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## ARTICLE

# In Search of C.B. Wade, Research Director and Labour Historian, 1944–1950

**David Frank**

HE DROVE INTO GLACE BAY OVER DIRT ROADS, through clouds of coal dust and past rows of housing in disrepair. It was a “bleak and dreary scene,” he later recalled, “It took everything I had to keep on going and not turn back.” He was coming directly from the green fields and grey towers of Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. Now he was answering an invitation to work for one of Canada’s largest unions, District 26 of the United Mine Workers of America (UMW), the branch of the international union that represented coal miners in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The miners’ union was one of the first in Canada to recognize the need for research staff in the changing world of industrial relations in the 1940s. The age of industrial legality meant that contracts were becoming more complicated to negotiate and administer, there were more briefs and submissions to prepare, and the ongoing changes in provincial and federal laws and regulations required constant attention. For many unions, there were also significant political and social objectives associated with the social democratic agenda of the times. Since the election of a new leadership in 1942, District 26 was determined to promote improved conditions in the coal towns and a development strategy to stabilize the coal industry, aims that pushed the union to document the needs of their members and their communities more fully and to bring the union’s policies to wider public attention.<sup>1</sup>

1. Harold Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1948), 605–606. Logan identified five union research directors in Canada, all named since 1942, as well as the appointment of Eugene Forsey at the Canadian Congress of Labour. In addition to District 26, the others were among the major new industrial unions of the period: the United Steelworkers, United Electrical Workers, United Packinghouse Workers and United Textile Workers. Logan classified the responsibilities of the research directors in

Beginning in 1944 and for the next six years, these were the main challenges facing C.B. Wade as the union's first director of research and education. Even before he arrived, the federal government had announced its intention to establish a Royal Commission on Coal, and the union wanted to be ready to make the case for public ownership of the industry; then, in 1947, District 26 would be out on a long strike against the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation, the first major strike since 1925, and again the union would have to work hard to deliver their message and win public support. Wade was at the centre of these efforts. Meanwhile, before leaving his position in 1950 under controversial circumstances, Wade researched and wrote a major manuscript on the history of District 26. It was not published, nor fully completed, but it has been recognized as a pioneering contribution to the emerging field of labour history.<sup>2</sup>

This account is about a particular individual, time, and place, but it cannot be separated from larger themes. Across North America in the 1930s and 1940s hundreds of politically sympathetic intellectuals brought their energy and skills to the industrial union movement of the period and contributed significantly to its successes. As Wendy Cuthbertson has pointed out in the Canadian context, one of their missions was to create "a union world – a union public sphere" that articulated a discourse of citizenship rights and social expectations and placed the working class at the centre of postwar reconstruction.<sup>3</sup> For this new stratum of labour staff, the link between knowledge and power was not a theoretical concept but part of a struggle to define the interests of the unions and advance the place of organized labour in Canadian society. In this they had a broad range of responsibilities and, to the extent that they had the support of union officers, they were in a position to influence

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three ways: (1) "internal statistical," involving analysis of contracts and trends; (2) "problems of the day" for workers in their sector, with a view to providing material for publicity; and (3) "the economics of the industry," studies that would help in collective bargaining and also influence public policies relevant to the sector.

2. Wade's influence on local labour history was acknowledged in the wave of publications that began to appear in the 1970s. Paul MacEwan drew upon the manuscript for columns on local history in the *Cape Breton Highlander* (1965–1969) and identified it as one of the major sources for his subsequent book, *Miners and Steelworkers: Labour in Cape Breton* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1976). It was also cited (in an accompanying teachers' guide) as one of the sources for a popular history project, *The People's History of Cape Breton* (Halifax: Opportunities for Youth, 1971). Like other researchers at the time, MacEwan had little information about Wade. In *Miners and Steelworkers*, the preface notes the importance of the Wade manuscript and discusses his work as research director, while also referring to him as "the late C.B. Wade."

3. See Wendy Cuthbertson, *Labour Goes to War: The CIO and the Construction of a New Social Order, 1939–45* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012). She notes that besides hiring organizers, the new industrial unions often placed a priority on public relations staff, journalists, researchers and educators as part of a larger strategy of "unionizing" as well as "organizing" members and influencing the larger working-class public.

union policy and promote the social vision of the labour movement. However, this was not a stable context. While the negotiation of the postwar compromises between labour, capital, and the state gave union staff an increasingly central role in the stabilization of labour relations, it also exposed them to the successive pressures of wartime mobilization, postwar expectations, and a looming Cold War.<sup>4</sup>

## Workers' Education

C.B. WADE'S ROAD TO GLACE BAY STARTED, perhaps a little improbably, in upper middle-class Edwardian England. He was born in 1906 at Much Woolton, near Liverpool, the son of a stationery wholesaler who became an innovative manufacturer of fountain pens. When the family moved to London, they lived in an eight-room house whose staff included a domestic servant and a nurse. After his father divorced and remarried in 1913, Wade got on well with his new mother but nonetheless remembered a strict family upbringing, with the children lined up every morning for father's inspection. The young man found conditions equally rigid at public school, where mischief was punished with caning. He was expected in due course to enter the family business, but the prospect did not please him. After some time in Europe, he travelled overseas in 1923 to visit an older uncle, who had first come to Canada in 1904 and was now settled in Toronto. Wade's initial years in Canada included going west on the harvest excursions; he taught himself to drive a tractor; and at one stage he acquired a saddle so that he could hire out as a cowboy. During this time he picked up the lifelong nickname "Jim," which was used by family and friends. As an adult, he was known publicly and in print as C.B. Wade and rarely if ever used his full given name, Claude Bates Wade.<sup>5</sup>

Although the rough work and outdoor life agreed with the young man, Wade's uncle insisted that he further his education; to this end, he funded Wade's training in Toronto as a chartered accountant. As one historian has written, it was an expanding profession: "The 1920s were good times for chartered accountants in public practice. Fees grew, clients grew, staff grew."<sup>6</sup> Entry

4. On the transition to a new order in labour relations, see Peter S. McNinnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada, 1943–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). As McNinnis shows, labour leaders narrowed their agenda considerably at this time in order to achieve the stabilities of industrial legality, a self-limiting trend that was accelerated by the anti-communism of the period.

5. Biographical information on C.B. Wade (1906–1982) is drawn from an interview with his daughter, Martha Wall, 24 July 2015 as well as this author's earlier discussion with Wade himself, 23 December 1974. I am grateful for information shared, 4 April 2016, by Peter F. Wade, whose father, William Claude Bates Wade, was the uncle referred to here. Additional details on family history were also provided by Peter Backman, 2 June and 5 June 2016.

6. Philip Creighton, *A Sum of Yesterdays: Being a History of the First One Hundred Years of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario* (Toronto: Institute of Chartered Accountants of

to the profession was controlled by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, and a failure rate of 52 per cent on the exams was considered normal. When Wade completed his training and joined the ranks of the profession in 1933, the Institute numbered about 600 members. However, employment prospects were not as good as they had been when he started the five-year programme, and Wade counted himself fortunate to find work in the field at Queen's University. In the early 1920s concerns about the quality of training offered by individual firms and private business schools had led the Institute to reach an agreement with O.D. Skelton, then Dean of Arts at Queen's, under which the university administered courses and exams set by the Institute. There was steady demand, particularly as most provinces came to accept the Ontario course as the basic requirement for certification. From the beginning, however, the Department of Political Science and Economics found difficulty in staffing the preparation and marking of the hundreds of exercises and exams involved in running this extramural programme.<sup>7</sup> When one of the instructors became ill in 1933 (and died the following year),<sup>8</sup> Wade was taken on to replace him, starting work on a temporary basis in October 1933. Little is known about his career at Queen's, but Wade's position appears to have become more secure over time. By 1939–40 he was listed in the annual *Calendar of the School of Commerce and Administration* as Instructor in Chartered Accountancy, and by the 1940s the extension courses in accountancy were attracting more than 400 new students every year.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, Wade's personal life was also becoming more settled. Before moving to Kingston in 1933 he married Laura Christine Hugill. Their daughter Martha is not certain how they met, but one of the family stories is that he took Christine to tea at the Royal York Hotel on one of their early dates, which she regarded as a sign that he wanted the best for her and that he too had a taste for enjoying the best.<sup>10</sup> Christine came from a difficult family background

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Ontario, 1984), 115.

7. Creighton, *A Sum of Yesterdays*, passim.

8. The reference is to Robert Owen Merriman, who was employed at Queen's as a tutor and administrator. Merriman was a Queen's graduate in economics with both a BA (1922) and an MA (1925). Merriman's thesis was published in a university series as *The Bison and the Fur Trade* (Kingston: The Jackson Press, 1926) and a prominent Queen's University political economist gave him posthumous credit as co-author of a textbook in economic history, W.A. Mackintosh and Robert Owen Merriman, *Trade and Industry* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1939).

9. Although Wade was not involved in these, the curriculum included a course on Industrial Relations (Economics 29b) in 1943–44, subsequently replaced by a course on Labour Problems (Economics 23) in 1944–45. There was also a well-established course on Socialism (Economics 22) for which one of the texts was, predictably enough, Skelton's *Socialism: A Critical Analysis* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911).

10. Wall, interview by author, 2015. The Institute of Chartered Accountants held annual dinner meetings at the Royal York Hotel, which was the city's premier hotel at the time.

in Hamilton, where she had lost her mother in her early teens. Her abilities and perseverance had nonetheless brought her to the University of Toronto, where she recalled being in classes with a student by the name of Northrop Frye. Both Christine and C.B. came from relatively unorthodox religious backgrounds: Christine's family were in the Plymouth Brethren, and C.B.'s family were Swedenborgians; however, their daughter recalls her parents both as confirmed atheists. They shared a love of the outdoors and, during their time in Kingston, were able to buy a small island on a lake north of the city, where Wade built a log cabin, by hand, complete with a stone fireplace. It was their practice to spend the late summer there, enjoying the lakes and rivers and picking up mail from general delivery in a nearby village.<sup>11</sup>

Wade's formal responsibilities at Queen's were limited, but by 1941 he was beginning to publish professionally, most notably a series of articles in *Canadian Chartered Accountant* between 1941 and 1943. The first of these examined the methods of calculating net profits employed by major Canadian corporations. Wade found general agreement on some standard practices for adjusting the measurement of incomes for this purpose, but he also concluded that "one seems justified in wondering whether or not items are sometimes included or excluded by virtue of considerations other than the application of accounting standards of income measurement."<sup>12</sup> A second article, on methods of evaluating inventories used by a sample of 200 Canadian public companies, was co-authored with J. E. Ferguson and based largely on the latter's Bachelor of Commerce thesis; the attribution states that it was "written by C.B. Wade, Chartered Accountant, who also did some further research." This one noted that company practices varied in the use of "cost," "market value," and "replacement value" in reporting inventories and that "a relatively insignificant percentage decrease or increase in value of inventory may result in significant decreases or increases in net profit." An accompanying commentary by a senior member of the Dominion Association of Chartered Accountants endorsed this as "an excellent study" and urged that corporations explicitly state the basis of valuation in their reports and explain whether this was consistent with their normal practice.<sup>13</sup> Another article discussed changes in net profits and corporation taxes between 1936 and 1941, implicitly a comparison of the late years of the Great Depression with the early wartime economy. Again, the focus was on major corporations, in this case 104 public corporations for which recent financial statements were readily available. Wade's general finding was that before-tax profits for these companies in 1941 amounted to \$276,275,000, an increase of more than 80 per

11. Wall, interview by author, 2015.

12. "Income and Cost Adjustments as They Relate to Prior and Future Income Periods," *Canadian Chartered Accountant* (February 1941): 98–108.

13. "Valuation of Inventories – A Study," *Canadian Chartered Accountant* (April 1942): 229–233, and "Valuation of Inventories": 234–235.

cent over the average for 1936–39; however, it was also notable that taxes on corporation profits had increased significantly in 1941, leaving aggregate net profits after taxes at \$160,521,000, a more modest increase of 26 per cent over 1936–39; moreover some 38 per cent of corporation income was withheld and not distributed to shareholders.<sup>14</sup> A further study in 1943 explored the revaluation of corporate assets and capital stock downward during the Depression. In this case, Wade examined the record of 247 public corporations and found that only a small number of these (49) chose to permanently reduce the value of their assets, most of them companies that were incorporated in 1924–29, in what Wade describes as “the era of mergers based on often wildly optimistic values and prognostications;” unfortunately, he also notes, “To what extent these reductions represent de-watering of stock, i.e. reductions of previously inflated long-term asset values, it is quite impossible to say.”<sup>15</sup> Perhaps none of the observations in these articles were surprising to specialists in corporation finance, but Wade was nonetheless documenting the ways that financial statements could be adjusted, if not manipulated, to meet corporate needs. This was hardly a frontal assault on misrepresentation or malfeasance, but it did point towards problems in taking financial reports at face value. Perhaps Wade knew the value of restraint in such contexts. One historian of Canadian business has recently reviewed these studies, and found them to be “critical, but in a manner that is suggestive and understated.”<sup>16</sup>

Wade was also active in other areas, particularly in the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA), an organization founded in Toronto at the end of World War I on an Old Country model of collaboration between academic institutions and trade unions. In its early years, the Association operated under the aegis of the University of Toronto with the support of provincial funding. By the 1930s, under the leadership of a fulltime general secretary, Drummond Wren, the organization followed a more independent course, focusing not only on general goals such as “education for citizenship” but also providing training and assistance to unions. By the end of the 1930s, the WEA had 24 district associations in Ontario and more than a dozen in other parts of Canada. The Association published a bi-weekly bulletin under the title *Labor News* as well as a number of research bulletins and pamphlets. They also participated in regular radio broadcasts and the distribution of filmstrips and films to study

14. “Taxes on Corporation Income: A Comparative Study of the Years 1936–39 Inclusive and 1941,” *Canadian Chartered Accountant* (August 1942): 86–88. In a subsequent article in January 1943, he described the situation succinctly in these terms: “the situation was saved by war production – immediately profits rose.”

15. “Revaluations of Assets and Reductions of Share Capital,” *Canadian Chartered Accountant* (January 1943): 66–70. There appears to be a typographical error at the bottom of 69, where the number of companies listed in 1924–29 should read 29, which would conform with the discussion on 70.

16. Donald Nerbas, personal communication, 29 July 2014. None of Wade’s articles referenced Queen’s University directly. He was listed simply as Chartered Accountant, Kingston, Ontario.



groups.<sup>17</sup> There is reference to Wade's activity in the Kingston branch as early as November 1939, when Wren refers in correspondence to "our friend on the accounting end," and in April 1940 it was arranged for Wren to stay with "our accountant friend" during an Industrial Relations Conference at Queen's.<sup>18</sup> Following that they were in continual contact.

In October 1941, Wade agreed to write a regular page on corporation finance and related matters for the *Labor News*, covering such matters as "contracts, money grants from the Government to industries, profits, taxation, dividend payments in comparison with other items such as wages, prices and cost of living." His column appeared, without attribution or signed by "Our Financial Expert," and usually consisted of short items summarizing government reports, financial statements or other news. He probably was also the author of a number of unsigned features, such as "Low Wages Kept Down" and "Company Financial Statements Conceal Vital Information." Wade himself considered these contributions to be a learning experience and asked Wren to "be severely critical of the stuff I send, for living as I do, a very cloistered existence, I may well be off the rails in my ideas of what labour people want to know."<sup>19</sup>

Wade also helped to coordinate WEA classes in Kingston, consulted on radio scripts and other initiatives, and responded to union requests for financial information about companies. By 1943, he was helping to lead sessions at the Association's new summer school at Port Hope. During a campaign by the United Electrical Workers (UEW) to represent workers at the Canadian Locomotive Works in Kingston, he promoted a debate at Memorial Hall at Queen's, under WEA auspices, between the charismatic leftist union leader C.S. Jackson of the UEW and the journalist and former Liberal MP R.J. Deachman. The proposition for debate was whether it was in the best interest of unions to promote higher wages or higher productivity. Prior to the event, Wade gave

17. Ian Radforth and Joan Sangster, "A Link between Labour and Learning: The Workers' Educational Association in Ontario, 1917–1951," *Labour/Le Travail*, 8/9 (Autumn/Spring 1981/82): 41–78. See also their chapter in Michael Welton, ed., *Knowledge for the People: The Struggle for Adult Learning in English-Speaking Canada, 1828–1973* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1987).

18. Drummond Wren to Idele Wilson, 14 November 1939; Wilson to Wren, 3 April 1940; file 84, MU4030, Fonds F1217, Workers' Educational Association fonds (hereafter WEAf), Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Toronto, Ontario.

19. Wren to Wade, 10 October 1941; Wade to Wren, 15 December 1941; file 85, MU4030, WEAf, AO. In August 1942, Wren expressed satisfaction with Wade's contributions: "Your financial page in Labour News is a welcome one and we have had frequent favourable comment on it. The more frequent it is, the better." Meanwhile, Wade was also receiving some coaching from Idele Wilson on how to write for a labour readership without trying to cover too much in a single item: "It doesn't do much good to try to rush this education job, Jim. Our people aren't scholars, and they can and will only absorb a certain amount of new material at one time. There's always another issue, you know, so if a point is left out one time, it can be carried further the next time." Wilson to Wade, 8 October 1942, file 85, MU4030, WEAf, AO.



Jackson detailed advice on the arguments to present ("Labor has no control over production" and "there is no guarantee that prices will fall with costs.") The debate was reported in some detail in the local press, which noted that "most of the members of the audience showed their sympathy with the labor cause."<sup>20</sup>

During his time in Kingston, Wade was interacting with a range of people on the political left, including other staff at Queen's. According to their daughter's recollection, her mother considered Wade to be "only a Bertrand Russell socialist" when they first met. In Kingston, however, they both moved further to the left and participated in a circle of intellectuals associated with the WEA and the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order as well as the parties of the left, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Communist Party, later the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP). One of these intellectuals was Idele Wilson, a University of British Columbia BA graduate in history who went on to study economic history and labour relations at several institutions, including the University of Toronto and the London School of Economics. Wilson was at the Industrial Relations Centre at Queen's before going to work for the WEA and then as research director for the UEW in 1945.<sup>21</sup> Wade's network at Queen's

20. Wade to C.S. Jackson, 24 January 1944, 4 February 1944, file "MISC w," M-2338, MG28 I190, United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of Canada fonds, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC). See also *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 7 February 1944. Only one page of the second letter, addressed "Dear Jack," survives. Before his emergence as a union leader, Jackson had an early training at a commercial college and work experience in accounting, brokerage and auditing, which helped equip him to conduct successful labour negotiations over the course of more than four decades. No evidence of contact between Wade and Jackson prior to the 1940s was found. Jackson had joined the Communist Party as early as 1934, but has stated that he did not maintain formal membership after his release from internment in 1941. Established in 1937, the United Electrical Workers obtained some of the first major contracts for CIO unions in Canada and by 1944 represented more than 31,000 workers. See Doug Smith, *Cold Warrior: C.S. Jackson and the United Electrical Workers* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1997), 105, 120–121, 127, 136. The union was also involved in earlier organizing at the Alcan fabricating plant in Kingston, but withdrew in favour of the Aluminium Workers of America, later replaced by Local 343 of the United Steelworkers. As David Akers has noted, the question of union recognition "dominated local discussion of labour issues from 1941 to 1945." See David Brian Akers, "Capital Organizes Labour: Company Paternalism, Industrial Unionism and Alcan Workers in Kingston, 1941–1945," MA thesis, Queen's University, 1987, 93 et passim.

21. On Wilson, see Julie Guard, "The 'Woman Question' in Canadian Unionism: Women in the UE, 1930s to 1960s," PhD thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1994, especially 185–188. Wilson's publications included pamphlets such as *Citizen Trade Unionist* (Toronto: Workers' Educational Association, 1945). Guard found that Wilson was recalled as "an outstanding Research Director" and her reports were described by contemporaries as "shot through with a Marxist economic analysis." In a union where about 25 per cent of the members were women, there were regular references to the status of women in discussing employment conditions, wages and hours. As Guard notes, Wilson was a pioneer in what came to be known as "labour feminism." She continued as research director at UE until 1958, shortly before her death in 1962.

also included notable faculty members such as Israel Halperin (physics), Glen Shortliffe (French literature), Gregory Vlastos (philosophy) and H. Martyn Estall (philosophy). His associates were by no means all Communists, but Wade himself has stated that within a year or so after his arrival at Queen's he came under the influence of several faculty who were party members and soon was "with them." More recently, his daughter has stated that her father and mother both considered themselves to be communists. "It was an intellectual group, they read a lot," she recalled, "At the time everybody was in the CCF, and they were trying to move it to the left."<sup>22</sup>

There is limited evidence regarding the attitude of Queen's University towards Wade's extracurricular activism. When Wren invited him to join the WEA board of directors in 1943, Wade had concerns about accepting and sent him a cautious handwritten note: "I am not a well known person either in academic, public or labour circles and on the other hand I am known to quite a few people as being politically what I am." It was difficult to know how Principal Robert C. Wallace might respond: "He has done his best to prevent my becoming active in Kingston community affairs and places obstacles in the way of my advancement in Queen's."<sup>23</sup> Later that year Wren wrote directly to Wallace: "For the past two years Mr. Wade has been of inestimable assistance to the Association, both with regard to its work in Kingston and the development of educational projects in other parts of the country." Wren was seeking the principal's endorsement of Wade's nomination to the board and also that of Professor H.L. Tracy, a classics professor involved in adult education, to a joint WEA-university committee. Wallace's response was unenthusiastic but indicated a relatively liberal attitude towards academic freedom: "This is a matter about which there is no question of authorisation or endorsation from the University standpoint. It is entirely a responsibility of the Association and the

22. Wade, interview by author, 1974; Wall, interview by author, 2015. Wren was not a Communist, but he was impressed by the successes of the LPP, noting for instance in 1943 that in Toronto many officials and members "are people who would never become members of the Communist Party." Wren to Ned McKay, 3 November 1943, file 10.48, MU4011, WEAf, AO. Steve Hewitt has noted that the RCMP reported the participation of "Professor Wade" at a film forum at Queen's University in 1943, stating that he appeared to be a supporter of the Communists: *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917–1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 65. In 1944, there was another public indication of Wade's politics when he attended a union meeting as a spokesman for the National Council of Canadian-Soviet Friendship, which was seeking donations for rebuilding Soviet cities devastated by the Nazi invasion. In an appeal to the Aluminium Workers of America local in January 1944, Wade wrote: "I bring this matter to your attention because participation in such projects will show Kingston people that organized working men and women are just as public spirited as any other group of citizens." See "Local Union 343, United Steelworkers of America: Making the Difference, 50 Years of Local 343" (1995), accessed 17 December 2016, <http://www.oocities.org/local343/343history.html>

23. Wade to Wren, 5 February 1943, and the incorrectly dated handwritten reply, Wade to Wren, 4 February 1942 [sic], file 85, MU4030, WEAf, AO.

members of staff who participate.”<sup>24</sup> There was also some evidence of concern about Wade’s involvement in the union campaign at the Canadian Locomotive Works, whose president wrote Wallace in January 1944 about “comments” by Wade in a letter to a newspaper. Wallace appears to have defended Wade’s individual right to freedom of speech while acknowledging that accuracy in information was also essential. While this may have contributed to Wade’s anxieties, there is no record of any action by the university on this matter.<sup>25</sup> In any event, Wade was soon on the road to take up his new challenge in Nova Scotia, and the *Principal’s Report* for 1945 noted only, under Resignations: “C.B. Wade as extramural instructor in accounting.”<sup>26</sup>

## District 26

IN THE EARLY 1940s, labour politics in District 26 of the United Mine Workers had taken a turn to the left. As Michael Earle has pointed out, at a time when many unions were struggling to win recognition in the 1940s, the coal miners’ union was an established organization with collective bargaining rights. These had been achieved at the end of World War I and successfully defended in the labour wars of the 1920s. Under the wartime conditions of the 1940s, older traditions of militancy were reasserted in efforts to reverse the wage losses of the past two decades. A number of rank-and-file actions, including a slow-down strike in 1941, challenged the conservative union leadership. Although the rebels failed to defeat the officers in 1940, they scored an overwhelming victory at the next elections two years later. Much of the new leadership came from the ranks of the rival “red” union of the 1930s, the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia (AMW), whose members had returned to the UMW several years earlier. Among the new officers, the most prominent were AMW veterans such as Adam Scott as secretary-treasurer, John Alex MacDonald as international board member and Tom Ling as vice-president. The president, Freeman Jenkins, was a less experienced 28-year-old activist from one of the Glace Bay locals.<sup>27</sup>

24. Wren to Wallace, 2 October 1943, file 70.6, MU4026 and Wallace to Wren, 4 October 1943, file 70.1.2, MU4027, WEAf, AO. The Queen’s record on academic freedom during this period was relatively liberal compared to Toronto and McGill: see Michiel Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 108. See also 186–190 for the influence of the Cold War on the careers of Halperin and Shortliffe in the postwar period.

25. This information is based on correspondence between archivists Paul Banfield (Queen’s) and Barry Cahill (Public Archives of Nova Scotia), 19 December 1994. More recently, the Queen’s archivist has indicated that there are no personnel records for Wade, likely because he was “not an actual ‘employee’ of the University in its fullest sense.” Banfield, personal communication, 19 January 2016. A search of the *Kingston Whig-Standard* for early 1944 has not discovered a letter from Wade on this subject.

26. *Principal’s Report for 1945* (Queen’s University), 5.

27. Michael Earle, “‘Down with Hitler and Silby Barrett’: The Cape Breton Miners’ Slowdown

Before Wade, there was, briefly, Eugene Forsey. A McGill University graduate and Rhodes Scholar, he had returned from Oxford in 1929 to lecture in politics and economics at McGill University. However, the university dismissed Forsey in 1941, primarily due to his political activism on behalf of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and he became research director for the new Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) in 1942. For a short time Forsey was also on retainer to do research work for District 26, and there was talk of appointing him as research director for the union. When Forsey came to Glace Bay in 1943 to help prepare a union brief, he recalls welcoming the assignment with enthusiasm: "I had a burning desire to be of use to workers who, in my judgement, had long been oppressed, exploited, and swindled." He also recalled that his mission included "slimming down" the miners' demands to achieve a more realistic bargaining position.<sup>28</sup> Forsey articulated the union's main themes clearly: first, that "maximum production of Nova Scotia coal is essential in the national interest, and will continue to be essential if the Government's assurances of post-war 'full employment' mean what they say"; and secondly, that "if the coal is to be got out, the mine workers must be paid decent wages, whether through higher prices, subsidies to private enterprise, or nationalization, with such subsidies from public funds as may prove necessary." This remained the union's position throughout the decade.<sup>29</sup> As had happened during World War I, Central Canada's dependence on coal imports from the United States became especially apparent in wartime and raised questions about the security of the Canadian fuel supply. For the miners in eastern and western Canada, the prospect of greater reliance on domes-

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Strike of 1941," *Acadiensis* xviii, 1 (Autumn 1988): 56–90. See also Earle, "The Coalminers and their 'Red' Union: The Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, 1932–1936," *Labour/Le Travail* 22 (Fall 1988): 99–138. The miners' rebellion also found expression in increased support for the political left, at a time when the Communists endorsed the election of CCF candidates in return for their support for labour militancy. As a result, CCF MLAs were elected in Glace Bay, Sydney and New Waterford in 1941. The coal miner Clarie Gillis, a former AMW member, was elected to Parliament in 1940 for the CCF and would continue to serve until 1957.

28. Eugene Forsey, *A Life on the Fringe: The Memoirs of Eugene Forsey* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), 76–77; Horn, *Academic Freedom*, 141–144. See also Helen Forsey, *Eugene Forsey: Canada's Maverick Sage* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2012) and Earle, "Down with Hitler and Silby Barrett." According to Earle, the question of a research director was discussed at the 1940 district convention. There was dissatisfaction with the work of Frank Scott, the McGill law professor and CCF intellectual, who had represented the miners on a conciliation board earlier that year. Officers defending Scott stated that he did not have the necessary information about company finances to oppose the majority recommendation.

29. For the union submission of 15 November 1943 to the National War Labour Board, see "Dosco – Miscellaneous," vol. 10, part 3, MG30 A25, Eugene Forsey fonds, LAC. Interestingly, Forsey signed the union brief as Director of Research, Canadian Congress of Labour. His preliminary notes in this file also included a stronger statement of the case for public ownership: "if the people of Canada are to go on providing public money to assist this enterprise, isn't it time they took it over and ran it for the benefit of the workers in it and of the community generally."

tic coal reinforced their expectations for postwar reconstruction. When the federal government announced in March 1944 that there would be a royal commission to investigate the coal industry, District 26 expected to make a strong case.<sup>30</sup>

This was the context in which Wade was recruited. When Drummond Wren learned on a trip to Ottawa that District 26 was looking for a fulltime research director, he wrote a strong recommendation to the union president: "there is an excellent person who might be available, whose main concern is the education of workers and the provision of essential materials to the officers and members of the trade union movement." He went on to describe "Mr. James Wade, M.A." in more detail: "He is an outstanding authority on accounting, public and industrial finances, and during the past several years has devoted considerable attention to labour's economic problems. He is, in effect, a trained economist and has broad experience acquired through studies in Britain and in Canada." After receiving an interested response, Wren informed Wade that he had encouraged Jenkins to "make every effort to secure your services" and that Jenkins wanted to know if he would accept the position.<sup>31</sup> Wade has also recalled that A.A. MacLeod, one of the most influential organizers for the LPP, the not very secretive "party of Canadian Communists" founded in 1943, encouraged him to go to Glace Bay to explore the union's invitation. MacLeod himself was a Cape Bretoner by origins and a regular visitor there; he was well aware that District 26 had taken a turn to the left and that the new officers would benefit from experienced and politically sympathetic staff.<sup>32</sup> Things went smoothly. In May, Jenkins was taking the appointment to his executive board; in July Wade told friends that "So far as I know I am going down to Nova Scotia;" and in August he was asking Wren for introductions to people in Nova Scotia. By November, Wade was installed in Glace Bay, and receiving correspondence from the WEA office in Toronto: "we often speak of you and wonder what sort of new experiences you are encountering

30. *Report of the Royal Commission on Coal, 1946* [Carroll Commission] (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1947). The terms of reference were released in October 1944; hearings took place at intervals between January 1945 and April 1946; the final report was dated 14 December 1946 and tabled in the House of Commons on 31 January 1947.

31. Wren to Jenkins, 20 April 1944 and Jenkins to Wren, 23 April 1944, file 10.48, MU4011; Wren to Wade, 29 April 1944, file 85, MU4030, WEAf, AO.

32. Wade, interview by author, 1974. MacLeod came to prominence as the organizer of the Canadian League against War and Fascism in 1934. Later he was the founding editor of the *Canadian Tribune* (1940), and in 1943 he was elected to the provincial legislature in Ontario, where he served two terms. He had worked in the steel plant at Sydney Mines in his youth, had known J.B. McLachlan during the veteran union leader's lifetime and was well-regarded by the leftists in District 26 and other local unions. In writing to Wade in April, Wren also added that he had discussed this matter with two senior LPP figures, "JB and Stanley" [J.B. Salsberg and Stanley Ryerson] "and they both think it would be a good thing for you to do." Wren to Wade, 29 April 1944, file 85, MU4030, WEAf, AO.

in an environment that is somewhat remote from the academic atmosphere of Queen's."<sup>33</sup>

Wade arrived in Glace Bay alone, without his wife and daughter, perhaps with an inkling of the pressures and instabilities that could attend his new position. As his daughter recalls, he was also concerned about beginning her education in what he believed were substandard local schools, and as a result she started Grade 1 in Kingston while her mother ran a small nursery school in their apartment. In the summers, they took the long train trip to Nova Scotia to join him at a bungalow near the mouth of the Mira River. His daughter recalls those summers fondly and the enormous freedom she enjoyed to roam the beach with her dog. She also remembers wandering in and out of her father's long meetings with union leaders, sessions that often included both song and drink. "To him the coal miners were heroes," she recalls, in terms similar to those Forsey used in his memoirs: "What they had to go through. How hard they had to work. He was there to try to get them something better."<sup>34</sup>

At union headquarters, the scope of the work was broad, and Wade later summarized his "routine work" in a list of more than a dozen ongoing activities: assistance with unemployment insurance cases; assistance with old age pensions; preparation of briefs, letters, and resolutions; analysis of legislation; collection of clippings on the coal industry, unions, and provincial affairs; collection of data on the cost-of-living in Canada and Nova Scotia; collection of data on wages; provision of information to the *Glace Bay Gazette*; bulletins to board members; preparation of resolutions to labour bodies; following general economic situation in Nova Scotia and Canada; collection of material for published articles.<sup>35</sup> In 1945, Wade requested an estimate from Sun Life of what would be needed to provide a pension of \$30 a month for all miners from age 60. The answer was that this would require a lump sum of \$6.5 million to cover 1,500 men already on pension, plus an annual premium of \$2.5 million to cover more than 8,500 men under 60.<sup>36</sup> In 1949 he completed a review of security plans for coal miners in Canada and the United States that included coverage for accidents, sickness, and retirement pensions. His survey compared the UMW Welfare Fund in the United States to the existing protection

33. Jenkins to Wren, 9 May 1944; Wade to John Wigdor, 18 July 1944; Wade to Wren, 10 August 1944; ? to Wade, 13 November 1944, file 85, MU4030, WEA, AO. By early November 1944, Wade was defending the union against charges by an official in Ottawa that the coal miners were not cooperating in addressing falling production levels. Wade replied that the union had already proposed a package of measures to increase production and improve cooperation between labour and management: see Michael D. Stevenson, "Conscripting Coal: The Regulation of the Coal Labour Force in Nova Scotia during the Second World War," *Acadiensis* xxix, 2 (Spring 2000): 82.

34. Wall, interview by author, 2015.

35. "Notes for Report to Board, September 16/47," Reel #10027, Series #1134, United Mine Workers of America, District 26, Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS), Halifax, N.S.

36. A.J. Moore to Wade, 7 September 1945, Reel #10023, PANS.





**C.B. Wade (front and centre) with executive officers of District 26, UMWA, c. 1947.**  
 Courtesy of Martha Wall.

in Canada against accident and sickness; in the case of compensable accident and sickness, provisions in Canada compared favourably, but there was “extremely poor protection” against non-compensable accident and illness; and retirement pensions were distinctly inferior to those under the union plan in the United States. Medical services, however, for which the miners paid under a longstanding insurance plan at a rate of about \$5.00 per month per employee, “would seem to provide wider medical care for all members of the family than most other prepaid systems.”<sup>37</sup>

Wade did not normally attend the district executive board meetings but was expected to be on hand to brief the officers and provide advice. In January 1946, for instance, he reported on changes in the cost of living and on his work on town planning, and in March 1946, he reviewed recent changes to the Workmen’s Compensation Act and Coal Mines Regulation Act. When a board member asked for information about when his sub-district had joined the UMW, the matter was referred to Wade, who later devoted a full chapter of his manuscript history to the subject. He also assisted at several stages in sorting out the financial arrangements for the *Glance Bay Gazette*, the daily

37. “Some Security Plans Available to Coal Miners Canadian and U.S.A.,” July 1949, Reel #10023, PANS.



newspaper that the union had purchased in 1942.<sup>38</sup> Also turned over to Wade were questions about a possible link between heartburn and the consumption of sugar in the coal miners' diet; his inquiries produced a response from the Technical Information Service of the Department of Reconstruction and Supply stating that there was no known connection, except that "heartburn may follow overeating of relatively indigestible foods."<sup>39</sup> Later, Wade listed some of his most important activities as the following: exploring the feasibility of producing oil from coal; organizing a "full employment committee" to bring government attention to unemployment in Cape Breton; helping to lead the movement for public libraries in Cape Breton; working on town plans for Glace Bay and Sydney; and producing a series of labour radio broadcasts.<sup>40</sup>

From the beginning, however, the most urgent task was to prepare for hearings of the Royal Commission on Coal, whose terms of reference included questions of production and distribution, employment, industrial relations, government assistance, and other conditions affecting the industry's future. A preliminary submission went forward in January 1945, signed by Jenkins, Ling, and Scott on behalf of the union membership: "though officially our views are those only of the Maritime coal miners, we believe that in the main we express the opinions and hopes of the great majority of working people in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and indeed, of all forward looking people in the Maritimes. This is so, we believe, because the fundamental interests of labor are also the basic interests of the great majority of Canadians." This opening statement signalled that the union planned to address issues not only from the standpoint of the coal miners but also from the perspective of regional and national development.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, District 26 contracted the country's leading labour lawyer, J.L. Cohen, to act as their counsel at the hearings and to prepare the union's brief. Wade assembled information and formulated ideas to pass on to Cohen. In March 1945, for instance, one letter considered the problem of making a

38. See, for instance, District Executive Board Minutes, 8 January 1948, MS 9.32, UMWA No. 4514 Papers, Dalhousie University Archives (hereafter DUA), Halifax, N.S. The files contain minutes for 1942–52, though some meetings are missing. For a discussion of the newspaper, see Michael Earle, "The 'People's Daily Paper': The Glace Bay Gazette under UMWA Ownership," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 7 (2004): 63–ix. Plans to buy the local daily newspaper originated in 1940, with support from the national CCF leadership, who were greatly encouraged by the affiliation of District 26 to the party and the election of coal miner Clarie Gillis as their first MP east of Manitoba. The newspaper was not always consistent in following UMW and CCF policy, explains Earle, but lost subscribers when it became more "tame and predictable." Union members voted to discontinue support in 1947, but it continued to be published by the staff as a cooperative before closing down in 1949.

39. F.G. Green to Wade, 21 May 1946, Reel #10024, PANS.

40. *Sydney Post-Record*, 30 May 1950.

41. Jenkins et al. to Coal Commission, 16 January 1945, with document, Reel #10023, PANS. There was no direct acknowledgement of Wade's part in preparing the submission.

reasonable estimate of the coal reserves available for production. Recognizing that the Maritimes could not fully meet Canada's domestic requirements for coal, Wade underlined the idea that "our position must be based on the fact that Canada must have *the largest possible domestic source of supply to take care of any stoppage in the supply of American coal*" and that this would require subventions to assist in the transportation of coal. However, it was also important to continue urging industrial expansion and diversification in the Maritimes. Any temptation to limit coal production to regional needs would have to be resisted on the grounds that "*a vast transfer of population*" out of the region was both objectionable and impracticable. Four days later, Wade followed up with notes on the wasteful policy of extracting the highest quality coal while leaving large reserves of lesser quality coal untouched. With more attention to washing and treating coal and better burning equipment, so-called inferior coal could be more fully utilized; however, the company seemed to make little or no effort to develop or install new facilities: "It harps on 'second quality' coal and refuses to mine it." The underlying criticism was that the coal companies were poor stewards of the resource: "All this, in my opinion, is a sign of apathy and lack of interest in expanding the market. It is the natural behaviour one would anticipate from a quasi-monopoly operating in isolation and in a one-industry, one-company area. It is Besco all over again." Later the same month Wade commented on the idea of "conservation" as applied to a non-renewable resource such as coal: "there can be no possible sense in trying to make a coal mine last 150 instead of 100 years. To attempt to postpone the inevitable is like trying to grasp the infinite; alright for theologians I dare say," adding that "we should strenuously oppose the notion of 'prolonging the agony' by stringing out Nova Scotia coal production as long as possible." Although a change in the economic base was ultimately inevitable, "conservation" should mean efficient extraction and utilization in order to promote the fullest practical use of the resource.<sup>42</sup>

These were only a few of the elements needed for the full brief, but working with Cohen was not an easy matter. The lawyer's work schedule was gruelling, as Cohen already represented several major unions, including the Mine-Mill and Smelter Workers and the United Auto Workers, and he was the favoured lawyer for civil liberties cases, especially when they involved people and organizations on the left. In 1945, Cohen was also advising the CCL on revisions to federal orders-in-council and appearing before an inquiry into the Ontario premier's use of provincial police to spy on unions and the CCF during the

42. Wade to J.L. Cohen, 12, 16, 26 March 1945, Reel #10024, PANS. Cohen, who had already assisted the Nova Scotia steelworkers in 1943 in making the case for national standards, appreciated that conditions in coal were even more central to a policy of balanced development. In May 1945, he noted: "I have seen many parts of Canada but I have yet to see so large an area of the Dominion which seems to submit so consistently to a low standard of living. If anything is to be done to remedy this, now is the time": Cohen to Pat Conroy, 12 May 1945, file 3124, vol. 42, J.L. Cohen fonds (hereafter JLCF), MG30 A94, LAC.

ongoing provincial election campaign. As his biographer Laurel Sefton MacDowell has shown, Cohen was a man of enormous energy who by this time was nearing physical exhaustion and personal collapse. In June one of the union leaders expressed concern that time was running short, adding that “Mr. Wade tells us he has the material all collected so that a start can be made immediately.” Soon afterwards Wade took on more responsibility for the brief and worked with one of Cohen’s assistants to complete work in time for the hearings in September in Sydney.<sup>43</sup> Cohen attended as counsel, but it fell to Wade to present and defend the 78-page brief.<sup>44</sup>

The union submission made a coherent, often eloquent, argument for the place of the coal industry in plans for postwar social reconstruction and economic development, especially as they affected standards in the Maritime Provinces. Like other documents of the time, the brief drew attention to the disastrous aftermath of World War I and the wider current acceptance of postwar planning, social security and full employment: “the Commission can make recommendations which if implemented will open a new chapter in Maritime history and one with a much happier ending than has been so far written. And just as certain is it that the Commission can be instrumental in opening the way to a full, rich life for the miner and his family – a life such as has hitherto been denied this winner of coal.” What the coal miners wanted was “a decent standard of living firmly based on continuous employment and decent wages, healthy social conditions and social amenities, ample cultural facilities and full opportunities for the advancement of their children.” Moreover, the coal miners, the argument continued, had a vested interest in the success of the industry: “The fact that the company leases the coal and owns and manages the equipment is not the basis for an interest and pride greater than ours who spend one-third of our adult lives in the pit and whose food, shelter, wives, children and pleasures are so largely dependent on efficient coal production.”

Turning to the question of government assistance to the industry, it was in the public interest to promote the stability of the industry, both to ensure a

43. Adam Scott to Cohen, 25 June 1945; Cohen to Wade, 11 July 1945; W. R. Dymond to Cohen, 26 July 1945, file 3120, vol. 40, JLCF, LAC. As MacDowell puts it, preparation of the brief required more research than Cohen expected and “eventually union people drafted the brief, under Cohen’s supervision.” *Renegade Lawyer: The Life of J.L. Cohen* (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History / University of Toronto Press, 2001), 203–204, 269 and Chapter 8 generally. Whether it was a manic-depressive condition or a reliance on drugs and alcohol to offset pain and insomnia, 1945 was the year of Cohen’s full collapse. In October, he took time off to rest before being drawn back to work, a process that culminated in a scandalous episode at Kirkland Lake in November. This led to his conviction for assault and his subsequent disbarment.

44. *Gloucester Bay Gazette*, 13, 14 September 1945. The headline in the *Gazette* underlined the union’s main message: “U.M.W Coal Brief Recommends Nationalization of Industry.” During the following weeks, the brief was excerpted in the pages of the *Gazette*, each instalment accompanied by a short introductory note by Wade.

reliable supply of fuel to the Canadian market and to prevent a massive depopulation of communities dependent on coal. Regarding concerns about falling productivity and labour shortages in the mines, the union argued that higher living standards were essential as an incentive to efficiency. Sadly, however, the coal towns lacked many basic requirements: no playgrounds, public libraries, well-baby clinics, or other elements of a healthy urban environment: "The Nova Scotia colliery town is, speaking without exaggeration, a scene of desolation, a picture of ugliness and the greatest aggregation of dirt and filth to be seen anywhere in Canada." With an aging work force, more would have to be done to attract younger men to go into the pits after they returned from the armed forces or finished school; and pension plans supported by employers, governments and workers could promote the retirement of coal miners at the age of 55. Modernization of the industry would require mechanization, but new machinery would face less resistance if linked to the opening of new seams, new public works and new industries. As for industrial relations, the charge was that management refused to accept the union as an equal partner and continued to follow outdated policies that bred antagonistic attitudes: "The 'Company' is like the smoke and the soot: an endless, wearying, destructive, senseless battle must be fought against an unyielding enemy." Dosco and its predecessors had earned their reputation for poor management and failed leadership over many years, and the logical answer was to bring coal under public ownership as a public utility.<sup>45</sup>

There would be a long wait for the royal commission to report, but the union's vision of postwar reconstruction remained at the centre of union

45. United Mine Workers of America, *Submission to the Royal Commission on Coal* (1945). The summary here draws on the useful discussion in Courtney MacIsaac, "The Coal Miners on Strike: Cape Breton, 1947," MA thesis, University of New Brunswick, 2007, Chapter 1, 14–23 especially. The plan for nationalization attracted a vigorous cross-examination by Dosco's longtime general counsel, Lionel Forsyth, who later became president of the corporation. In addition to questioning Wade on levels of investment, subsidy, productivity, markets, employment, and wages required for the industry to succeed, he demanded details of the plans for a government agency to operate the industry. Wade admitted that the union did not have such a blueprint but was making the argument at the level of public interest, much as had been done in the original creation of Ontario Hydro, Canadian National Railways and other public enterprises. In tense exchanges, Forsyth called Wade's approach "idealistic" or "utopian" while Wade described some of Forsyth's questioning as "childish." Cohen interrupted several times to point out that "there is no equivocation about the position of the Union that there should be public ownership of this enterprise" and that "coal is an industry that inherently should be publicly and nationally owned." See Testimony, 13 September 1945, Royal Commission on Coal, RG33-63, vol. 37, file 40, LAC, 3556-3653. The position of the union was hardly surprising, as it had been adopted as early as 1918; moreover, the new Labour government elected in Britain in May 1945 was already taking steps to establish a National Coal Board. At the request of the commission, however, Cohen and Wade provided the text of a resolution from the 1943 District 26 convention to confirm that the union officially favoured "a system of operation and control by the Government of coal mining industry of this country;" they also provided a statement from the executive officers, 10 September 1945, reaffirming this position. See Cohen to J.J. Frawley, 12 October 1945, file 3120, vol. 40, JLCF, LAC.

policy. When the Halifax *Chronicle* attacked union proposals for public ownership of the coal industry, Wade repeated the basic proposition that coal was a key industrial material and a scarce one in Canada, essential to industrial production and national defence and requiring full employment: “For this reason alone there exists a *prima facie* case for treating coal as a public utility.” Wade argued that it was wrong to refer to the industry as a “business” to which ordinary methods could be applied: “It is a very grave disservice to our province to want to apply to this key industry (nationally and provincially it is a key industry) those methods of operation that might work to the public benefit in the manufacture of thimbles or nylon stockings.” Nor had the newspaper remembered their own editorial statements of a year earlier, which the union had quoted in their submission to the Carroll Commission: “There is only one sensible scheme before Canada in this important sphere of her economy. Coal should be declared a national matter and the industry should be made a national industry *in which the federal government interests herself to the limit*.”<sup>46</sup>

While much of Wade’s work focused on the case that coal was essential to the national economy, this was inseparable from the argument that the coal miners were entitled to improved living conditions. He developed this theme in the Labour Day edition of the *Glace Bay Gazette* in September 1945: “Community planning means tearing down sub-standard houses and building new, modern houses according to a plan. It means laying out parks and playgrounds. It means building community recreation centres, paving our streets. It means organized sports activities and facilities, especially for our children. It means proper bathing facilities on our beaches and the construction of picnic grounds with all the necessary equipment in our many beauty spots.” Later that month, he attended a meeting of Glace Bay’s new Town Planning Board with an expert from the Housing Administration of the federal Department of Finance; later, a planning specialist from Halifax visited Glace Bay and other coal towns. According to newspaper reports, Wade explained to the council that “Government loans will not be made to any town which has not properly prepared its town planning.” Soon after, he was assisting in a housing survey in Ward 3, with the help of union locals and community groups; he supervised volunteer enumerators who took a list of 25 questions (and ten supplementary ones) door to door. Earlier that month, he also spoke to a local community planning club about improvements to beaches, parks and playgrounds.<sup>47</sup>

46. Clippings, MG 19.6, E3, United Mine Workers of America, Beaton Institute. The *Chronicle* references are to 26 April 1946, 1 April 1945. MacDowell notes, however, that Cohen came to the conclusion that the commission was not likely to endorse public ownership. As he wrote to Wade, “I had hoped that the Ottawa sessions would assume an aspect and a status which would enable the whole subject to be handled upon a more elevated basis than had previously prevailed but that did not by any means develop.” See Cohen to Wade, 27 October 1945, file 3120, vol. 40, JLCF, LAC.

47. *Glace Bay Gazette*, 1, 25 September, 5, 13, 30 October, 2, 8, 17 November 1945.

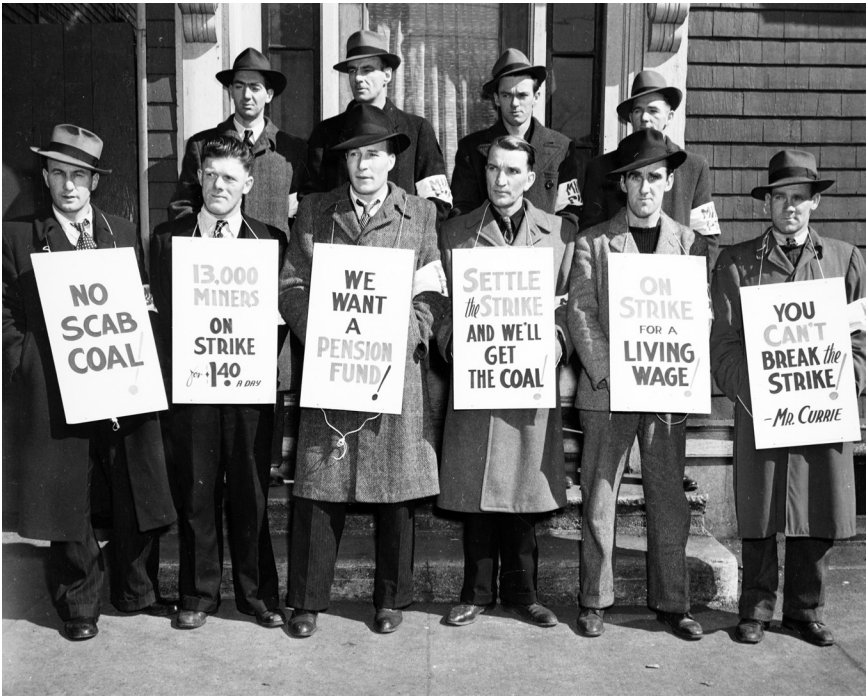
Meanwhile, the union was preparing for an aggressive round of collective bargaining. The mood was apparent at the district convention in October 1946, which called for a wage increase of \$2.50 a day, a reduced work-week, and a pension fund supported by the coal royalties. When the union went into negotiations, armed with a strike mandate, Wade supplied data on coal production, living standards and wages, and helped assess the company's counter-proposals. When the company refused to discuss a pension plan and argued that any wage increases must depend on greater productivity, negotiations broke down. By this time the union had reduced its wage demand to \$1.40 a day and was preparing to go on strike when the contract expired on 1 February. There was a brief government intervention, but the long strike was soon underway, and it lasted through to June. In their expectations for significant gains, the coal miners were adding to the high tide of strike activity across the country during the immediate postwar years. As Courtney MacIsaac has put it in her study of these events, "The coal miners' expectations and views had solidified around the idea of major improvements in status and conditions, and neither the employers' resistance nor the government's efforts to stave off the conflict were succeeding."<sup>48</sup>

The strike involved an extended test of wills, and Wade helped to mount a publicity campaign to keep up local solidarities and attract wider support. His "strike publicity" included leaflets, releases and open letters that were distributed to daily newspapers, press agencies, labour newspapers, heads of unions, federal members of parliament and members of the provincial legislature. There were radio talks on the CBC network, as well as on Nova Scotia stations such as CJFX, CJCB and CHNS and local radio in strong union towns such as Hamilton and Oshawa. Wade was particularly pleased with an impressive half-page advertisement, "What Have They Been Telling *you* About *us*?" that ran in newspapers in British Columbia, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. Other ads carried titles such as "Dosco Falsehood," "Another Dosco Falsehood," "Yet Another Dosco Falsehood," and "It Doesn't Add Up."<sup>49</sup> One short leaflet written by Wade, *Robbing the Mines*, drew upon evidence in the recently released royal commission report to document Dosco's failure to reinvest in the coal industry. He noted that from 1930 to 1944 Dominion Coal and its subsidiaries paid out \$10 million in interest and dividends to investors as well as \$8 million for the redemption of bonds and shares, while investing only \$5 million in

48. MacIsaac, "The Coal Miners on Strike," 47. The tabling of the royal commission report in January aggravated the union's discontent, as the report proposed only limited government intervention and support for the industry. Wade's response repeated the longstanding argument that a full programme of industrial modernization and social reform could be achieved only under a national fuel policy supported by public ownership. See C. B. Wade, "Coal Should Be Public Utility," *National Affairs Monthly* 4, 9 (November 1947): 334–343.

49. "Notes for Report to Board, September 16/47," Reel #10027, PANS. In addition to the list of "strike publicity," another summary included 37 additional articles and studies prepared from September 1946 to September 1947.





**Coal Miners on Strike, 1947. Photographer: Allan Foley.**

96-1036-27724. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University.

capital expenditures. Where the royal commission gave this policy a cautious criticism, Wade linked the reduction of investment to concerns about low productivity and Dosco's failure to ensure the future of the industry: "It is surely obvious that productivity must fall, sooner or later, when an industry already burdened with obsolete and worn-out equipment is robbed so efficiently."<sup>50</sup>

In another initiative, the union invited a Toronto graphic artist to visit the mining district to support their appeals for assistance in the strike. Although Avrom Yanovsky was best known for his political cartoons in the Communist press, the drawings he did for the union depicted human-interest views of the social landscape, including a street scene in New Aberdeen, an interior scene of a miner's home, a sketch of a Glace Bay singer, a portrait of a striker's child, a view of bootleg coal pits, and another one of pickets on a roadway.<sup>51</sup>

50. C.B. Wade, *Robbing the Mines* (Glace Bay [1947]). For a similar discussion a year earlier, see "Does Dosco Make Profits?", an editorial by Wade published in the CCF regional newspaper, *Maritime Commonwealth* (Halifax), 8 August 1946.

51. Several sketches made at the time appeared in the *Canadian Tribune*, 3 May 1947, and in the *Glace Bay Gazette*, 23 May 1947. Four lithographs based on this work were included in a



When the strike came to an end, there was still an atmosphere of distrust. Members approved a settlement that gave them an increase of \$1.00 a day. And there was another 40 cents if production levels increased in the first six months, the kind of provision the union had long been reluctant to support on the grounds that productivity depended more on management than the miners. The return to work was not smooth, as there were objections to changes in working conditions that many miners believed were contrary to the agreement or still under negotiation. In a comment in the *Glace Bay Gazette*, Wade observed that the company had lost its chance "to gain the confidence and honest appreciation of its production problems." Moreover, he added, the company was not alone in failing to understand that the strike was more than a wage dispute: "How many people have been blind to the implications of this strike? The people who have seen it only as a matter of dollars and tons of coal that might be earned and that might be mined if only the men returned work. The people who were too nearsighted and concerned about their immediate money problems to realize that this was much more than a protest over wages. This strike was not simply a protest, it was an education."<sup>52</sup> It was difficult to avoid the conclusion that the strike was a setback for the union's optimistic hopes for the future. The royal commission had failed to support public ownership, and although a pay raise had been achieved, the concerns about social conditions had not been adequately addressed. MacIsaac has observed that the strike may be regarded as "the last gasp of the old school Cape Breton labour leader for whom overthrow of the inherently unjust relationship between employee and employer was the ultimate goal." It was an effective strike, she concludes, but "the longterm goals of industrial democracy were not greatly advanced."<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, as the largest union in the province, District 26 was also directing attention to issues of concern to other workers. For instance, when the Nova Scotia Trade Union Act was revised in 1947, even though the coal miners remained under federal jurisdiction, Wade prepared an analysis of the changes and appeared at hearings in Halifax. Besides identifying objections and amendments of concern to labour, he outlined a set of principles to promote stable industrial relations on the basis of strong unions in all sectors of the economy. It was desirable to "settle differences by negotiations in good faith without interruption of operations." Employees should accept the right of businesses "to plan, direct and manage the business so as neither health nor safety are endangered." Employers should recognize the right of workers to union representation and "the highest standards of wages and other working conditions attainable." And governments should address the "inherent inequality of economic or bargaining strength" between workers and employers and "enact

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folio of his work published in 1952.

52. *Glace Bay Gazette*, 31 May 1947, as quoted by MacIsaac, "The Coal Miners on Strike," 75.

53. MacIsaac, "The Coal Miners on Strike," 78.

labour relations legislation that will, in so far as legislation can, modify this inherent inequality, in favour of the worker.” This was not a recipe for social revolution but for accommodation, a set of conditions for the integration of unions into the evolving labour relations system, and it would especially benefit unions with less bargaining power and political influence than the coal miners. The document was adopted by the provincial Federation of Labour for presentation to the provincial government.<sup>54</sup>

There was much more for the unions to do, and in an article on “The Unorganized in Nova Scotia” Wade noted that only about 25 per cent of the labour force was unionized. Despite the difficulties, there was a pressing need to bring unionism to new sectors: “the great majority require a trade union for the protection and advancement of their interests.” For many, it was a matter of achieving full citizenship: “They also require a union if they are to become active and influential as citizens in a way that the casting of a vote on election day can never by itself, make possible.” Wade’s discussion went on to single out the 25,000 “girls and women” whose low wages were limiting the province’s purchasing power and undermining union efforts to raise the standard of living. He reported that one survey found that 10,000 women workers earned an average of \$14.00 a week, and that women workers were employed for average wages as low as 37 cents an hour in the textile factories and 30 cents an hour at telephone companies. Wade pointed to the “smug and sanctimonious” language of a government report that boasted of a \$1 per week increase in the minimum wage for women workers – at the end of a seven-year period when the cost of living had increased at least 25 per cent. This was “a scandalous, disgraceful business,” he concluded, and “the obvious solution is to get these workers organized.”<sup>55</sup>

In another initiative, this one concerned with the fortunes of the steel industry in Nova Scotia, Wade prepared a list of questions to submit to C.D. Howe, Minister of Reconstruction and Supply. The purpose was to urge the federal government to investigate Dosco’s failure to expand basic steel production and develop an export trade in secondary steel products. Howe’s predictable response was that “it is not considered a function of the Crown to compel a privately owned corporation to expand its operations beyond a point considered financially and economically sound by that corporation’s management.” Wade assembled Howe’s replies to this and other questions in a press release

54. *Glace Bay Gazette*, 10 May 1947, 30, 31 March 1948. The Act was notable for excluding fishermen from the category of “employees” at a time when the Canadian Fishermen’s Union was engaged in a struggle for collective bargaining. For discussion of the context, see the chapters by Kirby Abbott, “The Coal Miners and the Law in Nova Scotia: From the 1864 Combination of Workmen Act to the 1947 Trade Union Act,” and E. Jean Nisbet, “Free Enterprise at Its Best: The State, National Sea, and the Defeat of the Nova Scotia Fishermen, 1946–1947,” in Michael Earle, ed., *Workers and the State in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989), 24–46, 170–190.

55. Wade, “The Unorganized in Nova Scotia” (July 1947), Reel #10027, PANS.

that included the union's observations on his statements, noting that "the solution to the difficulty raised by Mr. Howe would be to nationalize the whole industry as apparently, they are going to do in England." The five-page package was distributed to the press with a covering statement signed by Jenkins: "This speaks for itself – nothing could be plainer. In wartime the Crown was willing to 'compel' corporations to do all kinds of things. But apparently it is quite unwilling in any way to interfere with private industry when a great social problem such as chronic unemployment in the Maritimes, demands such interference."<sup>56</sup>

Some of Wade's most striking original writing was a series of nine articles prepared for the *Gloucester Bay Gazette* on "Centralization and Unemployment." Here he applied the Marxist concept of the concentration and centralization of capital to the conditions of underemployment in the region:

The location of industry follows certain laws of capitalist growth. It is ridiculous to blame government for those laws; for they are brought into action by capital owners, not government. What can, and should, be done is to demand that government restrict the working of such of these laws as are harmful. But if one is to demand that government de-centralize industry in favour of a more even social and economic development of every portion of Canada, then it must be clearly understood that one is interfering with the autonomy and profit interests of large-scale industry.

Moreover, Wade did not hesitate to state the political conclusions that followed: "It is essential that the Maritime people recognize that capitalism, by its own momentum of growth as it were, leads to centralization. But this centralization need not be merely geographic; it inevitably involves also a centralization of ownership, of control and of funds for investment in industry, in every area. Thus, the problem of the Maritimes is *not* one only of centralization of industry in Central Canada; *it is also one of centralization of big business control both in Central Canada and Nova Scotia itself.*" This kind of language, pointing to capitalism as the essential cause of regional disparity, was rarely heard in the political economy of the region prior to the popularization of underdevelopment theories in the 1970s.<sup>57</sup>

56. C.D. Howe to Jenkins, 21 September 1948, MG 19.6, E1, Beaton Institute. The original questions were submitted to Howe on 16 June 1948. The press release with union comments and Jenkins's statement are also in this file.

57. "Centralization and Unemployment," Reel #10027, PANS. In his evidence before the royal commission in 1945, Wade stressed "the burning social question of the decentralization of Canadian industry" as part of a programme of full employment and regional development: Testimony, 13 September 1945, 3639–3653. For later explorations see, for instance, "The Nine Myths of Regional Disparity," and "Canada's 'Eastern Question': A Reader's Guide to Regional Underdevelopment," *Canadian Dimension* (July 1978): 18–21, 37–41 and other features in this issue of the magazine. Note also David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Industry and the Rise and Fall of the British Empire Steel Corporation," *Acadiensis* VII, 2 (Autumn 1977): 3–34, which is helpful in explaining the corporate history of the industry and the origins of Dominion Steel and Coal in 1928.

During this period, Wade also produced radio programming under the title “Labour Leads the Way.”<sup>58</sup> The surviving script for a broadcast on the Sydney radio station CJCJ on 11 June 1948 offers some insight into the sophistication of Wade’s approach to public history. In explaining the origins of Davis Day, the coal miners’ annual day of “remembrance and tribute,” the text begins with a narrator reviewing the history of coal as a struggle to harness nature and to achieve freedom from exploitation, concluding with a call for historical recognition of the worker: “For every scientist, a thousand working men have died. But their names are not engraved on a tablet of fame; their names are forgotten. And yet without the worker, without the man who pits his physique and skill against nature, the raw materials of this planet would have remained nothing but raw materials, of use to no one.” The narrator then introduces a series of events in the story of the Nova Scotia coal miners, from 1 September 1879 (the founding of the Provincial Workmen’s Association) and 21 February 1891 (the Springhill mine disaster) through to 31 March 1919 (recognition of the UMW and the eight-hour day) and on into the labour wars of the 1920s (“more years of struggle against exploitation and despotism”), including 1925 (“a year of grief, of hunger and sacrifice and heroism”) and the shooting of William Davis by company police on 11 June. Last to be noted was the coal miners’ most recent struggle in 1947: “but this four months is part of the present, it is too near an event to be history.” The script is punctuated with cues for (unspecified) music and (unscripted) spoken comments by witnesses to the history, including ministers from churches in Glace Bay and New Waterford and former district presidents John W. MacLeod and D.W. Morrison. Finally, a concluding statement by Jenkins is given in full (as written by Wade):

For at least 100 years many working people have dreamed of creating the kind of social and economic institution in which the man working for himself will know he is working also for the common good; and when he works for the common good he will know he is working for himself. So, just as we have built machines and mastered nature with them, we must now build a society which we control.... In this way we can carry on the work and bring true the dreams, of those we now remember.<sup>59</sup>

58. One participant was Jane Wisdom, Glace Bay’s pioneer municipal social worker, who in 1948 attacked the province’s archaic poor laws and discussed the problems of providing housing for the aged. Wisdom’s approach to social work was rooted in a tradition of individual case work, but she welcomed the union’s support for a full programme of social security. Moreover, during the 1947 strike, Wisdom helped to administer community-based assistance to the children of the strikers. See Suzanne Morton, *Wisdom, Justice, and Charity: Canadian Social Welfare through the Life of Jane B. Wisdom, 1884–1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 208–210.

59. “Radio Script” (1948), MG 19.6, E2, Beaton Institute. Other broadcasts also had historical content. Wade has recalled dramatizing excerpts from the hearings of the 1925 Royal Commission on Coal, a source he also used in preparing his manuscript on the history of the union. Wade took some of the speaking parts, usually those of management and government figures due to his own educated English accent. For the use of radio by the Extension Department at St. Francis Xavier University, including a “Labour School of the Air,” see Mark

## The Dismissal

THERE HAD BEEN ANXIETIES ABOUT WADE from the start of his appointment. As early as December 1944, the veteran labour leader Silby Barrett (the former international board member for District 26 and a key figure in the leadership of the Canadian Congress of Labour) wrote to inform his longtime ally, UMW International President John L. Lewis, about Wade's arrival: "this man has been hired by District #26 as Research Director. He has been very active since taking his position with the District in regard to Communist Activities. I think that something should be done about it or later on we may have more trouble than what we anticipate."<sup>60</sup> Wade's politics also seemed to be general knowledge at Dominion Steel and Coal. In a 1968 interview, the company's former Director of Public Relations responded to a question from history professor Tony Mackenzie by stating that Wade was a Communist and that "he was under observation all the time he was here."<sup>61</sup> This was also the opinion of the Catholic church in the mining districts, where even sympathetic clergy at the time of the 1947 strike were certain, as Peter Ludlow puts it, "that the leaders of those miners were communists (especially, so the priests argued, the researcher C.B. Wade)."<sup>62</sup>

Wade was aware that his presence could cause controversy and recalled an invitation for the union president to speak at St. Francis Xavier University. When Jenkins received the request, he asked Wade to go in his place. Wade remembers that his car was met at the Canso Strait by a group of sympathetic students who urged him to turn back, saying "We can't guarantee your safety." His reply was that he was the designated spokesman for the union and that you could not turn the union back on account of an audience that might be disturbed by the prospect of a "red" speaker. They drove on, and halfway to Antigonish a second group hailed him and again urged him to turn back. When Wade reached the hall, it was packed, and full of argument. There was a tape recorder at the speaker's place, apparently not a usual arrangement at the

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G. McGowan, "The People's University of the Air: St. Francis Xavier University Extension, Social Christianity, and the Creation of CJFX," *Acadiensis* xLI, 1 (Winter/Spring 2012): 5–20.

60. See President's Correspondence 1944/1945, United Mine Workers of America Archives [formerly in Washington, D.C., now at the Special Collections Library, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa.]

61. Ernest Beaton Interview, T-159, Beaton Institute.

62. Peter Ludlow, *The Canny Scot: Archbishop James Morrison of Antigonish* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 235–238. For his part, Bishop Morrison (who had been in office since 1912) continued to battle the "powers of darkness" represented by Bolshevism, in line with Vatican Cold War policy. This included asking parish priests to fill out questionnaires reporting the names of known communists. Meanwhile, Moses Coady, the veteran founder of the St. Francis Xavier University Extension Department, proposed that the diocese train what Ludlow describes as "worker-experts in the field of labour economics."

time. Wade pushed the machine aside. He recalled that the gesture won over most of the audience and believed that his presentation was well-received.<sup>63</sup>

Although no individual surveillance file was located in surviving intelligence records, there were references to Wade in more general files on “communist” or “subversive” activities in District 26.<sup>64</sup> In retrospect, they seem relatively scant. No notice was taken of his appointment as research director and his name does not seem to appear until February 1945, when Communist organizers from Halifax arrived to discourage the union from going out on a wartime strike. During their stay, they were “frequently and secretly visited by Professor Wade in their Hotel rooms.” A note that “Wade is Research Director for the UMW of A Dist 26,” may imply that he was not yet well known to the local RCMP. He was also mentioned in December 1946, as the union was preparing for the 1947 strike: “a scientific survey which is said to have been made by Professor Wade on the existing coal supplies on hand in Canada.” After the strike, however, he attracted more attention. In March 1948, an RCMP officer in Glace Bay noted that Wade was having “increasing influence” with the union leadership but that “Thus far Wade has stuck to straight Trade Union and Worker-Political subjects, with no mention of Communism.” Wade’s appearances as a speaker at local union meetings were described as part of an effort to address the continuing unrest among members: “It is the hope of leading LPPers that Wade can bring the rank and file to lean on him as the District officers are now doing. It is the hope of the District officers that Wade in approaching the Local Unions, may eliminate some of the Anti-Executive feeling now existing.” Shortly after that “Professor Wade” was identified in a police report as a member of the LPP and described as “the intellectual force behind the Union.” A rumour that attempts would be made “by rightist elements” to have Wade removed from office at the union convention in August 1948 proved to be exaggerated. When he gave his report, Wade stated that the work of his department had “increased the authority and prestige of the union in business and government circles” and “had been able to make the policies of the UMW better known throughout Canada.” President Jenkins reassured delegates that Wade was an efficient and valued employee and that there had been no criticism of the research director from any member of the executive board.<sup>65</sup>

63. Wade, interview by author, 1974.

64. “United Mine Workers of America, District 26, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Communist Activities Within,” file A-2006-00529, RG146, Canadian Security Intelligence Service records, LAC [cited below as RCMP files]. The material was released following an Access to Information request. A number of sections were heavily redacted. Following an appeal to the Information Commissioner, a second release with some additional material followed in 2015. Internal evidence indicates that there was also a separate file on Wade himself; however, a search of records did not locate this file and it is believed to have been destroyed.

65. Reports in RCMP files, 22 September 1945; 4 December 1946; 22 March 1948; 31 March 1948; clipping, *Sydney Post-Record*, 4 September 1948. There was an attack on Wade at the



Things changed on the morning of Saturday 20 May 1950, when Jenkins called Wade into his office and told him that the interests of the union required him to resign. When Wade refused, Jenkins told him that he was dismissed, effective immediately. Within hours, his office door was padlocked. A Canadian Press dispatch went out across the country, stating that Jenkins had said the dismissal was “part of a showdown for the removal of Communist influence,” although Jenkins later denied making any statement to the press.<sup>66</sup> Reports were greeted with relief at UMW headquarters in Washington, where the secretary-treasurer, Thomas L. Kennedy, made a handwritten note indicating that no action should be taken on the matter: “Wade is supposed to be a Communist or fellow traveller. Jenkins told me over the phone last Friday that he fired him. He should have done it a long time ago.”<sup>67</sup>

When the union’s executive board met a few days later, Jenkins came under attack for his action. “It was the meanest thing ever done,” said one board member, “Mr. Wade always done what he was asked.” Vice-President Ling introduced a motion that the board disapprove of Wade’s dismissal and that he be reinstated. For his part, Jenkins claimed that “he never found fault with Jim Wade’s work” and that he defended him at conventions and before the international union: “I always stood up for him as long as he was keeping with the organization.” Ling then revised his motion to include the statement that “because this Board has no knowledge of any activities on the part of C.B. Wade detrimental to the interest of UMW of A, the Board disapprove of his dismissal and ask for his re-instatement.” Jenkins went on to add that he could not say Wade was a Communist, but that “I have lost confidence in him and I know that he was not working in the interest of the Union.” Nonetheless, Ling’s motion of disapproval was adopted by a vote of 7 to 2.<sup>68</sup>

As Michael Earle has noted, “blatant red-baiting” had not been popular among the coal miners, but it seems clear that Jenkins was feeling the pressure of the deepening Cold War atmosphere of the times, which was coming to a head with the expulsion of several left-led unions from the Trades and Labour

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district convention in 1946 but a motion of confidence was adopted and Jenkins stated: “I will not let any man’s politics interfere with his job. All that matters is that he does his work well.” *Glance Bay Gazette*, 30 October 1946, as cited in an unpublished paper by Michael Earle, “The Cold War in Cape Breton: Miners’ and Steelworkers’ Unions, 1949–50.”

66. *Globe and Mail*, 22 May 1950; *Sydney Post-Record*, 22 May 1950.

67. The clippings and notation are in President’s Office - Correspondence, District 26 1950 1951, UMW Archives.

68. District Executive Board Minutes, 26 May 1950, DUA. Jenkins appeared to attribute pressure for Wade’s removal to the international union when he stated that keeping him on staff “would nullify in part certain basic principles as annunciated [sic] within the International Constitution.” The UMW had long maintained an anti-communist clause in its constitution, but it was not enforced with any consistency during the CIO period. Moreover, Robert Stewart and other leftists often described themselves as agreeing with the LPP on many issues without being members or accepting party discipline.



Congress and the Canadian Congress of Labour. The most dramatic example occurred in the spring of 1949, when the “Communist-dominated” Canadian Seamen’s Union (CSU) was broken by the collaboration of shipping companies and government authorities and replaced by the Seafarers’ International Union (SIU). When Dosco ore carriers arrived at the Sydney steel plant with “scab” SIU crews in the midst of the CSU strike, union solidarities were severely tested. District 26 had already donated \$1,000 to the CSU, and the secretary-treasurer, Adam Scott, went on CJC radio to denounce the SIU crews as strikebreakers who should be boycotted by local unions. There were tense scenes at the docks until the leader of the Steelworkers local, under pressure from union headquarters, announced that their union would not interfere with the unloading of the ships. In this situation, Jenkins proved reluctant to intervene in support of the CSU, and the episode undermined his credentials as a militant leader.<sup>69</sup> This in turn encouraged the former AMW secretary-treasurer, Robert Stewart, who was among the most vocal supporters of the CSU among the coal miners, to challenge Jenkins for the presidency, as he had also done in 1946. There was a complication in early 1950, however, when Stewart led a two-day walkout in a dispute at the mine where he worked. This gave Dosco grounds to terminate Stewart’s employment. Under established rules, the case went to an umpire, and when the decision went against him, Stewart was careful to maintain his union membership while the decision was under further appeal. But as local union nominations for Stewart arrived at the district offices and the date of the June election approached, Jenkins made plans to declare Stewart ineligible for office.

This was the immediate local context for Wade’s removal. Jenkins had come to office “from the pits” with a reputation as “a fighter,” Wade recalled, but “his position got to him, as happens often with union leaders.” Wade was not alone in believing that his dismissal was part of a deal by Jenkins to win support from the Catholic Church in return for getting rid of the alleged “red” in his office.<sup>70</sup> Was Jenkins further provoked by word of the discussions at a meeting on 14 May, where Cape Breton LPP members gathered to hear the visiting A.A. MacLeod discuss the situation in District 26? According to the police report of the meeting, MacLeod told members that the party wanted to see Jenkins defeated and replaced by Stewart. Jenkins may well have concluded that an

69. Earle, “The Cold War in Cape Breton.” The developments in Cape Breton are also documented in the RCMP files for these months. In addition, see *George MacEachern: An Autobiography* (Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1987), 134–137, and, more generally, Jim Green, *Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen’s Union* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1986).

70. Wade, interview by author, 1974. An editorial in *Steelworker and Miner*, 3 June 1950, claimed that an influential former UMW officer had told Jenkins: “Fire Wade and you have ‘our support.’” A similar claim is reported in an interview cited by Earle, “The Cold War in Cape Breton.”

attack on Wade would strengthen his case against Stewart.<sup>71</sup> The announcement of Wade's removal was followed the next day by the declaration that Stewart was not eligible for office, and in this Jenkins was supported by the UMW international office.<sup>72</sup>

After the district board called for his reinstatement, Wade appealed to the union membership to hold Jenkins to account: "It is not the firing of Wade out of the district office that is the issue; it is the tearing up of the constitution and the firing of union democracy out of the district office that is the issue." His dismissal, he said, was contrary to the district constitution, which stated that suspensions were subject to approval by the executive board. Jenkins was attempting to use charges against him, said Wade, in order to demonstrate that he was sufficiently "anti-Red" to continue in office as president: "Jenkins in his determination to rule District 26 will stop at nothing, not even at the meanest smear tactics, not even at the destruction of my reputation for honest objective work on behalf of the coal miners." Moreover, he added, the attack on his integrity was especially damaging: "To someone in my profession such a reputation is not only prized for itself, but it is the most important asset one has in earning a livelihood."<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, the headlines in *Steelworker and Miner*, the popular local radical weekly edited by M.A. Mackenzie, declared: "Boss Jenkins Becomes Dictator." Wade was described as "a modest self-effacing man whose sole desire was to serve the union and its members well." Now he was the victim of Jenkins's unscrupulous wishes to please the corporation and advance his own ambitions by repudiating "the man who has literally carried Jenkins on his back for the past five years, the man who wrote every speech Jenkins ever delivered, who prepared all the able briefs presented in the name of the union to governments and other public bodies."<sup>74</sup>

Still, the damage was done. Jenkins returned to office unopposed, and the June election also saw several leaders associated with the left go down to defeat. The *Sydney Post-Record* described the results as a victory for "safe and sane and responsible leadership."<sup>75</sup> The Wade case did not go away, however. It

71. Report on meeting of 19 May 1950, RCMP file. Wade was not listed among those in attendance.

72. Stewart may have overestimated the extent of his support, but he received nominations from fifteen locals against twelve for Jenkins. Later, in 1952, Stewart came within a few hundred votes of being elected mayor of Glace Bay. Stewart's disqualification was debated at the executive board meeting, where Scott reported that the international union instructed him to carry out the orders of the president: see District Executive Board Minutes, 26 May 1950, which also includes the umpire's ruling in Stewart's case.

73. "Statement Issued by C.B. Wade," 30 May 1950, RCMP file.

74. *Steelworker and Miner*, 27 May 1950.

75. *Sydney Post-Record*, 15 June 1950. Three of the board members who had held office since 1942, vice-president Thomas Ling, international board member John Alex MacDonald and Glace Bay sub-district member Allan MacPhee were defeated by "long-time fighters against left-wingers in Cape Breton labour circles." Clipping, *Ottawa Journal*, 14 June 1950, RCMP file.

was on the agenda when the District Executive Board met in September 1950. As the previous board meeting had voted to reinstate Wade, Jenkins wanted the matter concluded. When members noted that no reasons had been given for Wade's dismissal, Jenkins explained that "he was not working in the best interest of the membership of this union" and that the attempt to reinstate him placed the district "in a grave position with the International." Scott, the secretary-treasurer, argued that "a motion passed by the Board is law" and that Wade was due his wages unless some action was taken for his dismissal or resignation. The union solicitor was brought in to provide advice. Louis Dubinsky explained that Wade's lawyer had already secured a writ for payment of wages for June and July and had initiated a suit for reinstatement and damages of \$10,000. From a legal standpoint, Wade had not yet been dismissed. It was then agreed to request Wade's resignation, a solution that Scott viewed as being in the best interests of the union. After further consultations, Dubinsky advised that Wade was prepared to submit his resignation and accept a cheque of \$1,050 for three months' pay.<sup>76</sup>

With Wade's departure, a page was turning in the history of District 26, but there was no question that the need for a research director had been established. Within days after Wade's dismissal there was speculation about a replacement.<sup>77</sup> However, it was not until April 1951 that Jenkins submitted names of candidates to the board. Wade's successor, James Morrison, held BA (1949) and MA (1950) degrees in English and Economics from Acadia University; moreover, as the son of the former District 26 president D.W. Morrison, he must have been considered a politically reliable choice for the deradicalization and normalization of labour relations in the 1950s.<sup>78</sup>

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The veteran secretary-treasurer, Adam Scott, was re-elected; following his death in 1951 he was replaced by Michael Higgins, a younger miner who had been favoured by the left in the 1950 election. Jenkins himself was defeated in the 1954 district election by Thomas McLachlan, the widely-respected son of the early leader of District 26. Following this, Jenkins worked for Dominion Coal as a mine inspector and also served as chairman of the board for the Glace Bay General Hospital. See *Cape Breton Post*, 12 June 1979.

76. District Executive Board Minutes, 1–2 September 1950, Reel #10024, PANS.

77. The reference was to Henry Harm, a skilled worker who emigrated from Norway in 1929 and worked as a papermaker at the mill in Dalhousie, New Brunswick before his appointment as Atlantic region organizer for the CCL in 1945. Harm denied he had been approached about the position. *Sydney Post-Record*, 30 May 1950, summary in RCMP file. See also *Steelworker and Miner*, 3 June 1950.

78. Morrison's 1950 Acadia University MA thesis in economics was titled "A History of Labor-Management [sic] in the Coal Mining Industry of Nova Scotia." Interestingly, the bibliography cited an interview with Jenkins dated 26 May 1950, which apparently took place in the midst of the controversy over Wade's dismissal. The concluding paragraph of the thesis, 112, offered a conciliatory prescription for the future: "It is essential, therefore, that the open wounds of the past be allowed to heal in an atmosphere of trust and understanding. They will heal in time as men who have been trained in the arts of peace replace those who have been trained in the arts of war, and as men replace the experience of industrial strife with merely the memory

## The History

MEANWHILE, THERE WAS THE HISTORY, literally left behind in Wade's pad-locked office. At the time of his dismissal, Wade identified the manuscript as one of his major accomplishments: "The first history ever written of any Canadian trade union was written by me; this refers to the history of District 26 which though completed is still in manuscript form."<sup>79</sup> The manuscript may have had its genesis in 1945, when J.L. Cohen asked Wade to prepare "a very careful historical account" on industrial relations for the use of the Carroll Commission. With time running short, Wade completed eleven pages of notes in October but was not satisfied with the result. Nor was Cohen, who returned an annotated copy with nine pages of questions and comments, suggesting that more "care and time" would be required to meet the challenge of writing an effective historical account.<sup>80</sup> By early 1950, Wade was more satisfied with his efforts. Moreover, his work had attracted interest, and Wade was invited to speak about it at sessions of the Maritime Labour Institute at Dalhousie University at the end of May 1950. Events intervened, however, and the lecture

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of past differences and the experience of successful negotiation." Meanwhile, the opening of Xavier Junior College in Sydney in 1951, with the support of a new bishop in Antigonish, marked another initiative to influence the prevailing discourse in the industrial community. For the origins of the college, see James D. Cameron, *For the People: A History of St. Francis Xavier University* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 292–299, and Robert Morgan, *Perseverance: The Story of Cape Breton's University College, 1952–2002* (Sydney: UCCB Press, 2004), 13–31, which includes evidence that representatives from the coal and steel unions were included on the college advisory board formed in 1952. The emergence of a local catholic social gospel may be traced back to the 1910s and 1920s and became broadly accepted in the 1950s and 1960s, when community responses to deindustrialization in coal and steel drew to a remarkable degree on the populist Marxism embedded in union policies of earlier decades, including those articulated by intellectuals such as Wade. This is apparent in accounts of the Sydney steel crisis of 1967, such as Andy Parnaby, "'The Counterfeit Principles of a Free-Enterprise System': The Antigonish Movement and the Sydney Steel Crisis of 1967," paper presented at the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, Mount Allison University, May 2016. See also "Report on Sydney Steel," *Canadian Dimension* (February–March 1980): 33–52.

79. "Statement Issued by C.B. Wade," 30 May 1950, RCMP file. Wade's interest in writing labour history may be traced back to his involvement with the Workers' Educational Association, for whom he drafted a history of the trade union movement in Canada, apparently for a short pamphlet. It was not published, and no copy has come to light. Although there were a number of treatments of labour history and labour relations in print, both academic and popular, Wade's claim that there were no previous histories of individual unions may, like all historical "firsts," be difficult to establish. See, for instance, Jack R. Shapiro, *Golden Jubilee: Division 113, Toronto Street Railway, Motor Coach and Maintenance Employees' Union; affiliated with International Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America (A.F. of L.): 50 years of organization, 1899–1949* (Toronto: Toronto Street Railway and Motor Coach Employees' Union, 1949).

80. Cohen to Wade, 12 May 1945; Wade to Cohen, 12 October 1945; Cohen to Wade, 17 October 1945; with "Notes on Relations Between the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation and the Coal Miners," file 3120, vol. 40, JLCF, LAC.

was not delivered.<sup>81</sup> The pending completion of the manuscript is confirmed by a letter in early 1950 from the steel union veteran Forman Waye, by this time an international representative for the United Steelworkers, who read the manuscript and returned it with comments.<sup>82</sup>

As we have it, however, the “History of District 26” is not in final form. There are passing references to an introduction, bibliography and appendices that do not appear in any versions of the typescript. Nonetheless, the surviving manuscript, about 300 pages in length, consists of twelve well-developed and fully footnoted chapters covering the history of District 26 from 1919 to 1941. The dates are a little misleading, as by the bottom of the first page of the first chapter, “1919: Recognition,” we are already circling back into a discussion of the origins: the founding of the Provincial Workmen’s Association in 1879, the UMW challenge that resulted in the 1909 strike, and the later unification of the rival unions in 1917. The chapter demonstrates a methodical approach: a central question, namely the recognition of the UMW in 1919, followed by an account of the events leading to that outcome and an analysis of the implications. This is in the inductive traditions of narrative history, but it is more than simple empiricism. Buried in the middle of the chapter is an articulate statement of the purposes of writing this kind of people’s history, an account that echoes similar statements before and since: “The heroes in our history books are nearly always the generals, the ‘empire builders’, the industrialists and the politicians who associated with them. No one would wish to deny to some of these an honourable place in our history. But in the coal towns of Nova Scotia, as in scores of other industrial towns in Canada, there have lived and died

81. The programme for the Maritime Labour Institute at Dalhousie University on 22 to 26 May 1950 included a lecture by Wade on the history of District 26. The sessions were attended by about 60 delegates from unions in the Maritimes. A police report noted that “no attempt was made by the left-wing element among the delegates to dominate the proceedings.” Report, 21 June 1950, RCMP file.

82. In his comments, Waye suggested a parallel between the events of 1923 and a famous episode in English history, Wat Tyler’s Rebellion: “when the King went out of London to meet his rebellious subjects, he promised that all their wrongs would be righted and when they dispersed to their homes he had them all hanged.” Waye stated that as secretary of the steelworkers’ union at the time, he met with the management in February and that they were promised full union recognition once work resumed: “Needless to say, once we got the men back to work, the management forgot their promises and began to figuratively hang the steelworkers separately, until it all culminated in the July strike.” This letter is quoted in the manuscript. Waye also commented on a statement that “the Company armed the steelworkers to fight the CSU pickets at the time of the CSU strike,” which he considered to be a false statement and “a libel on the organized steelworkers and our union.” He asked that this paragraph be deleted. See Waye to Wade, 16 February 1950, Reel #10032, PANS. Wade appears to have yielded on this point: see Wade, “History of District 26,” Chapter VI, 31: “Dosco played an important role in smashing the Canadian Seamen’s Union on its coal and ore vessels.”

thousands of union men and women who have shown courage and made sacrifices far greater than many of our history book heroes were ever capable of.”<sup>83</sup>

The chapters continue more or less in the same mode of narrative analysis: a major development explained through an elaboration of context and story. “Top Wages in 1921” is followed by “1922 Wage Cuts: Slow-down and Strike,” “1923: Steel-Coal Strike,” “1924 Strike and Restoration of Autonomy,” “1925: One Hundred and Fifty-Five Days on Strike.” A long chapter (“1925–1926”) on the Royal Commission on Coal Mines chaired by Sir Andrew Rae Duncan slows down the narrative to discuss its main recommendations and to explore the roots of several issues before the Commission, including the checkoff, company stores, housing conditions, relief societies and workers’ compensation, and safety in the mines, all of which are traced back into the 19th century. The narrative resumes with the crises of the early 1930s in Chapter Eight (“1931–1932”) and the rivalry between District 26 and a new AMW (“1932–1936”) in Chapter Nine. Other developments of the same decade are dealt with in Chapter Ten (“1933–1937”) on Sydney Mines and Stellarton. A separate chapter, “Minto – They Never Gave Up,” traces the story of the UMW and the coal miners in the New Brunswick coalfield down to 1938, although recognition of the UMW there was not finally achieved until several years later. Chapter Eleven (“1939–1941”) takes the District into the early years of wartime mobilization and labour regulation. Were additional chapters planned, or was Wade content to end in 1941? That chapter ends on a note of suspense: the decision of union officers in April 1941 to sign a contract without the customary membership vote, which led in turn to rebellion in the ranks: “Thus there began yet another struggle: the famous five months slow-down strike.” A treatment of this turning point and the election of a new leadership in 1942 would seem to be in order, even as it would take the author deeper into the recent history of the union. Perhaps Wade was exercising restraint, but the lack of a final statement or concluding chapter confirms that he was not in a position to put finishing touches on the manuscript.

The status of the text has been unstable, as there are several extant versions. Over the years, this researcher has reviewed at least five typed copies of the manuscript, two at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, two at the Beaton Institute of Cape Breton Studies, and one at the St. Francis Xavier University library. The two versions at the PANS are distinct. One is a microfilmed copy of a manuscript labelled “History of District 26, United Mine Workers of America, 1919–1941 by C.B. Wade;” a card indicates that it was borrowed in September 1965 from Michael Higgins, secretary-treasurer of District 26. Unfortunately, this is an incomplete copy. A number of pages are out of order or lacking, including one full chapter. None of the pages are numbered, and the

83. Wade, “History of District 26,” Chapter I, 17. The citation here, and in other notes, is to the two most reliable versions of the manuscript, discussed below as the “Beaton” and “Fergusson/Morrison” copies. Wade’s statement is repeated, without attribution, in MacEwan, *Miners and Steelworkers*, ix–x.



paragraph indents differ from other versions. It is likely this is an early draft of the manuscript.<sup>84</sup> The second PANS copy has a slightly different title, written by hand on the cover page of the first chapter, "History of the United Mine Workers Organization up to 1941 (James Morrison)." The name of the provincial archivist, C. Bruce Fergusson, is also written in at the top corner. This copy was apparently obtained from Morrison, Wade's successor as research director, as part of a large collection of District 26 records that were micro-filmed by the archives in 1971.<sup>85</sup> It is unlikely Fergusson intended to attribute the authorship to Morrison, but Wade's name does not appear anywhere and the manuscript is catalogued in the archives library under a call number that implies the author's surname begins with an M. This "Fergusson/Morrison" copy is more complete and more cleanly typed than the "Higgins" copy, and most of the chapters are individually paginated.

The copies at the Beaton Institute also present some challenges. At the time these were first examined in the 1970s, they were contained in the Stephen Dolhanty and Ernest Beaton Collections; both are now in a fonds titled "C.B. Wade, 1950."<sup>86</sup> File 1 is the manuscript from the Dolhanty Collection. It is typed single-spaced (the first three chapters with a blue ribbon); there are also a number of minor typing errors that were corrected in the second manuscript, which is in File 2. Both manuscripts are relatively complete, but the "Dolhanty" text appears to be an earlier draft, as the "Beaton" version not only corrects typographical errors but is typed more cleanly, double-spaced, with normal paragraph indents and pages internally numbered for each chapter. The cover of the "Beaton" manuscript bears the title "History of the United Mine Workers Organization up to 1941" (the same title as the "Fergusson/Morrison" copy at the PANS, which appears to be a xerox copy of the "Beaton" copy, which itself appears to be a carbon copy of an original typewritten version). The "Beaton" copy also includes a handwritten notation on a separate page at the front stating that the manuscript was "Written by C.B. Wade" and received by the archives on 18 November 1967 from Ernie Beaton, who was at the time head of Industrial Relations for Dosco. The note also mentions Wade's dismissal and states that the manuscript is understood to be "one of 2 or 3 in existence." Except for a few missing pages, the Beaton version in File 2 is almost as complete as the "Fergusson/Morrison" copy at the PANS.<sup>87</sup>

84. One of the pages has a dated minor correction regarding the ownership of a mine in the 1880s, added by Higgins in 1954, which indicates that this copy was in his possession for some years prior to the microfilming.

85. For this collection, see PANS Public Records List: Series #1134. The "Higgins" copy, formerly Microfilm W116, is currently classified as Microfilm Reel #3582; the "Fergusson/Morrison" copy is in the library as HD 8039 M879.

86. "C.B. Wade 1950," MG 19.16, files 1 and 2, Beaton Institute.

87. In 1980, at the request of the Beaton Institute archivist Robert J. Morgan, I added a short typed note at the front of the Beaton copy, explaining the origins of the manuscript. At the



Finally, there is a bound copy of the manuscript at St. Francis Xavier University. The typing, paragraphing and some of the misplaced pages appear to be similar to those in the "Higgins" copy, and the manuscript includes several pages missing from the "Beaton" copy (though also available in the "Fergusson/Morrison" copy). The title, "History of UMW District 26," is also similar to that of the "Higgins" copy, as is the attribution of authorship to C.B. Wade. The pages have been numbered, sequentially, by hand, though a number of them are out of order. The most extraordinary feature of the "St F.X." copy, however, which I examined in 1995, is the typed warning attached to the front of the manuscript: "This work according to reliable sources is 'slanted towards communism. Wade was an avowed communist who did not hide his allegiance. He made this work a sounding board for his opinions. The work is not considered accurate history and would therefore be of little value to students.'" The note is not signed, nor is the internal quotation attributed.

Later users have been more appreciative, beginning, as noted earlier, with Paul MacEwan's newspaper columns in the 1960s and his subsequent book. He noted Wade's appointment as Director of Research and Education and paid particular attention to Wade's work in preparing the union submission to the Carroll Commission. He also deals with Wade's dismissal by Jenkins, likely drawing here on interviews with former district board members.<sup>88</sup> Since then various academic theses and journal articles have recognized the Wade manuscript as a standard source for the history of the coal miners, and it is not surprising that union officers, libraries and archives took steps to preserve copies. By any standard, the History was a substantial achievement, written with a level of authority and commitment that seem to have been characteristic of the man.

At the time Wade was writing, there was a limited amount of published work for him to use. Eugene Forsey had been attracted to the subject matter as a student at McGill University, and an incomplete version of his MA on "Economic and Social Aspects of the Nova Scotia Coal Industry" was published in book form in 1926; as recently as 1944, before Wade's arrival, it was serialized in the pages of the *Glace Bay Gazette*. There were also relevant sections on the coal miners in Harold Logan's monographs on trade union history

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time there were also two further copies (not mentioned above) in the then University College of Cape Breton library, #941 (light blue binding) and #942 (brown binding). Both were incomplete and disorganized. On a visit in 2015, I found no copies in the library collection, but the copy in blue binding was available on the shelf at the Beaton Institute (HD 6515 M7 W3). It is possible that this is the copy from which the microfilmed "Higgins" copy at the PANS was made.

88. According to this account, when Wade was called into Jenkins's office to be fired, he asked for an explanation and a decision by the executive board. At this point, "the president became belligerent and ordered Wade out at once. He left, and when he returned to his own office some two hours later, he found the door barred by two new padlocks." See MacEwan, *Miners and Steelworkers*, xi, 125, 167, 283.

and labour organization in Canada.<sup>89</sup> The detail in Wade's treatment goes well beyond what was available in these publications, and for this research he drew on the sources that were all around him at the district headquarters in Glace Bay – union files, newspaper clippings, and government reports, including the extensive evidence from the hearings of the 1925 Duncan Commission. Moreover, the coal miners had an abiding interest in their history, and Wade absorbed details of local labour history from the union veterans with whom he worked. He knew too that, unlike Forsey and Logan, he was writing principally for the union members and a working-class public. He was likely influenced by the example of McAlister Coleman's *Men and Coal*, a sympathetic journalistic account of the American coal miners and the changing politics of the United Mine Workers of America published in 1943.<sup>90</sup>

Some of the qualities of Wade's research and analysis may be seen in his treatment of one of the more famous events in the miners' history, an account that is still usefully read to understand the tensions at play in the climax of the 1925 strike. The sequence of events leading to the shooting of William Davis on 11 June is placed in context, and the historical significance of the 1925 strike is underlined. Wade used newspapers and the royal commission

89. Eugene Forsey, *Economic and Social Aspects of the Nova Scotia Coal Industry* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1926) made good use of the evidence of the 1925 royal commission, which reported early in 1926. Forsey, who had left Canada to take up his Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford, once told me that the final text of the book was published without his verification and that, accordingly, some passages are in the wrong order. See also Harold A. Logan, *The History of Trade-Union Organization in Canada* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), Chapters 3 (on the Provincial Workmen's Association) and 143–148; internal evidence indicates that Logan's writing was completed in 1924, before the 1925 strike or the royal commission of that year. In his later volume, *Trade Unions in Canada*, Chapter VIII incorporates subsequent developments, but the manuscript appears to have been completed in 1946, and the treatment of District 26 ends with appointment of the Carroll Commission and without discussion of the 1947 strike. The appointment of Wade, "formerly of Queen's University," is mentioned at 207, with the comment that he was working with federal authorities to establish union-management production committees in order "to build up better labour relations on the basis of common attention to the problems of coal."

90. Wade used Coleman's book for a famous quotation that captured the self-serving mentality of the coal barons who insisted that "the rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected by the Christian gentlemen to whom God has given control of the property rights of the country." He was also impressed by Coleman's appreciation of the coal miners' close understanding of their industry and their commitment to finding constructive solutions to its problems: "the organized mine workers have approached their industry with a greater measure of social vision than have the operators, and have had more influence in bringing some degree of civilization to the mines than have the owners themselves." Moreover, John L. Lewis appeared more as a follower of trends than as a farsighted leader. See McAlister Coleman, *Men and Coal* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1943), 70, 19. The author was a Columbia University graduate who joined the Socialist Party of America in 1911 and was later active in the League for Industrial Democracy. He published a biography of socialist leader Eugene Debs in 1930 and had extensive experience working for unions and newspapers. See *New York Times*, 19 May 1950.

evidence but relied especially on two of the district board members with whom he worked regularly, Thomas Ling (described as a “leader of the affair”) and Douglas MacDonald (a “witness”). They provided detail that could only come from those with firsthand knowledge – pickets sleeping on a rainy night under shelters built of railway ties, a slow train loaded with company police and officials advancing slowly towards the plant as men cleared obstructions from the track. Wade stresses the fact that by early June the strike was at a critical point and that the union leadership had decided to adopt more aggressive picketing to prevent the company from attempting to resume operations. This led to the shutdown of the power plant at Waterford Lake and the loss of power to both the mines and the town in New Waterford, a development sometimes described incorrectly as an attempt by the company to intimidate the coal miners by cutting off the town’s water supply. On 11 June, the coal miners were not attempting to restore water and power service, as some accounts have implied, but to maintain the 100 per cent picketing that would prevent the company from trying to reopen the mines. After the force of police and officials recaptured the power plant from the score of union pickets on hand early on the morning of 11 June, they rode into town on horseback, parading along Plummer Avenue and boasting of their victory. Then came the legendary march of some 800 strikers through the woods to the power plant. When the coal miners were met by gunfire, they retaliated with sticks, stones and bare hands. After the shooting subsided, the miners managed to rout the police, pulling them off horses, chasing them into the woods and marching captives back into town. In the course of the mayhem, William Davis was shot and killed by a police bullet, and two other men, Gilbert Watson and Jack MacQuarrie, were wounded. It was a tragic confrontation, but from this point of view, the men of 11 June were not so much the victims of a vindictive corporation or a police riot but combatants in a struggle to enforce their strike through what later historians have seen as a tactical form of workers’ control.<sup>91</sup>

At the same time, Wade also brought his understanding of industrial relations to bear on the larger context. He introduced the conflict as an instructive example of “how in some circumstances the employer’s position is so strong that he can force a union into a strike.” Attempts at negotiation and conciliation failed, in part because of uncertainty about the status of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act after a ruling of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council announced in January. Following this, the union was not willing to accept the proposal for an arbitrated settlement favoured by the company and the provincial government, stating that “it is neither our practice nor is it wisdom for us unreservedly to bind ourselves in advance to a commission

91. Wade, “History of District 26,” Chapter VI, *passim*. and 12–16 *esp*. The most reliable brief account is in Don MacGillivray’s biography of William Davis in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Lachlan MacKinnon has explored versions of the events of 11 June in his “Labour Landmarks in New Waterford: Collective Memory in a Cape Breton Coal Town,” *Acadiensis* XLII, 2 (Summer/Autumn 2013): 3–26, *esp*. 13–20.

which in all probability judging from past experience will be about as antagonistic to us as is the company itself.”<sup>92</sup> The strike started in March, after the company reduced mining operations and cut off credit at the company stores. “Let them stay out two months or six months, it matters not; eventually they will have to come to us,” Besco vice-president J.E. McLurg famously told a reporter. His contemptuous offhand remark – “They can’t stand the gaff” – conveyed the company attitude. Almost at once, “standing the gaff” became a popular rallying cry for the strike: “That phrase became famous in Nova Scotia. There is not a miner who has forgotten it. They ‘stood the gaff’ for one hundred and fifty-five days.”<sup>93</sup> By May the hard-pressed union leadership was nonetheless prepared to accept an arbitrated settlement, but the company was now refusing to deal with the UMW at all and hoping to promote a return to work without the union. This impasse was broken by the events of 11 June at Waterford Lake – an outcome reinforced by the looting and burning of company stores, the return of troops to the coalfield, the defeat of the provincial government, a temporary settlement, and the appointment of a royal commission. Wade concludes that the union had gone on strike to prevent a reduction in wages and that they did not succeed. Indeed, by the time the Duncan Commission finished its work, the union was tied to a collective bargaining formula dictated by the provincial government. As Wade puts it, “Basically the strike was lost because people were poverty stricken and they were hungry and terribly tired. In other words, Besco was willing and able to starve the men and their families into submission and the union was unable to prevent this. Into this situation stepped the Provincial government saying in effect: accept a reduction in wages or we will let Besco wipe you out. The strike was lost in terms of the immediate issue; it was won, in terms of establishing the union: after 1925 all serious efforts to destroy the union were abandoned.”<sup>94</sup> From this perspective, the “reluctant recognition” of 1919 was superseded by a more permanent commitment, explicitly supported by the Duncan Report and by the province, to the preservation of union recognition and collective bargaining in the coal industry. As Wade’s analysis makes clear, this was understood at the time as a necessary compromise that anticipated the state-supported formula of industrial legality that would be more widely adopted across Canada in the 1940s.

92. Wade, “History of District 26,” Chapter vi, 2, 6. Although the negotiations began with a company application for a conciliation board, the situation changed when a ruling from the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council declared that the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (1907) was not fully within the powers of the federal government. The decision reinforced the trend towards “industrial voluntarism.” See Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, *Labour Before the Law: The Regulation of Workers’ Collective Action in Canada, 1900–1948* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001), 140–141.

93. Wade, “History of District 26,” Chapter vi, 10–12.

94. Wade, “History of District 26,” Chapter vi, 30.

There is much more to appreciate in the manuscript. Wade's training as an accountant equipped him to analyze changes in wages, prices and profits that were at stake in disputes of the past as well as in his own time; and his familiarity with corporate behaviour was useful in explaining the strategies followed by the British Empire Steel Corporation and its successor, Dominion Steel and Coal. Discussing contract proposals at one stage in the 1920s, for instance, Wade explained the situation in these terms: "the familiar argument, used so persistently over the years by Besco (and afterwards by Dosco) is merely a demand that the workers submit themselves to the ungovernable forces of capitalism; that they permit their wage rates to fluctuate with and be determined by the profit needs and expectations of their employers."<sup>95</sup> Similarly, in one of the later chapters, he brought a critical eye to the history of government intervention: "At least so far as the miner is concerned, all the thirty odd boards and commissions that had dealt with his wages and working conditions from 1907 to 1943, had based their findings on the same principle; wages must be determined, no matter how great the miner's need, by the ability to pay of the individual firm involved."<sup>96</sup> His extended discussion of social conditions in Chapter VII did not fail to note that in the Canadian context wealth tended to concentrate far from the resource hinterlands, leaving the coal districts with few resources for social improvements: "wealthy Canadians tend to congregate in Central Canada and pay their local taxes there no matter how much of their wealth may have been extracted from East or West."<sup>97</sup> From this perspective, the history of the union to date was a long preparation for an overdue transition to a more effective economics of remuneration and reinvestment based on public ownership of the industry.<sup>98</sup>

There are not many large generalizations in the manuscript, but the author knew that the History had a didactic purpose for those who would carry on the work of the union. He encouraged readers to reflect on the underlying differences between radical and moderate leaders who appeared in the pages, tendencies represented almost archetypically by J.B. McLachlan and Dan Willie Morrison:

"J.B." was the militant, the fighter; "Dan Willie" the man of peace liked by everyone (including his opponents in the union) wanting to be liked and to avoid struggle. Both men were

95. Wade, "History of District 26," Chapter v, 5.

96. Wade, "History of District 26," Chapter xi, 3.

97. Wade, "History of District 26," Chapter vii, 30.

98. As expected, the Labour government in Britain adopted a Coal Industry Nationalisation Act in 1946 and the mines were transferred to public ownership on 1 January 1947. By the 1940s, public ownership of coal had become a common-sense ideology among the Nova Scotia coal miners, though not shared to the same extent in western Canada at this time. Public ownership of coal was also the policy of the CCF and the LPP, who, despite their intense rivalries, shared the same state-planning approach to natural resources and a gradualist transition to some form of socialism.

representative of divergent trends in the working class in the period a little before the turn of the century when the wage earners of Canada were gathering their ranks and emerging from submission to the hand that said it fed them.

McLachlan saw no hope for the workers except through unceasing struggle leading to the riddance of capitalism. Morrison believed that the institutions of capitalism were far too strong to fight successfully and the cost of fighting them greater than the cost of adjusting to them.

The one was guided by the principle: stop fighting only when you must; the other by: never fight until you really must. McLachlan was motivated by the belief that capitalism must be, could be and was going to be, superseded by socialism; Morrison (though no fervent supporter of private enterprise) by the belief capitalism was here to stay, if not for ever, but at any rate for an indefinite period.

It is easy enough for a third party to say that both went too far in their opposite directions. Which was more fundamentally in the right the reader will decide for himself.<sup>99</sup>

In leaving the reader with this challenge, Wade was content to present himself as a witness to the conditions and opportunities of history rather than as an authority on strategies of social change. In this, the Director of Research and Education was deferring to his constituency. It would be up to the miners' union and its members to determine the course of action ahead.

## Epilogue

HE WAITED FOR ME, AT THE EXIT from a subway stop in one of the older suburbs in Toronto. He was at the wheel of a small white sports car, wearing leather gloves, a dapper gentleman, relatively short and square-shouldered, looking to be of retirement age or more. When he spoke, there was a mild accent, what today we might call an educated mid-Atlantic tone. We went to a busy restaurant for lunch, and I can remember it being a lunch of corned beef and cabbage. We went on to his modest home, a bungalow in Scarborough, and then he drove me back to the subway. When I tried to reach him again by mail, there were no answers, and eventually I learned that he had suffered a stroke and passed away, only a few years after my visit.

After he left Glace Bay in 1950, there was no question of Wade returning to Queen's University. The family soon moved to Toronto, where he found work as a chartered accountant. Eventually he opened a practice of his own, which he ran from his home as well as from an office in Oshawa. He continued to do work for unions, notably for the United Electrical Workers, but most of his practice consisted of small accounts and he was known to be generous with his time for people. Meanwhile, Christine was hired to work for the board of education as a specialist in early childhood education. The family rarely discussed politics, but his daughter recalls that her parents encouraged her to

99. Wade, "History of District 26," Chapter iv, 25–26. On McLachlan, see David Frank, *J.B. McLachlan: A Biography* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1999).





**C.B. Wade (1975).**

Courtesy of Martha Wall.

be an independent thinker. Her father invited her to debate propositions such as “From each according to his ability; to each according to his need” and “Is the brotherhood of man really possible in a world of scarcity?” His daughter also recalls that her parents continued to enjoy time at their cabin on the lake and long camping trips. She always thought her father was happiest in the outdoors.<sup>100</sup>

When I met Wade in the 1970s, I had the powerful impression of a man who had moved on. He had no copy of the District 26 manuscript in his possession and although he was curious about the so-called “new left,” he had not been active politically for many years. When I visited him at home, though, I noticed that he was reading Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, the revisionist account of the Stalin era by a Soviet historian, published in an English edition only recently in 1972. He also mentioned that he and Christine were planning to attend a new Toronto Workshop Productions play about the overthrow of the Salvador Allende government in Chile in 1973. Indeed, Christine had

100. Wade, interview by author, 1974.

maintained a longtime interest in theatre, acting for instance in a Chekhov play and later directing an Ibsen production, in Toronto's little theatres of the 1950s. In some productions Wade's ability to put on a proper English accent earned him small walk-on parts as a butler or servant but little more.<sup>101</sup>

Our reconnaissance ends here, but there is enough evidence to identify the place of C.B. Wade in the history of District 26 and more generally in the field of regional history and labour studies. He emerges as a politically engaged intellectual who made common cause with organized labour in the hopeful period of transition from wartime mobilization to postwar reconstruction in the 1940s. His professional background and his experience with the Workers' Educational Association had prepared him to answer the call from District 26, where he became one of the first members of the cohort of union staff who were navigating the terrain of industrial legality and the postwar settlement and promoting an expanded definition of working-class citizenship.<sup>102</sup> At a time when labour studies in Canada were relatively underdeveloped, Wade can also be included in the relatively small contingent of researchers who made lasting early contributions to the field, and his historical work can be associated with the activist intellectuals of the 1940s who were discussing the need for a people's history of Canada.<sup>103</sup> Once on the ground in Glace Bay, Wade was energized by the militancy of the coal miners. His responsibilities as research director were always pressing, but he understood that the coal miners saw their history as a necessary explanation of the origins of present conditions. This drew him to apply his skills to documenting the continuing contradictions between economic exploitation and social progress that were so visibly demonstrated in the history of the coal miners. And, in step with union policy and dominant thinking on the left, he promoted solutions based on collective bargaining and social planning.

To be sure, Wade was writing his political economy and labour history at a time when coal remained the leading source of energy in Canada. The coal miners believed they were well-placed to protect the stability of the industry,

101. *Globe and Mail*, 9 March 1955, 28 March 1957; Wade, interview by author, 1974.

102. The normalization of the research director received state sanction in "The Research Director" (1954), one film in a National Film Board series on "Labour in Canada." The film profiled the research director for the United Steelworkers and was described as "an introduction to a recent but increasingly important figure, whose facts and figures are effective ammunition for a union's bargaining committee." See Chris Whynot, "The NFB and Labour, 1945–1955," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 16, 1 (Spring 1981): 13–22: "By treating them as it did, the NFB helped to establish the respectability of unions in Canadian society. The films it produced absorbed the unions into the new vision of the liberal order."

103. Gregory Kealey, "Looking Backward: Reflections on the Study of Class in Canada," *History and Social Science Teacher*, 16, 4 (Summer 1981): 213–222. See also his *Workers and Canadian History* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), chapters 1–3, including the discussion at 71–75 of the "people's history" initiatives promoted by the LPP in the 1940s. However, there is no evidence that Wade participated in those discussions.

the security of their communities and the future of the province and region. As an intellectual who served as one of labour's early research directors, Wade was participating in a long war of position, readying union members and the public for the better world to come.<sup>104</sup> By the end of the 1940s, however, Cold War conditions were encouraging unions to repudiate the more radical implications of their own history and seek a favourable accommodation with capital and the state, and Wade fell victim to the associated internal politics of the miners' union.<sup>105</sup> Soon it would also be clear that King Coal was being displaced, and by 1960 the logic of regional underdevelopment would lead a royal commission to propose an orderly reduction of the industry.<sup>106</sup> Conditions were changing, and it would fall to another generation of activists and intellectuals, and even the next wave of historians, to respond to the conundrums of capitalism and underdevelopment in the region.

104. On the expanding role of the research director in the following decades, see Gil Levine, "Economic Research in Labour Unions," *Socialist Studies Bulletin*, 52 (April-May-June 1998): 49–64. Although he understood that the research director was a "union civil servant" and often an "outside professional," Levine, who was first appointed by the National Union of Public Employees in 1956 and continued with the Canadian Union of Public Employees until 1988, found that he was able to function as both a professional specialist and an intellectual advisor and political activist. This was at some risk to his position, and much depended on his background as an early member of the union as well as his relationship with key officers. Ultimately, Levine's influence on labour studies extended well beyond his own union. See Jane Stinson, "A Tribute to Gil Levine: His Pioneering Role in Labour Research," *Labour/Le Travail* 67 (Spring 2011): 173–187.

105. He was, of course, not the only one, as unions across the country purged staff and the labour centrals expelled "red-led" unions. See Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making a National Insecurity State, 1945–1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), Chapters 14 and 15, and more anecdotally, Len Scher, *The UnCanadians: True Stories of the Blacklist Era* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1992).

106. *Report of the Royal Commission on Coal* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960). In 1950 the coal miners in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick produced more than 7 million tons of coal, about 37 per cent of the country's production at a time when coal, both domestic and imported, was still the predominant energy source. Although Canadian coal was always in a weak position in Central Canada, the coal miners believed that a national fuel policy would bring stability to the industry for years to come. This was not to be the case, and the production levels of 1950 fell rapidly in the next decade as hydro-electricity, oil and gas replaced King Coal as the principal sources of energy in Canada.