<sup>7</sup> He was also disturbed at the tight controls over delegates that demanded support for the official slate of candidates for the CCL leadership and that prevented him from meeting anyone from any other union. He seems to have lost interest in attending any more of these events.

The picture is not always in focus, but Edwards' memories do give more than a hint of a process in postwar Canadian working-class life that deserves more careful study. What happened when local union militants were convinced to hitch their star to the particular organizational and ideological form that held sway at the top of most of the new industrial unions of the 1940s? Certainly there was plenty of uneasiness over the "outsiders'" lack of appreciation of local history and issues.<sup>8</sup>

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*of Sociology*, 20, (Spring 1995), 193-225; and "The Impact of the Postwar Compromise on Canadian Unionism: The Formation of an Auto Worker Local in the 1950s," *Labour/Le Travail*, 36 (Fall 1995), 17-73. See also Charlotte Yates, *From Plant to Politics: The Autoworkers Union in Postwar Canada* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1993).

<sup>6</sup>By this point, the CIO-affiliated Textile Workers' Union of America was raiding locals of the AFL-affiliated United Textile Workers of America, whose Canadian leaders, notably Kent Rowley and Madeleine Parent, were more radical. See Rick Salutin, Kent Rowley, *The Organizer: A Canadian Union Life* (Toronto: James Lorimer 1980), 70-2, 76-83; Madeleine Parent, "Valleyfield's Textile Workers, 1946," in Gloria Montero, ed., *We Stood Together: First-Hand Accounts of Dramatic Events in Canada's Labour Past* (Toronto: James Lorimer 1979), 133-5.

<sup>7</sup>Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1973), 86-67; Doug Smith, *Cold Warrior: C.S. Jackson and the United Electrical Workers* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History 1997), 176-203; Jim Green, *Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union* (Toronto: Progress Books 1986).

<sup>8</sup>Joy Parr has noted this dynamic in Paris, Ontario in the same period; see *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1990), 96-119.

The evidence here (and elsewhere) suggests that many of the full-time leadership (and much of their staff) operated from an ideological commitment to centralizing, bureaucratizing planning processes that they had learned through their social-democratic connections, rather than from the lessons of shop-floor experience (that is, the day-to-day life of the workplace, not simply the great strikes into which full-time officials often threw themselves). The struggles to defeat pro-communist unionists probably strengthened the social-democratic leaders' tendencies to centralized control and their suspicion of rank-and-file independence. By the mid 1950s the new shape of unionism in Canada was not simply the victory of that perspective, but the institutionalizing of a tension and often a battleground between local activists and the national or regional leadership. The Alfred Edwards of the Canadian labour movement did not disappear.

## The Mill: A worker's Memoir from 1945 to 1948

by Alfred Edwards

SEPTEMBER, 1945, the bus passed the brickyard that was on the small plateau where the road dips on Main Street. The big, square kiln had been lit early that morning. The heat from it could be felt in the bus. The next stop was near the mill.

It was exactly the same as in 1938. A square, red brick, two storey building with the full fashioned knitting machines on the first floor and the finishing departments and the offices on the second floor. The employees' entrance had been painted a dark grey.

George, the Mill superintendent, had the charm he reserved for new employees and visitors as we walked along the center aisle.

"We're back to two shifts. Seven til six and six til seven, sixty hours on nights and fifty-five on days. Take it easy until you get the feel of it. A couple of days should do but don't rush it. I put you in for 75 cents an hour. That's top rate now."

We stopped at #3 machine and George beckoned to the knitter.

"Al, meet Shorty. You can help him."

We stood there a moment. The machine stopped and Shorty adjusted the needles so we could turn the welts. I nodded to George and went to the other end of the machine. It felt strange fitting the grooved points of the pick up bars onto the needles of the machine heads, pressing the fabric down then turning the bars to release the stitches. This doubled the fabric which formed the tops or welts of the stockings. Shorty made the 'changes' disconnecting the welt thread carrier and engaging the three sets of leg thread carriers then setting the narrowing fingers on their ratchets.

He started the machine and, after we had trimmed the threads, he gave me a card.

"I'm the shop steward on this shift. You have to sign a union card."

"When did they start giving stewards a helper?" I asked. "What union is it?"

"Its our union."

"It must have a name."

"Its the employees' union."

"Give me the card and I'll think about it."

A few minutes later George was back in the machine aisle. "Things have changed, Al. Its O.K. to join the union now. In fact, you have to. They run the place. I'm just a figure head."

I looked at him and grinned. He was six feet, three and weighed about two hundred and twenty. The humour of him being a figure head must have struck him at the same time. He laughed, looked at me and shrugged as he walked away.

At noon hour I needed fresh air for a headache and it was a sunny, mild day so I walked around the neighbourhood. From the railway overpass I could see the pottery where the red clay flower pots were made. Smoke was rising from the burning kiln in the brickyard beyond it. The soft coal in the fire boxes which were about eight feet apart on all sides of it would burn for a couple of days, then cool for a week or more to finish the bricks. This was the last of more than a dozen brick yards that had been in the area. In a few weeks it too would be dismantled.

During the afternoon I was able to talk to some of the older knitters. Fred Jean, who had been the unofficial head of the night shift at Penmans in London was running a Jacquard. The National had six of these machines which were similar in operation to the Jacquard lace machines in Nottingham, England. The oldest and best knitters operated them. They made a superior grade of hosiery exclusive to the National.

During the early thirties he had been one of the leaders of a spontaneous strike at the National for which he was fired and listed.

"The black list is gone now, they need help." I said.

Fred smiled but said nothing.

George put me on Number 14 machine on the night shift when the two days of adjustment were finished.

Russ Allen, the president of the union talked with me on the first night. Someone told him I had been active in the union. He wanted help and advice and suggested I come on the committee. We discussed it for a full midnight lunch hour and I agreed to stand for vice president suggesting it be put to a vote at the next meeting.

"You're elected by acclamation.", Russ said.

"How come?" I asked.

"No one else wants the job."

He had a copy of the contract. It was three typewritten pages. It was signed for the company by Joe, the manager, and the President and for the National Hosiery Mills Employees' Union by Russ, the president, Jerry, the secretary treasurer and William, the recording secretary. Joe had a copy and one copy was kept in the company safe. It was a valuable company document.

Selective Service was very hard on the mill during the war. A high percentage of knitters joined the services. The mill could not hire men who were subject to Army call nor could they hire anyone wanted by any war industry. Leo, a knitter and an old friend, told me six of them, unable to get any action on their complaints through the union went to see Joe as a group. He wouldn't do anything about their problems. They quit. He changed his mind and agreed to their requests. Alas, they had quit and couldn't be rehired. Three of military age joined the Navy and Army. The other three, Leo was one of them, went into war work.

The mill lost six good knitters and were forced to hire men like Shorty who stood on his tip toes to reach the machine.

Russ had no knowledge of the Canadian Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers' Association. He was embarrassed when I told him what we had was little better than a company union. He was younger than I, had four young children and was military-exempt because of a polio limp. It was obvious he enjoyed being union president but he had little knowledge of Trade Unionism. I liked him.

There was a union meeting on the Sunday afternoon in the beverage room of a hotel about one city block from the mill. Everything was closed on Sundays so the hotel allowed the union free use of the room. Russ and I met at his house which was about four blocks from the hotel. On our walk to the meeting we passed Oscar's home. He was foreman of the finishing room. He and Mrs. Oscar were sitting on the front porch like many of their neighbours on the clear, sunny, October day. Oscar called out to us about damn fool reds wasting their Sunday afternoons going to meetings. Russ and he exchanged words. Russ was apologetic and Oscar talked to him as though he was a teenager.

The executive met before the general meeting. Russ brought out some points he thought should be discussed. William said nothing. Jerry talked to Russ with the

same tone and manner Oscar had used. Without thinking I blurted out, "You're talking nonsense, Jerry. You know better than that."

Jerry sat red-faced saying nothing. His feelings were hurt. He had become so accustomed to telling Russ they couldn't do this or they shouldn't do that. He hadn't realized what a shrewish person he had become.

Jerry was the oldest knitter in the mill and the best liked. He was kind and mild-mannered. He did not smoke or drink. He and his wife had no children. His one passion was taking bets on the horses. Bookmaking and placing bets off the track was illegal. It was also the main outlet for people who wanted to gamble. All newspapers carried racetrack news, tips and results. The afternoon radio had the race results from various tracks around the country. Jerry took bets from bettors in the mill and office and was allowed to use the office phone to "place off" heavy bets with a larger bookie.

He had been secretary-treasurer of the union since it was formed in 1938, and would never answer my repeated questions as to what had happened to the old union and the whereabouts of its records.

The following week Bill, another airman, returned to work. He had been a WAG, Wireless Air Gunner. After he had worked for a few days we talked.

"Tell me honestly. Is everybody here nuts or am I? How are you making out?" Bill asked.

"About the same as you. I've given up trying to talk sensibly to anyone. At noon hour one guy takes out a little book and writes down how many stockings he tied in bundles, then he figures how much he earned that morning."

"The company has it made," Bill said, "We work a ten or twelve hour shift. They pay us and that is all. They don't supply meals, sick parade, entertainment, recreation, overalls or boots, nothing, absolutely nothing. I asked one guy what he did in the evening. He said he had supper, listened to Amos 'n Andy, read the paper and went to bed. What a way to live! Its disgraceful."

A few days later Bill brought in a newspaper ad about a meeting for former airmen. We thought it would be better than Amos 'n Andy.

The meeting was in a second floor dance hall on James St. North. The hall was filled with over three hundred glum and angry men. Any military officer having control of them would have ordered either a route march or a sports day.

A form table had been set up on a small platform with the blanket covering draped to the floor. Five men sat at the table while the rest of us milled around looking for someone we knew.

The centre man at the table rapped a gavel and called for order. He outlined the principles of the club they were forming. "This club will not be for a bunch of veterans sitting around drinking beer," he said.

A wide chested, heavily built man who had obviously been an N.C.O. shouted. "O.K., O.K., we've heard you gentlemen for too long. We came here to meet fellows

who are as fed up as we are. We want to drink a little beer and try to loosen up. Bring out the beer or we're going home."

Everybody roared agreement and although a few more comments came from the former officers at the table, the beer was brought out.

Bill and I stayed until closing, neither of us knew anyone in the hall. The beer didn't help the mood of the men. We agreed on our walk to the bus stop that we didn't fit in as civilians and we were no longer airmen.

Military training and practice, of necessity, builds loyalty to the squad, squadron or battalion and to every member in it.

After V.J. day hundreds of thousands of men and women were released into the strange, weird world of civilian life. In the mill the fastest man ran the fastest machine and the slower man struggled to make the worst piece of junk operate. *Wages were paid for production only.* The night shift was twelve hours. To that could be added one hour for lunch and one hour going to and returning from the mill. Fourteen hours of the twenty-four for five days of the seven. The only relaxation and break from the monotony was *placing bets on the horses through Jerry.*

Not everyone knew what was making them frustrated but they all knew they were getting a raw deal.

Bill and I watched veterans return to work. They were filled with life and vitality and enjoying the calm and love of home life. After a few days of work they showed their frustration and discontent.

Russ asked me to go to Toronto on a Saturday morning with Jerry and him to consult a lawyer who was to represent the union on an arbitration case. The lawyer was Labour Progressive, which was now the name of the CP party, and I asked Russ why they had hired him. "Jerry got his name from a news item. He represents some *unions in Toronto.*"

We rode the bus to Toronto and met Jerry outside the lawyer's office on Front Street. He was late and came bustling up all apologies and good humour. He was a likeable and thoughtfully careful man.

We waited only a moment for the receptionist to show us into the inner sanctum of the office where the lawyer apologized for keeping us waiting and Jerry assured him he had not. He wore a well-tailored, light grey suit which had a *fine white stripe.* The shoulders were made wide. The collars and the cuffs on his white shirt seemed abnormally large; that may have been because of his small size. He continually patted his stomach or his vest as he didn't appear to have a stomach.

"I have just come from a champagne breakfast. Did you ever attend one?"

"I brought the cheque we talked about on the phone," Jerry said.

He handed the cheque to the lawyer and it disappeared. Maybe he slid it in a pocket when he patted his vest.

"My apologies, gentlemen," he said, "Would you like a drink?"

He opened the drawer of the desk and grabbed a bottle. He didn't bring it out.

"No thanks, we don't drink," Jerry said.

Russ and I looked hard at Jerry. The phone rang and someone named Joe was yelling into the other end.

"You've got to get me out of here. I left money with you. You've got to get me out of here right now."

"You'll be alright, Joe. Just settle down. Everything will be alright."

Joe shouted some more but to no avail. The lawyer hung up the phone and smiled at us.

He stood. We stood. He shook hands with each of us.

Outside on Front Street Jerry said he supposed we could go to lunch but we didn't. On the bus ride back to Hamilton Russ and I discussed unions. He didn't know any of the other mills or whether they had locals or shop committees and he had never heard of the Canadian Congress of Labour.

There was a shop committee meeting the following Thursday. Jerry did not attend as he ran a footer and the three women toppers would have to be sent home if he stopped his machine. Meetings were always held from four p.m. to six p.m.

There was no agenda for the meeting and Russ brought forward items everybody seemed to know about. The committee sat on old style wooden chairs with their backs to the door where they had entered. Joe, the office manager, Eddy, the factory manager, and George sat behind a huge office desk opposite us. Most of the discussion focused on their problems — not ours.

Russ was the youngest person in the room and the management used their age and knowledge to reject every suggestion he made. William said nothing.

After the meeting I brought a couple of booklets to Russ. One was on parliamentary rules, and one, I think it was a WEA booklet, was on leadership. He thought they were bunkum but promised to read them.

At this time all mills were processing nylon which was to replace silk and the various synthetic yarns used during the war. It was released to the mills on a quota system set by the nylon producers. On 16 November 1945 over two thousand women stood in line at a Toronto department store to buy one pair of nylon stockings for \$1.95. They had a certificate entitling them to one pair each. The mill

employed guards armed with shotguns on weekends to protect their stock of finished nylon stockings.

There was a severe shortage of manufactured products at the end of the war but for most people the real problem was a shortage of money. Wage and price controls had been rigidly enforced yet prices of goods had increased more than wages.

The management at one committee meeting told us they had no hesitation spending money as profits were much higher than expected. They created new jobs by hiring a toolmaker, a carpenter, electrician, painter and an additional janitor. Wages could not be raised as they could not be sure profits would continue.

The frustration and discontent of returning service personnel seemed to be spreading to other employees. The management put on a banquet and dance the Saturday night before Christmas. The banquet started at six p.m. in the Crystal Ballroom of the Royal Connaught which was Hamilton's most prestigious hotel. Dancing started at eight p.m. with a twelve piece orchestra. There were unlimited free drinks. The room wasn't cleared until two a.m. It was the greatest party any of us had ever enjoyed.

A shop committee meeting with management was the second week in January, 1946. Management was always united in opposition to the committee suggestions. Russ had to do most of the talking for our side and their attitude toward him was an amused tolerance. We did settle a few small grievances but on the larger issues there was no agreement.

During the February meeting management announced they and some other mills were setting up labour-management committees to solve mutual problems. We agreed to discuss this at the union meeting.

The members did discuss it. Leo Martineau, a long time knitter, said "Yes, Mr. Chairman, we will cooperate, play ball they call it, with the company. We've always tried to play ball and when they have the bat we know what they do with it. We have the bat now so they talk cooperation. O.K. we cooperate but we don't let go of the bat — that way they cooperate too."

Two weeks later a group arrived from London for a discussion but they were foremen, supervisors and one superintendent. They were looking for better production methods which included letting good knitters know there were jobs available.

The Cooperation Committee was never mentioned again.

At the next committee meeting management was more willing to listen to us. We didn't have definite objectives except to improve working conditions. We weren't in touch with any other locals. Joe, the manager, said they were willing to spend money on anything we suggested. He would not talk about wages or rates. The company put a one hundred pound bag of expensive grass seed by the employee's exit with a supply of paper bags for the employees' free use.

I suggested Russ write to the Canadian Congress for help and advice. In a few days he excitedly told me he had been contacted by Jack Robinson of the Canadian

Congress of Labour. Next, a group of us met with Robinson and Ray Ruggles who was now an organizer but had formerly worked with Robinson at Ontario Hydro. Jack had been a congress organizer since 1942.

They were with TWUA., Textile Workers' Union of America, which now had a Canadian section affiliated with the Canadian Congress of Labour. Sam Baron was director of the Canadian section and maintained an office in Montreal. Baron was also on the executive of the TWUA and of the CIO.

With memories of 1938 and how Mosher and Conroy had helped us I became Robinson and Ruggles champion. Robinson was in charge and Ruggles organized small locals and took care of business details. The other members of the committee were skeptical of Robinson and the TWUA.

Robinson was medium height and build with a complexion which showed his feelings. He always wore a properly pressed suit with a vest and white shirt and tie. His voice was shrill but he was a good speaker and talked continuously about the necessity of industry wide bargaining.

Ruggles was a CCF supporter and explained that our TWUA membership carried with it associate membership in the CCF and in the Canadian Congress of Labour.

Pat Conroy had warned us in 1938 not to ally our local with any political party at any time and to support any party only when they supported labour.

Robinson was a CCF supporter but did not press the issue.

My enthusiasm for Robinson and Ruggles continued. They rented a ground floor hall on Barton Street near Wentworth and it became the headquarters of The Greater Hamilton Textile Joint Board. The hall had been a retail store. The floors creaked. The ancient oil space heater smoked and smelled. Ruggles assured everyone the building was safe and secure but he started a fund to build a union hall.

We were now local 860 TWUA so Robinson or Ruggles attended every meeting. Neither of them had worked in a textile mill so there were some interesting exchanges. Omir, an older knitter, suggested Brother Robinson should come into the mill and watch his brothers and sisters work.

"When we talk about cleaning time we're not discussing washing our hands," he said. "We're talking about cleaning the machines. We aren't paid for that and we want to be 'paid'."

Meetings were well attended. Members turned out better when they were held at the same time in the same hall each month.

Jack began attending shop committee meetings with us and the management side became very serious and careful. The humour tactics against Russ ceased and they were direct and courteous.

1946 was an extraordinary year for trade union activity especially in the Hamilton area. The Liberal government and the manufacturers were determined to hold to wartime standards on wages. There were great pronouncements about the

shortage of goods and materials yet any housewife would say the shortage was not of goods but of the money necessary to buy them.

There was another reason for the frustration and discontent. One returned veteran who had gone overseas in 1939 said, "There is absolutely no culture in this country for ordinary people."

The neighbourhood activities and baseball leagues disappeared during the war. The largest public dance hall in Hamilton had closed as had most of the clubs which held dances.

The hotel beverage rooms were the busiest places. They sold only beer. Ladies and escorts drank in one beverage room where single men were not allowed. Men drank in the Men's room usually filled with chairs and tables. Waiters toured the room with full trays of beer. No music or games were allowed. One had to be seated to drink. Beverage rooms opened at noon hour and closed at 6:30 p.m., then re-opened at 8:00 p.m. This was deemed necessary for men to go home for supper.

They closed the bar at 11:30 p.m. so the patrons could finish the full tables of beer by 12:00. Waiters in the busiest hotels always said again and again, "Drink up, drink up. This is a beverage room, not a club."

Sundays were the same as before the war. The churches and the parks were open, nothing else.

It is difficult to understand why a stubborn government and immovable employers were so out of touch with reality that their citizens and employees were forced to strike in 1946 to maintain their standard of living.

The Seafarers' national strike shut down harbour activity in Hamilton. The Rubber Workers' Union struck Firestone. The UEW struck Westinghouse.

The Steel Company, during negotiations with the United Steel Workers', purchased mattresses, refrigerators, groceries and steaks. On 15 July 1946 the United Steel Workers' struck in Hamilton and ended with a union victory. By October of 1946 The Rubber Workers' had won at Firestone and the UEW had won at Westinghouse and several small companies had signed union contracts.

Jack Robinson declared a pattern for wage negotiations had been set and local 860 TWUA should seek a new contract with National Hosiery Mills for 1 January 1947.

Apparently Robinson had been discussing the new contract with Russ and when we had our executive meeting Russ said we were going to go after a standard TWUA contract. I said that would be alright as long as we added our four hour clause and whatever other clauses the membership decided should be in it. Robinson came in on the discussion then and I agreed it should be up to the membership as I was the only one on the committee who wanted the four hour clause in the contract. Jerry said he didn't think the members would accept a contract without the four hour clause.

The knitters who had been in the services and those who had been employed in war industries were now working in the mill. Most of them had been in the 1938

strike. The sister members who worked on the various finishing operations were good union members. The employees who had been hired during and after the war belonged to the union but had very little knowledge of it.

The four hour clause which was negotiated in 1938 was caused by supervisory people letting people come to work and then telling them their machine was shut down and they weren't needed that day. Foreladies used the same method with some sister members. A union member who had been sent home three mornings in one week after riding the bus to work moved that anyone not notified at least one hour before starting time of the work shift cancellation must be paid for four hours. Mr. Eastbourne, the president of National Hosiery, and his office manager thought it was a fair and sensible idea and a clause guaranteeing the four hours pay had been included in all union contracts since 1938.

The union hall was packed with an almost full attendance of members and Jack Robinson rose to describe the new contract. It would be a standard TWUA contract and any side issues could be included in future contracts as they were forging ahead to industry wide bargaining.

A member rose to inquire about the four hour clause and Jack said they could not mix up their contracts with petty details like that. Members were on their feet throughout the hall. Russ banged the gavel over and over again for order and Mary was selected as speaker. She was a large, powerful, good-looking, sweet-talking woman.

"We organized this union a few years ago because the management had become dictators. This is a democratic trade union. This is a meeting about the contents of a new contract. I move that the four hour clause which has always been in our contracts be included in the new contract."

Several members rose to second the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously. Robinson was red faced and angry and said that if the members were aware that things such as this clause can cause strikes he would be glad to include it. It was a poor statement and prompted another outburst from the floor.

Another sister rose and said,

"The committee should understand that the members of this union are fully aware of everything we do. We were assured when we voted to join T.W.U.A. that our local would have complete autonomy within the organization."

She sat down and the applause was deafening.

The four hour clause was later included in other textile contracts in Ontario. Eventually other unions adopted the clause. When all unions had it in their contracts, the conservative government in Ontario at that time made it part of the labour laws.

Another problem which could not be included in the contract was the Employees' health plan. The Company had an arrangement with a group insurance company. Employees paid 60 per cent of the cost and the Mill paid 40 per cent. The benefits were listed in a small booklet which noted that the insurance company paid \$125 for appendix removal, \$60 for tonsil removal, etc. They didn't pay for childbirth. The thing was a rip-off and almost useless. After a claim was made they would argue about it for weeks before paying. Every time an employee had a claim they would be angered by the system and would complain. The plan affected only one person at a time so there was not concerted action against it. Robinson agreed to argue for removal of the plan but it could not be part of the contract.

The day for negotiating a new contract came. I was on the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift. The meeting started at 2 p.m. Mr. Eastbourne and Joe, Eddie, George and Oscar, the finishing room foremen were on the company side behind their oversize desk. We were facing them in our usual wooden chairs, our backs to the door where we had entered. Jack Robinson took the end chair on our side and turned it before he sat down so that he was facing both sides of the meeting. He looked freshly shaved and showered. He had warned us to be prepared for a long meeting. Joe introduced Robinson to Mr. Eastbourne and Oscar and the meeting began. Eastbourne could be very tough in negotiations but he was a natural salesman and if a suggestion or elaborate point was sensible and possible he was apt to agree to it spontaneously. This day he was careful and quiet leaving the talking to Joe. Most of the negotiation occurred between Robinson and Joe.

I had the impression, though there was no factual evidence, that much of this had been agreed before and the meeting was to finish the bargaining. Jack did negotiate the pay increase of about 5 or 6 per cent and some pay schedules were adjusted. The contract was signed on 3 March 1947.

All union members received a small booklet printing the contract between National Hosiery Mills and Local 860 TWUA. The agreement had the signatures of Russ, me, Jerry and William for local 860 then in a separate box the Greater Hamilton Textile Joint Board by Jack Robinson, Director. It stated that all dues were to be sent to the Joint Board by the company and all communications between the Company and local 860 would be through the Joint Board.

The older workers came to me and asked was the agreement between the company and its workers or between the company and Jack Robinson. I had supported Robinson so I had to defend him, Russ said I had agreed that it should be that way. I had not. Russ received a few of the complaints I had been getting. The older employees were very skeptical of Robinson and Russ and to a certain extent me as I defended them. Jerry and William were out of the action. The only thing that made the agreement acceptable was the pay increase.

Jack had not raised the issue of the health plan during the contract talks but he went on the first shop committee meeting with us. Joe's answer about the health plan was that he knew it wasn't very good. It was a business arrangement and

couldn't be changed. I said it was their business arrangement, not ours, yet we were paying 60 per cent of its cost. I argued about it at the executive meeting but Robinson argued that Joe had explained it which did not solve the problem.

There was an Ontario election and number of local 860 members assisted the CCF candidate. He had been elected two years before. Except for members of his family the only worker support for him came from local 860. He lost by 500 votes.

Local 860 was allotted one delegate to the Canadian Congress of Labour convention in 1947. Russ wanted to attend the CIO convention in Atlantic City which was to be held in two or three months so I was selected. Two delegates from the cotton mills and I were given return bus fare to Toronto and eight dollars a day expense money for four days.

Ruggles met us in the lobby of the Walker House, an octagonal shaped brick building built about 1850. It was cater corner to the Union Station on one side and to the Royal York on the other. Our room on the second floor reminded me of a YMCA room because of its large size. There was an area floor carpet surrounded by about eighteen inches of highly polished dark wood flooring. The centre window of three on one side of the room had a neatly stacked coil of heavy, manila rope. One end was fastened to an iron ring bolted through the floor 'in case of fire.' There were three steel spring, single beds with good, comfortable mattresses, one bedroom style chair and one dresser with three drawers, one for each of us.

We had dinner with Ruggles and the Toronto delegate in the dining room. Ruggles said the Walker House was called the 'House of Plenty' and indeed on their menus, at the check in and wherever it could be placed was a huge picture of a bunch of grapes with the motto, 'The House of Plenty'.

The tables did not have grapes. They had the regular pickle tray, celery dish, cruet, sugar and cream. The waiters were prompt and relaxed. Less than half of the tables were occupied. The main menu items were roast beef or roast pork, the slices were thick and generous. Potatoes were mashed or roasted and the choice of vegetables was peas, peas and carrots or corn. There were three or four other menu items — sausage, pork chops. The prices which included beverage and dessert were about \$2.50 to \$3.50. Most diners chose pie for dessert. A ten inch apple pie was cut into five pieces.

After dinner we went to a delegate's room for a workshop. We met the other three delegates. One man from Milltown, New Brunswick had checked in on Sunday evening. Ruggles lived in Toronto but would meet us every morning in the lobby so we could go as a group to the convention hall in the Royal York.

Sam Baron, the Canadian Director, joined us in the hall on Tuesday morning. He was a short, alert, well-dressed, almost dapper man.

Our delegation faced the platform but at the furthest distance from it so we couldn't see the Congress executive members sitting there. We did occasionally see the head and shoulders of a speaker.

A small space separated us from the UAW with their wedge hats and their leader, George Burt. There were about seventy of them and they all seemed to be the same height as their leader. One wondered if all UAW members were this same height. Between the UAW and the platform were the Packing House workers led by Dowling. They were all shapes and sizes. On the right side facing the centre and nearest us were the United Steel Workers, the USW, led by Millard. Murray Cotterill seemed prominent among them but exactly what his position was I do not know.

On the left side facing the centre was the large delegation of the UEW led by Harris and Jackson. Various other delegations were on each side.

Outside the hall it was one of those sunny, clear, refreshing October days. One felt like a school boy day dreaming as the meeting ran through the previous minutes and accomplishment during the year. The interminable list of resolutions put forward by unions finally ended.

Sam Baron rose to speak. He was sitting directly in front of me. Although I don't know what the motion was for, it criticized the UEW leaders. He was an excellent and passionate debater and it was evident that he had been picked as the lead off speaker in an attempt to drive the Communist led UEW out of the Congress.

Harris and Jackson, the UEW leaders, had foreseen the strategy. They were at the front end of their delegation which was as close to Baron as they could be. Harris stood and leaned forward. "This is the man who testified before the Dies Committee. What have you got to say about that, Sam? I have all the evidence right here."

He grabbed a bunch of papers from somewhere beside him and waved them in the air. "Here it is, Sam." Then sneering and talking slowly and distinctly, pronouncing each word, "Testified before the Dies Committee."

He sat down and Baron jumped up and shouted, "Don't try those cheap tactics on me."

He said more but I missed it as I was trying to figure out what the tactic was. The debate tapered off. Jackson followed Harris and spoke about other problems being handled by the UEW. He was a precise and very capable speaker. I liked him.

At our evening workshop in one of the delegate's rooms Sam explained to us that he was subpoenaed to testify before the Dies Committee. He then told us of his involvement in the Spanish Civil War. He had gone to Spain as a correspondent for a group of United States socialist newspapers. The Communist faction did not agree with his reports. He was imprisoned and then one morning they marched him out of his cell, blindfolded him while he faced a firing squad. The commands were given and the triggers were drawn on empty chambers. He was marched back to his cell. This procedure was followed on five consecutive days. The loyalist group he was with found out where he was being held and had him freed.

Sam Baron, understandably had an implacable hatred of Communism.

The next morning, Wednesday, many delegates had copies of the morning newspapers. They had very good coverage of the proceedings. It was fair and accurate reporting.

The evening workshop was about TWUA support of the CCF. The New Brunswick delegate declared he was a small 'I' liberal and sometimes a large 'L' Liberal and he couldn't recall being anything else so he thought he would stay that way. *Once more I brought up about chatting and mingling with delegates from other unions.* Again there was silence. At no time during the Convention was I able to talk to anyone except members of our own delegation. Afterward whenever I read of someone from beyond the Iron Curtain defecting on a sports or cultural visit to Canada I was astounded.

Ruggles told us we were all associate members of the CCF. Three cents of our monthly dues were paid to the CCF.

Thursday debates were about ordinary Congress matters and jurisdictional disputes. The evening workshop discussed the Friday morning vote. Ruggles defended the slate voting system and a couple of delegates were against it. Ruggles said one obstructionist executive member could tie up all decisions. A delegate said you mean one Communist member. Ruggles didn't reply.

The delegate said, "He would be called a Communist if he didn't agree."

"We believe in the slate system. Delegates are free to vote as they please but we as a delegation are supporting the Mosher, Conroy slate. It would be nice if all eight of us voted for the same slate", Ruggles said. Millard was on that slate.

On the Friday morning the Mosher, Conroy slate was elected on the first ballot. The Convention adjourned.

Sam Baron sued Kent Rowley for libel and slanderous remarks which had been made over a Brantford radio station. Kent Rowley and his wife, Parent, ran UTW, United Textile Workers, an affiliate of the AFL. I have read many articles praising their organizing work and I have heard denunciations of them by Congress organizers. I never did meet or see them nor did I know of any mills who were organized by them so I cannot comment. Madeleine Parent was well known for her work in Québec in Duplessis' time and for being jailed by Duplessis.

About this time Fred Jean came on the shop committee. Fred Jean and I were on afternoon shift the week the trial was held in Civil court in Hamilton. Fred attended every day. He may have been a witness, my memory is not clear on this. Every shift he told me about the proceedings and how well Baron conducted himself. At one point the judge said, "You union people are always fighting among yourselves, aren't you?" Baron gave him a proper answer.

Baron won the case and was awarded twenty-five hundred dollars which he gave to charity.

The shop committee negotiated the 1948 contract with a slight wage increase and our four hour clause.

We discussed the health plan. Robinson said it could not be part of the contract but he agreed to bargain for changes in it. Joe declared it was a necessary business arrangement. Russ and I argued it was their business arrangement but we paid 60 per cent of its cost. Robinson said nothing more and we ended with the same plan.

After the contract was signed Russ came to me excited and elated. Robinson had offered him a job as an organizer. He wanted advice. I couldn't advise him but thought he would be a good organizer. One month later he left to work for the Joint Board. I became local president and Fred became vice-president.

Robinson went with the new committee to their first meeting with management. It was a friendly meeting and a couple of minor grievances were settled. Joe brought up a matter that had been missed in the contract and described how it would be to everyone's advantage to agree to it. It was a very sensible and straightforward thing and all except Fred agreed to it. Despite all our arguments he would not and advised Joe we would have an answer at the next meeting.

It was put to the membership. Fred led the debate against it saying, "This thing is wrong and management knows it."

During the debate it came to me what the catch was, probably from what some member said. The vote against it was overwhelming. Robinson was astounded and could not understand the members. He went with us to the next meeting saying, "This is going to be a tough one."

At the meeting Robinson, with red face, told Joe the fellows wouldn't accept it. Joe already knew and said, "I didn't think they would go for it."

We had been listening to the talk. Fred, a former boxer, had been watching the talker. I had a new appreciation of democracy.

Robinson did not attend the committee meetings for some time.

The mill had been installing new machines and were having trouble hiring good knitters. They insisted seniority must include management's estimate of ability but the union insisted newly hired knitters start on #1 machine which always ran an exclusive line of cheap hosiery.

Joe sent word through one of the knitters who was on his side and was known to us that he would be willing to consider an increase of eight cents a dozen on this line of hosiery. He had to do it this way because the other mills would complain if he raised rates.

Somehow the motion at the meeting was passed as eighteen cents a dozen. At our meeting with Joe the reaction was immediate. He shot out and upwards from his chair and blurted out, "I told that arse eight cents, not eighteen. He's stupid, that's what he is!"

Jerry and William sat open-mouthed wondering what was going on. Fred and I argued for the eighteen cents and I think, the settlement was eleven cents which was about 10 per cent.

Employers do not quibble much about raising top rates. They seldom raise the lowest rates knowing other rates will in time increase. Joe knew this.

Despite what the contract said about rates being negotiated through the Joint Board, this was through the local 860 committee. Robinson had to know this as he attended union meetings.

About this time, Jerry talked to everyone in the mill seeking advice on whether or not he should retire. He didn't need advice. He had already decided to quit and spend all his time as a bookie.

Jerry's retirement party was a huge success. We presented him with a Lazy Boy chair so he could relax while taking phone calls.

He was too active a man to sit all day by the phone. He visited the nearest hotel beverage room to take bets. From there he expanded to the street corner. Two plainclothes morality squad arrested him there. The sentence was thirty days. The magistrate said if he appeared again it would be three months. Released, he left Hamilton saying he could not understand how some bookies operated for years without being caught. He was taking bets when I started at the National in 1935.

Rosaire Roy grieved a shortage in his pay. His machine had been shut down for a shift while he and two fixers worked on it. He was paid for seven hours. He had worked eight hours. The company claimed it was his cleaning day and cleaning was not paid for. The committee aided by Robinson agreed. The company decision stayed, seven hours pay. Rosaire asked that it be taken to arbitration. Robinson refused, saying it was a small matter. He had never worked in textiles so I explained the cleaning issue to him. Angry and red faced he refused to discuss it further.

I had made a special trip to the mill a few days before to accompany a knitter to talk to George. The man had complained at the union meeting about being bypassed on his seniority for an opening on a better machine. Robinson said I would accompany him to see George.

We went to the 'cage' and I spoke to George about the man's rights. George turned to the man and said, "Bob, you don't want that machine."

I'm sorry George. These guys made me come up here."

Walking together back to the machine, Bob said, "I can't help it. That big guy scares me."

I told this to Rosaire and said, "So what happens when you change your mind and abandon the call for arbitration."

Rosaire said, "I won't quit, Al, and if you like I'll bring it up at the union meeting."

I returned to Robinson. He would not take it to arbitration. We were too militant. We had good management and didn't appreciate it. These matters were settled by industry wide bargaining, not by individual cases. He wouldn't change his position. Finally I said Rosaire would likely bring it up at the union meeting. He stared at me angrily, then said, "Notify Joe we are going to arbitration."

Full fashioned hosiery had the knitter's individual mark. This was done by varying the spaces in the fashioning indentations. All hosiery were inspected when they were Greige finished, that is before dyeing. Good knitters like Rosaire might receive one or two returns a day. Poor knitters could receive five or six.

Rosaire began receiving fifteen to thirty returns a day. All had genuine faults. All had his mark.

After about two to three weeks of these excessive returns, we asked a sister in the finishing department if she could find out if inspectors had any instructions about Rosaire's work. She said it would be impossible to follow instructions like that. The next day she told us there had not been any exceptional returns. At the shop committee meeting a few days later we told Joe we had a problem with a knitter's returns. We would never interfere with the inspection system but we would be willing to pay the expense of whoever they named to follow Rosaire's work through the system.

Joe was startled. He looked at his committee members who sat motionless. He was very quiet and polite and asked if we could wait two or three days for an answer.

Two days later two men were hired as cleaners. New equipment for better cleaning was purchased. Rosaire received his one hour of disputed pay. Free cleaning was abolished. The new system was so satisfying that other mills adopted it.

The health plan was giving us trouble. The insurer was arbitrary about the small payments they did make. Because the plan covered surgical procedures it only affected one or two people at any time. When one member complained I suggested he bring his complaint up as a motion at the union meeting. He did and the committee brought it up at the monthly meeting. Joe hit the roof declaring it had been settled at contract time. We argued that as it could not be included in the contract it had never been settled. We wouldn't give in and the meeting lasted three hours with no agreement about the issue. Joe was furious.

After the next union meeting Robinson stopped me as we were leaving. He accused me of being after his job. I thought he was joking and laughed. He was angry and red faced and said I was to follow his orders and do as he told me. I said I did whatever the members of local 860 told me. Again he said I was to do as he told me or he would make me look like the biggest fool in Ontario. I said his job was to run the Joint Board and to give advice, not orders.

*We parted and I could not understand what his beef was. I was carefree about the argument.*

How it started I didn't know. First Leo asked if he could help me, then one of the sisters in the finishing department said there was a lot of talk against me. What was it all about and how could they help. Next some of the newer knitters were talking openly against me. The antagonism grew until at the time of the monthly meeting everyone seemed hostile.

The hall was packed. The seating arrangements were always the same. The older, active members were in the centre. Newer members were at the rear and front.

*No one spoke to me before the meeting. It was about to start when the frosted glass door of the director's small office opened. He, in sport shirt and slacks, walked over and sat in one of the centre seats. He was red faced and did not look toward the chair but talked animatedly to members near him. Strangely, I thought he shouldn't try to be one of the boys. He should keep his distance. He is the director.*

William was almost finished droning through the minutes of the last meeting when there was a knock at the door. Two older men were there. One, a pleasant, grey haired man said, "can we come in?"

The door opened into the centre of the meeting and members scrambled to make room for them as the pleasant man said, "I'm Sam Lawrence. I'm your mayor and this is my close friend, Controller \_\_\_\_\_. We were walking along Barton Street. We always walk along some part of the city on Sunday afternoon. I said to my friend, this looks like a union meeting. I have my union card, Mr. Chairman. I'm a member of the Stonemason's Union.

Sam held the card in the air as I said, "Your card isn't necessary, sir, We all know Sam Lawrence's record."

Sam had made his way to the centre of the meeting and everyone there was standing so they could shake his hand. Everyone except the Director who sat in his chair, about two rows ahead of the mayor, looking unconcerned. Members were moving from the front and rear to shake Sam's hand. The Director decided to join the crowd and reached out his hand just as Sam started turning in a semicircle to meet everyone. Sam pointedly did not shake the Director's hand.

Sam gave a little speech about his campaign plans for the coming year and thanked the members for their warm welcome. He suggested we carry on with our meeting and he and his friend would sit quietly and enjoy.

Sam Lawrence was the socialist mayor of Hamilton, the third largest city in Canada, from 1945 to 1949. He led a parade of 10,000 citizens showing their support of the union during the steel strike of 1946 despite the fact the Steel Company of Canada was Hamilton's largest employer. He was continually harassed by other members of council who wanted him to seek Provincial Police protection to prevent violence on the picket line. Sam said there hadn't been any violence and there wouldn't be any as the company had locked all the scabs inside the gates. He was the lone CCF member of the Ontario Legislature in the 1930s. The CCF at that time was a truly socialist party.

It was a quiet, orderly meeting. Sam rose to leave near the end. He thanked everyone for letting he and his friend sit through a well conducted meeting.

As they usually did some members gathered in groups outside the hall to talk. Someone offered me a ride home. I walked on and took the Barton Street car to the centre of the city.

Immigrants who settle in Hamilton generally locate in the Barton Street area. From there they gradually leave for other parts of the city or the suburbs. Some always stay in that area so there is a mixture of different people. When you smile they smile back. An English war bride who was having a rough time with her new relatives in Canada said that whenever she felt like going back home she would go for a ride on the Barton street car. No one there ever tried to imitate her Liverpool accent. It was an enjoyable ride.

On the bus ride from the city centre to West Hamilton I noticed, for the first time, that the ramps for the paraplegic veterans in the wartime houses on Main street had all been removed. It was a shock to know they were all gone.

The next day Fred Jean told me that a group of fellows had been in their favourite downtown restaurant late one evening the previous week. Mayor Lawrence came in to talk with them as he often did. Recognizing Fred he had asked about the union. Fred told him there was a meeting that Sunday. He was surprised and pleased that the mayor attended.

At the next shop committee meeting Joe talked all through the meeting about some employees abusing the employee's hosiery purchase plan. We protested that it was a matter for their sales department. We actually spent the full two hours listening to recitals of supposed wrongs by employees buying hosiery.

The annual election of union officers was to be held at the next meeting. A few days before the meeting Robinson sent an organizer with a package containing an expense cheque, certification papers, etc. for the TWUA Convention in Atlantic City. I didn't want to go. Fred didn't want them either so William became the delegate.

I didn't attend the election meeting. William became president and Fred continued as vice-president.

Sam Baron had a dispute with Emil Rieve, president of TWUA. At the 1950 convention Baron supported Baldanzi as vice president against Rieve's wishes. Baron was fired as Canadian director in March of 1951.

Baron was unemployed so he made a deal with the AFL to take over the United Textile Workers which was a member of the Trades and Labour Congress, the Canadian arm of the AFL. Whether he did this in revenge against Rieve or because he resented losing control of all the TWUA locals in Canada. He and his employees; Robinson, Ruggles, Russ, etc. may have organized a minuscule number of these but the majority had been organized by the workers themselves.

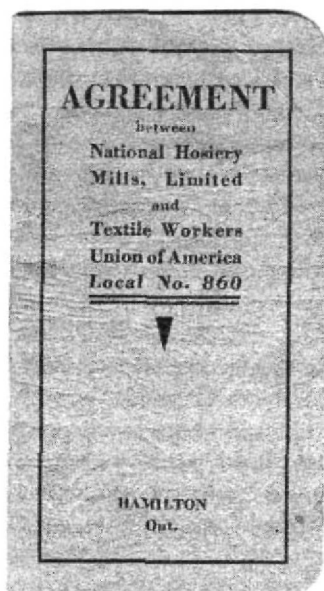
Baron's campaign was relatively easy as the workers voted against the organizers and policies Baron had set in place under TWUA. More people vote against regimes than for them.

TWUA did win the certification vote at local 860 and they did win in some small locals. The Hamilton Joint Board was shut down and its employees dismissed. The UTW had the majority of Canadian textile workers.

The National Hosiery laid off all wage workers in September of 1954 because of the surplus inventory. Knitters wages at that time were from \$1.70 to \$2.00 an hour.

They rehired workers nine months later at a 20 per cent wage reduction with a heavier work load. A lot of us never went back. A few months later I received a cheque for \$72. It was holiday pay.

The Trades and Labour Congress joined the Canadian Congress of Labour in 1956 and the UTW was absorbed by the TWUA.



*I would like to thank my daughter, Dr. D.V. Edwards, for her assistance in the preparation of this memoir.*