

**Labour**  
Journal of Canadian Labour Studies  
**Le Travail**  
Revue d'Études Ouvrières Canadiennes



## Editor's Note

Bryan D. Palmer and Sean Cadigan

Volume 74, Fall 2014

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1060917ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Palmer, B. & Cadigan, S. (2014). Editor's Note. *Labour / Le Travail*, 74.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

AFTER 17 YEARS AS EDITOR of *Labour/Le Travail* I am retiring from this position, lessening my responsibilities at a journal I have been fortunate to be associated with since its beginnings. My tenure with *LLT* has been long, and the rewards of working with it and the many people who do so much to insure the publication's high quality have been many.

It is impossible to separate my life as a historian of the working class and of the social history of Canada from my involvement with this important journal. I was, at best, tangentially involved in the informal discussions on the part of Greg Kealey, Eugene Forsey, Russell Hann, Irving Abella, James Thwaites, André LeBlanc and others that culminated in the 1976 appearance of *Labour/Le Travailleur* as a slim annual, composed of six articles and an irreverent historiographic commentary. My original contacts with this founding group were with Greg, the preeminent figure, and Russell. But as both a youngster and an outsider (having no affiliation with the University of Toronto), I came to the journal's pre-history relatively late in the day and was by no means pivotal. Subsequently my involvement and contribution grew.

I published the lead essay in the first issue of the journal. Since then I was never far from what was happening with the publication, serving on the editorial board from an early date (1979); becoming the book review editor in 1982, continuing in that role for fifteen years; and being elected as editor by the *LLT* board in 1997, succeeding my increasingly close collaborator and friend, Greg Kealey.

During the heady days of the 1970s and early-to-mid 1980s, when it seemed every week brought a new batch of ideas and a cohort of misnamed and much misunderstood so-called 'new labour historians' emerged, there also seemed an onslaught of challenges. Many threatened to turn *Labour/Le Travail* into something different than some of us wanted it to be.

In the end, the consolidating presence of *LLT* within Canadian research and writing on the working class over the course of the 1980s and 1990s spelled out a certain success. The changes in the field of labour studies that were inevitably happening registered in the pages of our journal, which had moved, by the time I took over the editorship, from the margins of scholarly publishing in Canada to the established centre. By almost any standard of definition, *LLT* was a success, and quite a notable one. This can be measured, of course, by the quality of the articles appearing in *LLT*'s pages. But another reflection of the achievement of the publication is the impressive personnel that have worked

on its behalf. Few scholarly journals in Canada, other than designated national reviews of specific disciplines, can boast of graduating from their editorial ranks the number of presidents or in-coming presidents of major academic associations that *LLT* has managed to do. Irving Abella, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Gerald Friesen, Craig Heron, Gregory S. Kealey, Veronica Strong-Boag, and Joan Sangster have, over the course of their careers, been associated with the editorial board of *LLT*. They have also gone on to the leading position within the largest body dedicated to fostering communication of scholarship in their field, the Canadian Historical Association.

For the last five years I have been asking myself, and others, whether it was time to step down as editor. There were always reasons not to. But all things, however good, come to an end. It is important to renew energies, allow enthusiastic and developing leadership a chance to place its stamp on old initiatives, blaze new paths, and cultivate new constituencies. A fresh start to an old race is always a welcome development. And it is also important to grant oneself the time to finish projects that have gathered the dust of neglect due, in part, to editorial responsibilities.

The journal rests on a substantial and well-established footing, and has benefitted from this security for some time. I inherited from Greg an enterprise that was well supported at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). Indeed, MUN should be remembered by all who value *LLT* with appreciation for what the university provided the journal in its first decades. Thanks are also due to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, whose continuous grants-in-aid of *LLT* since 1978 have been a significant foundation on which the journal has thrived. Labour studies in Canada is much indebted to this SSHRC funding. We have also managed the journal prudently. As things changed in *LLT*'s funding and support climate, I helped to chart new institutional affiliations with the journal's base of operations moving from MUN to Athabasca. The material well-being of *LLT*, in spite of new pressures and tensions, has been preserved and maintained. A significant factor contributing to this stability was that, as a Canada Research Chair in Trent University's Canadian Studies Department, I was accorded both the time and research funding that allowed me, in various ways, to contribute to and build the journal. As editor of *LLT*, I always owed thanks to the CRC program for supporting labour studies scholarship. I was also grateful to my colleagues in Canadian Studies and other departments at Trent, who valued the journal's existence and my editorial role.

As the chief responsibilities for *LLT* are passed on to Sean Cadigan, he will be sustained as editor by Athabasca University Press, where Kathy Killoh heads up an impressive and dedicated team. I know the journal will flourish. There is nevertheless an inevitable sadness in leaving a position that has allowed me such a privileged vantage point to contribute to the burgeoning interdisciplinary scholarship on Canadian labour. The decision to leave the

editorship of *LLT* was thus taken with considerable hand-wringing and much difficult reflection.

One part of the difficulty of this decision was the continuity that has characterized *Labour/Le Travail*'s editorial leadership. The journal has been under the sole editorship of Greg and myself for every issue from 1977-2014. This is a rare occurrence in scholarly life, and while Greg and I always rubbed up against one another with more creative friction than many of our colleagues and critics would allow, we did share a sense of *LLT* as something *more* than yet another academic publication. We regarded it, I think, as having a modest *movement* character. In our different but almost always compatible ways, we strove to maintain the highest of academic standards, developing a genuine pluralism that allowed articles appearing in the pages of *LLT* to express differences of approach and substance. All of this aimed to deepen our collective understandings of the salience of class in Canadian society and, indeed, throughout the world. Yet both Greg and I also believed in taking intellectual risks, in allowing scholarship not yet congealed in some kind of mould to take venturesome forms. This was an undertaking that extended the research project of labour studies, and refused to sacrifice rigour and excellence in the marshalling of evidence and presentation of subjects, but that was not burdened with undue cautions and excessive accommodation to convention. Ultimately all of this resonated with a particular politics attuned to issues of democracy, equality, and social justice.

Differences of course abound in our pages, as they should; and no one with reasonable arguments and a logical presentation of material has ever been denied space in our journal. Innovative thought is welcomed, and articles that first appeared in *LLT* pioneered new ways of thinking about and seeing the multifaceted experience of class being. For the better part of four decades, *Labour/Le Travail* has been both an academic journal of the first rank and a voice of progressive thought and humane consideration of Canada's past, present, and future. It means a great deal to me to have been associated with this mobilization of ideas, and I am exceedingly thankful for the opportunity to have participated in *LLT*'s making, leaving my own small mark on its record of achievement.

None of this could have happened without large contributions from many people. Too many, in fact, to mention all of them by name. Those whose labours have made *LLT* what it is include the excellent support staff at Memorial University, whose work sustained the journal in the 1980s and 1990s. Greg and I could not have edited the journal without the help and commitments of Irene Whitfield (recently deceased), Joan Butler, and Josephine Thompson. Irene, in particular, worked with Greg as the journal was finding its early way, and provided a guiding hand in the years when *LLT* was seeking out its intellectual and material footing. At Athabasca, Kathy Killoh has been my constant companion in all aspects of the journal's daily routines: few journal coordinators are as

energetic and efficient as Kathy, and her disciplined and diligent management of so many aspects of *LLT* has been my saving grace as editor for many years. No one is easier to work with than Kathy, who manages to be both tolerant and exacting at the same time. Others at Athabasca University Press who have done much to benefit *LLT* include Linda Kadis, Rosie Pucci, and the former director of the Press, Walter Hildebrandt.

Among the editorial board team that has done so much for *LLT* over the years, special thanks are due to the book review editors with whom I have worked: Andrée Lévesque, Jacques Ferland, Peter Bischoff, Geoffrey Ewen, Mark Leier, Alvin Finkel, Donica Belisle, and Jim Naylor. Jim also served ably as Assistant Editor for many issues. I have relied, in more recent times, on a dedicated editor's advisory committee, composed of David Camfield, Alvin Finkel, Greg Kealey, Andrew Parnaby, and Jeff Taylor. Alvin, in particular, has been a source of much support for *LLT*, anchoring the journal's relationship to Athabasca and providing me, as editor, with a multitude of kindnesses and a seemingly inexhaustible willingness to take on new tasks. The editorial board and the international advisory board have always been helpful and as editor I have been particularly indebted to the members of these bodies for their peer review assessments, which I have also called on non-board-member academics and trade unionists to provide. Finally, my thanks go out to all who have submitted their research and writing to *LLT* and published articles, research notes, controversy statements, review essays, and book reviews in our pages, and to our subscribers and readers. This ongoing engagement with the journal, either as consumer or producer of scholarship, makes *LLT* what it is.

As we transition to a new editorial leadership, Greg, Sean, and I have been involved in conversations with Stephanie Ross, President of the newly formed Canadian Association of Work and Labour Studies. Stephanie was welcoming of our initiative to bring *CAWLS* and *LLT* closer together, and we are hopeful of a productive future, in which *LLT* becomes more interdisciplinary and labour studies scholars continue to see our journal as a venue for publishing their research. I especially want to welcome, as I make my exit as editor, four *CAWLS* members to our editorial board: Kendra Coulter, Larry Savage, Mark Thomas, and Steve Tufts.

My last thanks go to someone who, had circumstances differed, would likely have been more directly involved with editorial aspects of *LLT* than she has been in the last years, perhaps even taking on the editorship herself. Joan Sangster, with whom I am now associated by the accident of life partnership, served on the journal's editorial board for a number of years. When I became editor in 1997, she declined to continue on the board, thinking that it would court unwarranted criticism of *LLT* becoming too much of a 'family compact'. (This is no doubt one reason why Linda Kealey has remained outside of the *LLT* editorial apparatus, in spite of her obvious contributions to the field of Canadian labour studies.) Yet Joan (like Linda) has never faltered in her support and dedication to the journal, and I have benefitted from her broad

sense of the field of working-class history and her engagement with feminist, indigenous, legal, and labour studies. My editorship of *LLT* would have been possible without her presence in my life and her on-going support, but it would have been experienced quite differently, and not for the better.

Finally, I want to express my thanks to Sean Cadigan for his willingness to take on the editorial responsibilities of *Labour/Le Travail*. He is eminently suited to the position, having extensive familiarity with the journal and its workings. As a scholar of Newfoundland and Canada whose publications are characterized by their deep research and imaginative conceptualization, we at *LLT* are rightly proud of the fact that some of his first publications appeared in our pages. Sean will, I am sure, preserve what is best in *LLT* and extend the journal's strengths in new and stimulating ways. I look forward to being part of his team and am excited by what Sean brings to his new position. As *Labour/Le Travail* approaches its 40th anniversary there is much to applaud and even more to anticipate.

*Bryan Palmer*



I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO MY ROLE as the editor of *Labour/Le Travail*. Although my service to the journal in this capacity is new, my association with it is not. I first began work with what was then *Labour/Le Travailleur* while in undergraduate studies at Memorial University in 1983. After my MA at Queen's University, I returned to Memorial for doctoral studies and renewed periodically my work with the journal, which later developed into stints as Assistant Editor and member of the Editorial Board. Under the editorship of Greg Kealey and Bryan Palmer, *Labour/Le Travail* has thrived by balancing an enduring commitment to providing a venue for the very best in peer-reviewed scholarship with an ability to provide a home to other types of writing about labour and the working class. Further, they have built an excellent publishing partnership between the Canadian Committee on Labour History and Athabasca University Press, and I am delighted to be working with Kathy Killoh, our managing editor. It is my intention to build on the strong foundations laid by Greg and Bryan, to expand *Labour/Le Travail*'s appeal as a home to multidisciplinary and varied perspectives on the broader experiences of working people, and to welcome partnerships with new constituencies such as the Canadian Association for Work and Labour Studies. Last, but not least, I want to thank Bryan for his work as editor and for his willingness to join our editorial advisory committee.

*Sean Cadigan*