

Abstracts / Résumés

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ABSTRACTS / RÉSUMÉS

“Audacity, audacity, still more audacity”: Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932-1939

John Manley

IN 1932, WHEN Communist Party of Canada (CPC) general secretary Tim Buck, six other CPC leaders and one unfortunate rank-and-filer began lengthy sentences in Kingston penitentiary, the Party seemed to have reached its nadir. In fact, martyrdom proved to be a springboard for sustained political revival and was a particular boon to Buck, helping him consolidate a stirring performance in the dock at the Party trial a few months earlier. Until then, he had been considered something of a mediocrity, his status dependent almost entirely upon Moscow's grace and favour. During his three years in Kingston prison, the underground Party successfully reinvented him as the “dauntless leader of the Canadian working class”: shortly after his release in November 1934, his five month-long coast-to-coast tour attracted (by the RCMP's almost certainly conservative estimate) a total audience of over 100,000. Buck proceeded to dominate the Party for the remainder of the decade — the Popular Front years — a period fondly recalled in his posthumous memoirs. Buck presented the Popular Front strategy as his — as much as “Moscow's” — invention and quietly attributed the Party's rise in fortunes (membership almost tripled) in large part to his bold and independent political leadership. The Popular Front was certainly good news for Buck, but whether it was good news for “Tim Buck's Party” is more open to question. This paper questions Buck's self-evaluation and suggests that the exposure of the cynical character of the Popular Front project in 1939 “may have planted the seeds of [the] Party's long postwar decline.”

EN 1932, QUAND le secrétaire général du Parti communiste du Canada, Tim Buck, six autres chefs du parti et un travailleur du rang malchanceux avaient commencé de longues sentences dans le pénitencier de Kingston, il semblait que le parti avait atteint le comble de l'infortune. Cependant, le rôle du martyr s'est révélé avantageux pour une remise en vigueur politique soutenue et était un bienfait particulier pour Buck qui en avait profité pour donner une performance passionnante au procès du parti quelques mois auparavant. Jusqu'alors, il avait été considéré comme quelqu'un de médiocre; son statut dépendait en grande partie de la grâce et de la faveur de Moscou. Pendant ses trois années de prison à Kingston, le parti «souterrain» l'a réinventé avec succès comme le «chef intrépide de la classe ouvrière canadienne». Peu de temps après sa libération en novembre 1934, sa tournée d'un bout à l'autre du pays d'une durée de cinq mois, avait attiré (selon l'estimation presque certainement conservatrice de la Gendarmerie royale du Canada) un auditoire de plus de 100 000. Buck continua à dominer le parti pour le restant de la décennie — les années du Front populaire — une période dont il se rappelait avec tendresse dans ses mémoires publiés après sa mort. Buck avait présenté la stratégie du Front populaire comme son invention (aussi bien celle de «Moscou») et avait attribué silencieusement l'ascension du parti (dont le nombre de membres avait triplé) en grande partie à sa direction politique audacieuse et indépendante. Le Front populaire était certainement une bonne nouvelle pour Buck, mais s'il était une bonne nouvelle pour le «parti de Tim Buck» est toujours une question discutable. Cet article pose des questions sur l'autoévaluation de Buck et suggère que l'exposition du caractère cynique du projet du Front populaire en 1939 «avait peut-être semé le déclin graduel du parti après la guerre.»

The Cold War and Working-Class Politics in the Coal Mining Communities of the Crowsnest Pass, 1945-1958

Tom Langford and Chris Frazer

THIS PAPER IS CONCERNED with the resilience of socialist workers' movements during the early years of the Cold War in Canada. Our study compares the workers' movements on either side of the BC/Alberta border in the Crowsnest Pass through the Rocky Mountains between 1945 and 1958. These are interesting movements because, although they were equally strong at the end of World War II, in the period in question one movement was very resilient (BC) and one suffered an electoral collapse.

We found that the Cold War eroded the Labour Progressive Party's (LPP) electoral base in exactly the same way on the Alberta and BC sides of the Crowsnest Pass. Anti-communism was certainly promoted by extra-local sources of news and analysis such as newspapers, radio and movies, and was based upon international and national events. However, there were important local processes that amplified and concretized the more general forces, such as joint organizing against the LPP by a CCF leader and the Catholic Church in the Alberta Crowsnest, the recruitment of anti-communist miners from Eastern Europe, and the anti-communist stance of a roster of ethnic organizations.

The resilience of the socialist workers' movement in the BC Crowsnest between 1945 and 1958 was due to a labour unity strategy which allowed Labour and the Left to deflect Cold War pressures and maintain mass electoral support among workers. It is significant that the strategy was built around a local organization (the Fernie and District Labour Party) which involved all of the unions in the area, and a local politician (Thomas Uphill) who had built up a dense network of personal support during his many years as MLA and mayor. The socialist workers' movement in the Alberta Crowsnest might have proven to be much more resilient in the 1950s

had the LPP attempted to duplicate the successful labour unity strategy it had stumbled on in the BC Crowsnest.

CET ARTICLE SE RAPPORTE au caractère résistant des mouvements des travailleurs socialistes au cours des premières années de la Guerre froide au Canada. Notre étude fait la comparaison des mouvements des travailleurs des deux côtés de la frontière de la Colombie-Britannique et de l'Alberta dans le passage Crowsnest par les montagnes Rocheuses entre 1945 et 1958. Ce sont des mouvements intéressants car, bien qu'ils soient également importants à la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, dans la période en question, un mouvement était très résistant (celui de Colombie-Britannique) alors que l'autre avait subi un échec électoral.

Nous avons découvert que la Guerre froide avait érodé la base électorale du Parti progressiste travailliste exactement de la même façon que des deux côtés de la frontière de la Colombie-Britannique et de l'Alberta dans le passage Crowsnest. L'anticommunisme faisait certainement l'objet de la promotion par les sources de nouvelles et d'analyses, en dehors des localités, telles que les journaux, la radio et les films, et il était basé sur des événements internationaux et nationaux. Toutefois, il y avait des processus locaux importants qui amplifiaient et concrétisaient les forces plus générales, tels que l'organisation conjointe contre le Parti progressiste travailliste par un chef de la Fédération du Commonwealth coopératif et l'Église catholique dans le passage Crowsnest de l'Alberta, le recrutement des mineurs anticommunistes de l'Europe de l'Est, ainsi que la position anticommuniste prise par de nombreux organismes ethniques.

Le caractère résistant du mouvement des travailleurs socialistes dans le passage Crowsnest de la Colombie-Britannique entre 1945 et 1958 s'était développé grâce à une stratégie de l'union ouvrière qui permettait aux mouvements ouvrier et gauchiste de détourner les pressions de la Guerre froide et de maintenir l'appui électoral massif parmi les travailleurs. Il est significatif que la stratégie soit élaborée autour d'un organisme local (le Parti ouvrier de Fernie et District) auquel participent tous les syndicats de la région, ainsi qu'une personne politique sur le plan local (Thomas Uphill) qui avait établi un réseau complexe de soutien personnel depuis des années quand il était membre de l'Assemblée législative et maire. Le mouvement des travailleurs socialistes dans le passage Crowsnest de l'Alberta aurait pu être plus résistant dans les années 1950 si le Parti progressiste travailliste avait essayé d'adopter la même stratégie de l'union ouvrière qui avait eu tellement de succès dans le passage Crowsnest de la Colombie-Britannique.

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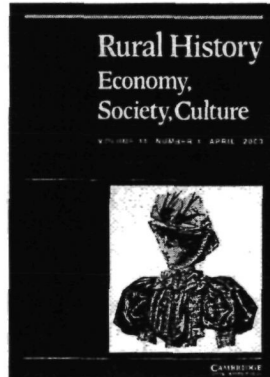
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Thanks to an anonymous donor, the Canadian Committee on Labour History (CCLH) is pleased to announce the fourth Eugene A. Forsey Prize competition. The CCLH, with the consent of the late Dr. Forsey's family, chose to name it in his honour because of his pioneering work in the field of Canadian labour history. Dr. Forsey, Research Director of the Canadian Congress of Labour and later the Canadian Labour Congress, also served on the committee which founded *Labour/Le Travail*.

The CCLH invites submissions for the fifth Forsey prize competition for graduate and undergraduate work on Canadian labour and working class history.

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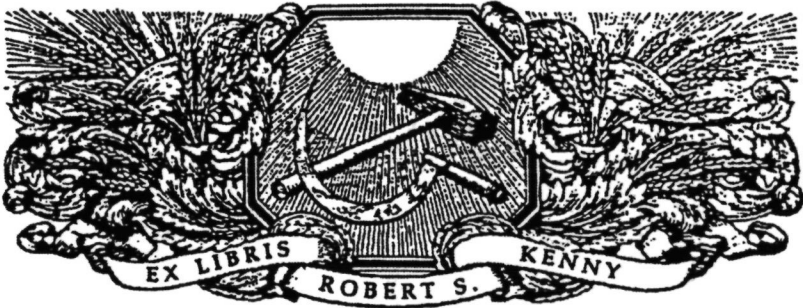
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Undergraduate

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LABOUR / LE TRAVAIL

L/LT is a bilingual semi-annual review dedicated to the broad, interdisciplinary study of Canadian labour history. Holding to no rigid position on the definition of labour, the Editorial Board hopes to foster imaginative approaches to both teaching and research in labour studies through an open exchange of viewpoints.

The Board feels that Canadian history lacks a sufficient understanding of the lives of workers. Productive human energy has played a vital role in the development of Canadian society. Our common life has also been richly endowed with the cultural contributions of generations of working men and women. It will be the constant endeavour of *L/LT* to rectify an all too general Canadian ignorance of these legacies.

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La rédaction est convaincue que l'histoire canadienne ne peut se passer d'une connaissance du monde ouvrier dans toutes ses dimensions. La société canadienne n'aurait pu se développer sans la contribution de générations de travailleuses et de travailleurs. Pour remédier aux oublis du passé, *L/LT* se propose de faciliter la reconstitution de cette histoire et de la rendre plus accessible.

Afin d'atteindre ces buts, nous sollicitons des manuscrits sur des aspects du monde ouvrier tels que: les syndicats de métier et d'entreprises, les non-syndiqués(es), les conditions de vie des travailleurs(euses), les mouvements radicaux et réformistes liés au monde ouvrier, l'impact politique, économique et social du syndicalisme, les idéologies ouvrières, ainsi que les études sur les travailleuses et les travailleurs de tous les pays dans la mesure où elles contribueront à la connaissance du milieu canadien.

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