

The Impossibleists

The Socialist Party of Canada
and
the One Big Union
Selected Articles 1906-1938

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The History Of Canadian Impossibilism

The Impossibilists were not unique to Western Canada. (1) The Socialist Labor Party and its affiliates in Australia and Scotland held similar beliefs. So too, the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The left-wing factions of German and Dutch Social Democracy, like the Canadian Impossibilists, expressed a militant and resolutely anti-statist socialism. Then there was the Australian OBU, the IWW, the French CGT and a host of other revolutionary syndicalist unions. These groups, suppressed and pushed aside like their Canadian counterparts, represent a path not taken by the world's labor movements.

The socialist movement in British Columbia was divided into five small groups at the turn of the century. One of these was the Socialist Labour Party which had formed a branch in Vancouver in 1898. E.T. Kingsley, a former member of the American SLP, was a powerhouse of militant socialism in Nanaimo. While not directly involved, the Western Federation of miners was also influential, as it espoused socialism since forming its first local in British Columbia in 1895. Some of these small groups of radicals came together in 1901 to form the BC Socialist Party, whose model was the Socialist Party USA.

A number of Nanaimo coal miners found the new party too weak-kneed and so formed the Revolutionary Socialist Party. The Nanaimo radicals succeeded in making their influence felt within the BCSP and in 1903 the party adopted a revolutionary platform. One year later the name, Socialist Party of Canada was formally adopted. (2) Reformists still remained within the new organization, many of them not leaving until 1907, when a split-off from the SPC created the Social Democratic Party. This group became the SPC's chief rival on the left.

The SPC's first ten years could be called its parliamentary period. Paradoxically, the Impossibilists thought the ballot box not very useful as a means to emancipate labor and considered parliamentary activity more as a propaganda effort. They did not specify how the revolution was to occur for this process was left up to the workers themselves. The main role of socialists was to educate. Nonetheless, three Socialists were elected to the BC legislature from the cities of Nanaimo, Victoria and New Westminster and the party found itself in an enviable position. The election left them holding the balance of power between the Liberals and the Conservatives and they were able to extract a number of important reforms, such as the eight-hour day for the miners.

This happy situation was not to last. In the 1911 election the SPC outdistanced the Liberal Party in all areas of BC except Vancouver. However, this was a Pyrrhic victory, since the Tories were returned to office with a landslide and the Socialists lost their bargaining power. The Impossibilists new weak position of chattering on the sidelines exacerbated the contradiction of claiming to be simultaneously revolutionary and a parliamentary party.

Electioneering became a thorny issue and a reformist tendency arose causing a membership drift toward the Social Democrats. Many people thought that if you were going to be a parliamentary socialist you may as well go the whole route and propose reforms. To make life worse for Impossibilism, the party expelled their veteran parliamentarian, "Big Jim" Hawthornthwaite, on the grounds he was speculating in coal properties.

Matters went from bad to worse. In the 1916 election not a single Socialist was elected. Again schisms occurred as members joined the reformists. Attacks by loyal party members against the "renegades" and the responding counter attacks became increasingly vitriolic. The Socialist Party of Canada was disintegrating. (3)

The War gave rise to many changes. Since the SPC was one of the few workers' parties to oppose the World War, they naturally found themselves leading demonstrations against conscription. For the

Impossibilists the real enemy was at home, not across the Atlantic, and the capitulation of the other labor parties and trade unions to the war frenzy seemed to justify the SPC's refusal to join the Socialist International. At first, the organization suffered, members were arrested for sedition and some pro-war Socialists turned in their membership cards. The party journal, the *Western Clarion* was banned by the federal government in 1918. The *Red Flag* replaced the *Clarion* in 1919, but it too was suppressed. Only in 1920 could the Impossibilists cease worrying about police raids and government harassment.

In spite of, or maybe because of this oppression, membership increased rapidly. The Russian Revolution was an impetus and no doubt the party gained support from the resulting radicalization. In January 1918 the BC Federation of Labor formed the Federated Labour Party which drew away most of the parliamentary-oriented Socialists and a new group of younger men and women rose to prominence. (4)

The failure of revolutionary parliamentary tactics, the rapid growth of anarcho-syndicalism in Europe and South America, the example of the IWW and the SPC's long-held criticisms of conservative craft unionism created a climate for the growth of a revolutionary union current within Impossibilism. The new party leaders, Bill Pritchard, Victor Midgley, Ernest Winch and Jack Kavanagh were all for the new approach. Soon the syndicalist orientation became predominant. (5)

How great a change this was can be seen by the fact that in 1911 the *Western Clarion* attacked the concept of a general strike and the Vancouver local of the party refused to give any assistance to the beleaguered striking coal miners, since "political action" was the only way forward.

Shortly after this trend appeared, a wave of radicalism swept across the labour movement of Western Canada. The most dramatic event was the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 and for radical workers the most hopeful was the formation of the One Big Union Movement. The OBU was a child of Impossibilism, most of the important leaders were members of the SPC and the rival Social Democrats had few representatives of importance. The Preamble and Constitution were written by Socialists as were other influential documents of the movement. They created a distinctly Western-Canadian form of syndicalism, strongly influenced by its SPC origins. The OBU grew like a mushroom overnight taking in most of organized labour west of Ontario. But in three years the OBU had lost most of its support.

By 1921 the SPC was again in trouble. With its major activity, the OBU going into steep decline, the party too began to suffer. A major headache was the Communist tendency. The party initially viewed the Russian Revolution favorably, albeit skeptical as to the extent that Socialism could be achieved in such a backward country. The question of affiliation to the Comintern was raised by pro-Bolshevik elements, and this caused serious disruption within the party. Many members were hostile toward the Comintern's infamous "21 Demands" of affiliation, which gave the Russian Party virtual carte blanche control of all the others. Many Socialists, including most of the revolutionary unionists and direct-actionists, mesmerized by the apparent success of the October Revolution, ignored the authoritarian nature of Bolshevism and left the party to form the new Communist movement.

Party members also sloughed off to the right as the various local Labour Parties gained increasing support at the polls. (6) The SPC was shattered, attacked by left, right and centre. Small discussion groups continued in a number of cities, but in 1925 the *Western Clarion* had to cease publication due to lack of support. Six years later, in 1931, some former members gathered in Winnipeg and tried to re-establish the SPC. This new party adhered to the positions of the SPGB and had a completely parliamentary orientation. They were never able to compete with the CCF or the Communist Party and soon withered into the tiny group which still exists today.

While the parent died, the child lived on for another thirty-one years. Since the OBU was to continue much of the Impossibilist legacy, it is necessary to discuss further the origins and history of this organization. In Western Canada there had been a long history of struggle with the Canadian branches

of the AFL unions for autonomy, internal democracy and amalgamation of craft locals into industrial unions. This helped to set the stage for the OBU. There had also been the stirring example of the IWW, active in British Columbia in the years prior to WWI. By 1918 dissatisfaction had reached the breaking point, for motions presented at the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) to endorse industrial unionism, demand the release of war resisters, end conscription and Allied intervention in Russia were all turned down.

After this defeat, the BC Federation of Labour, under SPC tutelage, called a meeting of all Western trade unionists with the intention of hammering out proposals for the next TLC Convention. The Western militants gathered in Calgary March 1919 with the representatives of 258 unions. Secession was not on the agenda, but the delegates passed a motion to sever all ties with the AFL “Internationals” and form an independent industrial union. Other proposals adopted included: an organization plan called the “One Big Union”, an endorsement of socialism (as understood by the SPC), a request for a Canada-wide referendum on the need for industrial unions, support for “soviets” and a general strike for the six hour day. On June 11, 1919, the Preamble and Constitution of the One Big Union was adopted and the movement to counteract the conservative American unions was officially launched. Within less than a year the OBU had 101 locals and 41,500 members—almost the entire union membership of Western Canada. More than half of these were in British Columbia where the largest group of OBU supporters were the Lumber Workers.

The isolation in Western Canada was to be the downfall of the OBU. With a strong base in the East, the TLC was in a good position to launch a counter-attack against the radicals. The AFL sent money and hot-shot organizers. Then the Canadian government got involved, ruling that the “Internationals” owned the contracts in the OBU chartered locals of the former American unions. Employers blacklisted OBU workers and would hire only TLC men. The recent Winnipeg General Strike was fresh in everyone’s mind and the OBU was blamed for this as well. Hysteria about radicalism in any form, especially syndicalism which was misrepresented as Bolshevism, was whipped up by the newspapers. The OBU was soon in deep trouble.

The Communists didn’t help either. Like revolutionary unions world-wide, the OBU was to suffer at their hands. Those individuals infatuated with Bolshevism formed the Workers Party in 1921 and many OBU people joined. The Communists and their supporters within the union began a campaign of disruption as they followed the Comintern’s orders of forcing the OBU members back into the AFL unions or destroying the organization outright. These disputes left a legacy of bitterness between the OBU and the Communists that never dissipated.

To make matter worse, in 1921 the Lumber Workers quit the OBU over a series of jurisdictional disputes and a personality clash. This was a very serious blow to the OBU which by 1923 was down to only 5000 members. Labor historians tend to leave the OBU at this point and mention in passing that the union hung around as a “ghost” for the next 33 years. The reality is somewhat different. By 1925 the membership had risen to 17,000 and grew slowly throughout the 1920’s to reach a maximum of 24,000 members. The year they joined the Canadian Labor Congress the membership stood at 12,000.

Impossibilism’s child had a rather ignominious death. When the AFL and CIO federations in Canada decided to unite to form the Canadian Labour Congress in 1956, the OBU announced that it intended to join its former enemies in the new federation. As a condition for joining, the OBU was to remain an autonomous union. However, the question of affiliation was delayed until the end of the unity conference and at that point the delegates voted to break up the OBU and place the members within the CLC locals. So ended the last functioning syndicalist union in North America.

Why should the Impossibilists matter today? Why should anyone wish to read an anthology of their

writings culled from moldy eighty-year old newspapers? One of the most striking events of the Twentieth Century, an era not lacking in dramatic occurrences, has been the complete collapse of both Stalinist Communism and “socialism” in all its forms. But what has been thrown in history’s famous and overflowing dustbin is not Impossibleist socialism, but state capitalism. For several generations labor and “progressive intellectuals” put their faith in the state as a means to solve social problems. Few people now look to statism for solutions and therefore the “left” is in chaos.

The Impossibleists represented something different—they never endorsed “state socialism”, rather recoiling from it in horror. Socialism meant democratic control and ownership of production by the producers—the original “co-operative production” of Marx, Proudhon and Owen. Nor did they endorse another evil of the Twentieth Century, the notion of the “vanguard party”. For them socialism had to be the work of the vast majority of the population or not at all. Socialism was inseparable from democracy, and was in their eyes, its full realization. The role of socialists was to educate and not lead.

Sneered at as “out of date” by the snottily superior Bolshevik fellow-travelers and dismissed as simple-minded millenarians by labor bureaucrats, (and their academic apologists) the Impossibleist’s often libertarian message is more likely to be welcomed today than leftist demands for nationalization and state control. No doubt, the SPC and the OBU’s ever-present rhetoric of class war will be annoying to most contemporary readers, but it is necessary to keep in mind just how brutal the times were. Talk of class war was not a lot of hot air, in the mines and lumber camps a protracted and sometimes violent struggle ensued between workers and employers. (7)

The SPC and the OBU did not have all the answers by any means. (8) But what they represented was a tendency that evolved over forty years, the evolution of which was stopped by Bolshevism and Social Democracy. Who knows what might have resulted had this development not been cut short. This situation was repeated world wide, culminating in 1936 with the destruction of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism by the combined efforts of Fascism and Stalinism. The tragedy is, a libertarian labour movement was suppressed, its place taken by other currents which we now see to be historical dead ends.

Notes

1. Outside of the English speaking world “Impossibleist” has a different meaning—those who were anti-parliamentary and in favor of a transitional program and a vanguard party—the future Communists.
2. 1904 was also the year the Socialist Party of Great Britain (the SPGB or British Impossibleists) was born. Like the SPC they were influenced by the Socialist Labor Party. The Canadian Impossibleists also had influence on the development of the SPGB.
3. But the influence of the SPC had spread. In 1916 a group of dissident American socialists formed the World Socialist Party which became a companion party of the SPC. For several years the Western Clarion had a page reserved for the WSP.
4. Many of the leaders of the BC Federation of labor were ex-members of the SPC.
5. The pro-syndicalist SPC and OBU never completely adopted the anti-parliamentarism of anarcho-syndicalism.
6. Social Democracy was not to unite nationally until the founding of the CCF in 1932. Until then existed a number of different organizations often going under the name of the “Independent Labour Party” (Which should not be confused with its British namesake)
7. In 1912, a lengthy strike occurred in the coal mines of Vancouver Island. At one point a six hour gun battle took place between strikers and strike-breakers. The military was called in and many miners arrested.
8. Most readers would probably agree they have two answers for us today—1. beware of Statism in all its forms 2. Social change must be the work of the people themselves and not some self-proclaimed elite vanguard.

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The articles presented here give a range of opinions and interests of the Impossibleists, organized by topic under eight headings.

1. **On State Socialism: A Reply To John Alexander, Nationalization Of Industry, The Fallacy Of Nationalization and Socialism And The CCF** are harsh rejections of statism.
2. **State Capitalism: The Next Act In World Drama** foretells the evolution toward state capitalism and how socialism would be pushed aside by its statist simulacra. This was almost ten years before Nicholai Bukharin developed the same concept of state capitalism.
3. **What Did They Want? What We Want, Emiliano Zapata and A Business Without A Boss**, explain what the Impossibleists would have liked to see as an alternative.
4. **Impossibleist Philosophy**: Philosophy is discussed in **Proletarian Logic, Centenary of Joseph Dietzgen and Dietzgen And Relativity**.
5. **The Development of the OBU** movement and its differences with business unionism are discussed in **Future Activity Of Trade Unions, The Burning Question Of Trades Unionism, What Is The OBU?, and Will Industrial Unionism Suffice?** Readers will be surprised by **The Closed Shop and Industrial Liberty** for its opposition to the closed shop.
6. **Socialism or Leninism?** Bolshevism is roundly criticized in **Is It The Dictatorship Of The Proletariat?, On Copying The Bolsheviki, and Russia Never Was Socialist**. Stalinist tactics are criticized in **The Eclipse of Trotsky, The Red Trade Union And S. American Labor, and Communist Hooligans at Their Usual Game**. The entire concept of leadership—parliamentary, trade union or vanguard party—is rejected in **Jack London And Leadership**, published in the very last issue of the OBU Monthly.
7. **Strikes and Struggles**: Long forgotten labor battles are discussed in **Law and Order In Drumheller, Nova Scotia Miners Put Down Lewis Tyranny, and The Anyox Civil War**. The fight for democracy and women's rights are examined in **The Sons of Freedom and Reflected Glory of Males**.
8. **Working Conditions**: The wretched working conditions often found in the “Roaring Twenties” are exposed in **Loggers Live In Squalor, Prostitution Demanded Of Girl Waitresses and Young Slaves Are Cheap**.

On State Socialism :

A Reply To John Alexander, *Western Clarion*, Dec. 8, 1906

In your issue of Nov. 17, Mr. John Alexander falls foul of me for certain “disparaging remarks” he says I made re the “British Labour Party” in a letter written to the *Winnipeg Voice* and reprinted in your columns October 20. Mr. Alexander does not attack the main point of my letter, which was in substance that the attempt to organize an other labor party in Canada when there was a good and efficient one already in existence in the SPC, would lead to undesirable complications (resulting) in splitting up the workers in various factions fighting each other more or less all the time.

Now as to the legislation that is to the credit of the Labour Group, I would ask Mr. Alexander to keep in mind that a measure which may benefit a portion of the working class may at the same time militate against the interests of another section. The man who classes these as labor legislation has little concept what “class interest” and solidarity means. As to the “States responsibility for the unemployed” which the labor group established, methinks this ‘tis the same that it ever was. When the unemployed get too numerous or noisy—Shoot them wholesale, deport them or jail them as vagrants.

If Mr. Alexander is enamored of these petty and questionable reforms, I will suggest a course which more of them and of better quality may be obtained. If your labor party shows such a poor grasp of the situation as to demand only palliatives, they will get few and of poor quality. If, however, they aim to overthrow capitalist society and show a fair ability to accomplish the task, reforms will come thick and fast much the same way as an individual pursued by wolves will throw his clothing to save his hide.

In BC, the trade unionists are coming into the Socialist Party, as witness the Western Federation of Miners, in their recent convention, on the common ground of workingmen not looking for legislation that will boost the craft at the expense of their class and that is the only kind of alliance that is either possible or profitable. In Britain, on the other hand, the alleged Socialists suppress their teachings of Socialist principles to effect an alliance with the trade unions.

Mr. Alexander informs me that the trade unionists in Britain are in favor of the nationalization of public utilities. I will tell him of some other individuals who, unlike the British unionists, are potent enough to carry their ideas into practical effect—the Czar of Russia, Bismarck of Germany and the ruling class of Japan. Shall the Socialists therefore ally themselves with these gentlemen?

If we have the ability to reason correctly pretty widespread throughout Canada, we shall be content with one Socialist party able to stand on its own legs without leaning on reactionary unions or weakening its program to gain their support. Moreover, we shall avoid the “British example” as one would a plague.

Nationalization Of Industry, *Western Clarion*, August 1918

National ownership, which during the last decade or so has been advanced by the old political parties and reform idealists, as a means whereby the miseries of the working class would be alleviated and which has even been labeled “Socialism”, has been the recipient of some severe shocks recently.

Because of government control of steamship lines, railroad systems, munitions plants etc., the impression has gained ground, assisted by the efforts of certain leaders of organized labor, that the sure cure for the troubles and sorrows of the working class is the nationalization of industry. Now these ideas have been somewhat upset by late occurrences.

Take the munitions workers strike in England a few weeks ago as an instance. Early in the war there was an outcry against munitions profiteers, raised principally by other sections of the capitalist class, who

were not so advantageously situated in regards to labor exploitation, and under pressure from the said sections, the British government too over and began to operate the munitions plants. And yet, recently, in the most conservative city in England, formerly the stronghold of imperialistic Joe Chamberlain, 100,000 munitions workers were on strike. Nearer at hand we have the strike of Canadian postal employees.

Apparently, government ownership is no better for the slave than private ownership, and it seems as if under government control the workers are in a more absolute slave position (if possible) than ever, bound by rules and regulations and subject to more direct coercion than ever before. National ownership or control is only a more complete development of capitalism and is generated by the commercial jealousy of one section of the capitalist class against another. Socialists realize that nationalization of industry will not remove the slave system under which the working class is compelled to live.

The Fallacy Of Nationalization by Alex Young, *OBU Bulletin* Feb. 27 1930

The question of nationalization is being discussed more than ever these days, especially in Britain. The wage earners are being made to believe that their troubles will cease if only the railways, mines etc., were nationalized. Let the reader remember we are living in a world where the existing industrial system is called Capitalism, and that the basis of Capitalism is to make profits, regardless whether under nationalization or not. Nationalization would operate and does operate the same as the big chain stores or trusts, to eliminate useless labour and make bigger profits. What about the workers? Would it give better wages or less hours and more employment? If the mines were nationalized operating staffs would be greatly reduced and more machinery introduced. The same applies in all industries, it is simply concentration of labour in the most efficient way.

Under private capitalism the workers must sell their labour power to live and under nationalization, which is state capitalism, they must sell their labour power and be subject to the laws of capitalism, a struggle for existence and hired and fired to suit a capitalist state.

Now, why do so many so-called labour leaders shout for nationalization? Is it because of ignorance or because it sounds big? Why should labour leaders be interested in throwing their own class out of jobs? The Post Office is nationalized and what is their standard of living? It is only a few years ago since they had to strike against intolerable conditions.

Socialism And The CCF, *OBU Bulletin*, July 27, 1933

The first CCF convention is now part of the history of the Canadian working class. On the discussion of the manifesto presented to the convention by the Provisional National Council, the cleavage between the socialist and non-socialist elements was brought into the open.

State Capitalism Advocated

Motion was made to delete the idea of compensating the present owners. The last sentence was re-written. Paragraph Four of this clause was adopted and read as follows: "The management of publicly owned enterprises will be invested in boards who will conduct each particular enterprise on efficient economic lines. Workers in these public industries must be free to organize in trade unions and must be given the right to participate in the management of industry. This will give the readers of the OBU BULLETIN a clear idea of the concept of the future society held by leaders of the CCF.

State Capitalism

The Next Act In World Drama foretells the evolution toward state capitalism and how socialism would be pushed aside by its statist simulacra. This was almost ten years before Nicholai Bukharin developed the same concept of state capitalism.

The Next Act In World Drama by Warren Atkinson, *Western Clarion*, December 15, 1906

The conflict over the distribution of labor's product is irrepressible, and in this conflict the only vantage ground from which any lasting success can be forced by either side is control of the tools and natural resources. So the conflict is developing itself into one for ownership of the means of production and distribution. That its conclusion ultimately is the common ownership of things is not in doubt. It is a question of when and how it will be.

Public opinion of a nation turns as a great ship turns, imperceptibly to those who strain at the ropes. But the growing sentiment for public ownership shows that the public opinion yields to physical necessities and the incessant Socialist agitation. Yet its advocates protest truly, that they are not Socialists. Mr. Hearst says, "we are not opposed to capitalism small or large." Socialists regard this radical movement with hostility because by it alone can the time be delayed when more will be gained than state capitalism.

But the campaign thunder of the Socialist Party has been stolen it seems. Does the Socialist Party possess any great principle distinguishing it from other political parties which the professional politician cannot steal? The Socialist movement was born in revolt against the horrors of poverty. It gets its whole philosophy by analyzing the modern industrial and financial system in search of the cause of poverty. Its aim, namely, to make the conditions of all employments prohibit the incomes which able bodied idlers draw through the ownership of the means of production, is opposed to capitalist business and capitalist politics as light is to darkness.

This principle no professional politician will adopt; and it is the only one worth stealing. But government ownership will not in itself secure labor's product to those who produce it. This is sustained by experience with government ownership abroad, of which there is much more established in European countries than is even proposed here. Nevertheless it is expected that the movement for government ownership now being organized will swallow up the Socialist Party by becoming more and more radical as though they would defeat it in the end by counterfeiting it.

That public ownership after the fashion of the capitalist should be corrupt is inherent in the nature of it. It will be corrupt not only as capitalist business is corrupt, but even as measured by the moral standards of the trading class themselves. The public may expect no mercy and should deserve none. Government industries administered by politicians are often disgracefully inefficient and usually unprogressive, resisting the introduction of improved methods and devices. But these things will be learned by experience.

What Did They Want?

What We Want, Emiliano Zapata and A Business Without A Boss, explain what the Impossibilists would have liked to see as an alternative.

What We Want, *Red Flag*, June 21 1919

A lot of make-believe capitalist sympathy has been slobbered over the working class recently as a result of the revelations of some of the horrors of working class existence. That the capitalist may make a genuine effort to improve these conditions is quite possible. But even if they do improve the workers conditions; if they stable them in palaces and harness them in “Workmen’s Charters;” if Lord Leverem finds that he can exhaust his men in six hours and does it, and Mr. Ford discovers anew that high wages, as the Dutch say of paint, cost nothing—what then?

Such things, realized far beyond the realms of possibility, would leave us unmoved. We are out for a LIFE for the workers. The world is beautiful, life is glorious. Even work is a joy if man may, as Morris said, “rejoice in the work of his hand.” Evolution has given us the possibility of producing by work, as distinct from toil, wealth in such abundance that the amenities of civilization shall be the portion of all, without stint.

A place in the sun, a draught of sweet air of the meadow, the tranquillity of the country sunset, relieved of the shadow of our slavery—are they not worth fighting for? Are the workers forever to be content with the mentality that can raise a singer to fame and fortune on such a song as “Champagne Charlie?” The earth sings a song after rain, but how many of us have heard it? The World with all its beauty is for the Workers, if they will but take it.

Emiliano Zapata, *OBU Bulletin*, October 1919

Emiliano Zapata is dead and before he died he saw crumbling beneath the water his Atlantis of Industry, the Paradise of the workers which he had erected upon the sunny plains of the state of Morelos in Southern Mexico. At the height of his power the experiment was flourishing on a gigantic scale—there were three and a half million human beings populating this Eden of the proletariat in the Twentieth Century.

It was probably the largest, happiest and most thorough trial of communism which the world has ever seen. In comparison, Socialism is reactionary and Bolshevism conservative. Let us look upon this one astounding fact: in all of Morelos, during the Zapata regime, there was not a single coin or bill of money in circulation. Money was completely abolished, save that at the capital some sacks of gold were stored for dealing with the capitalistic systems of other countries in the transactions of import and export.

Instead of money each member of the community wore about his neck a disc of brass the size of dollar and about twice as thick. On it was inscribed: “The bearer of this—Manuel Garcia for example—is a member of the Industrial Union of North and South America. Who shows him favour shows favour to all the members of this union.” Armed with this disc, Manuel and his family could present themselves on a train and ride free of charge. He could shop at the stores, put up at hotels, attend the theatre, opera or picture show, without price. In return Manuel was expected and compelled, if he desired to avail himself of all these advantages, to put in a certain amount of labour on behalf of the commonwealth. If he would consume, he must produce. But his toil was not irksome, Morelos and the adjoining states of

Chiapas and Tabasco, to which the experiment eventually spread, enjoy a tropical climate and bounteous soil. Between the upland pastures and the hot lowlands almost every variety of fruit and vegetable can be grown in abundance, with a slight expenditure of labour. If Manuel was a farmer, he could put in an hour or so a day with his crops; then after his own table was supplied, he would take his surplus to the market and leave it there for his fellow communists to help themselves at will. There could be no haggling over prices, for everything was free.

Or, supposing that Manuel worked in a factory. Strange to say, in a society so idyllic, there were factories. The sugar industry was highly organized, from cane to finished product: one refinery alone employed 25,000 persons. The shoe industry, from grazing cattle to finished boot and sandal, was equally flourishing, though on not so large a scale. One shoe factory employed more than 3000. The cotton industry was also considerable.

Under the previous management, Manuel would have worked 14 hours a day and received in return 50 cents. The factories still ran 14 hours a day under Zapata, but in seven shifts of two hours each—and the pay was the freedom of the union, from cabbage basket to opera house!

One of the markworthy results of this system was that women immediately became free. Every woman was as wealthy as every man. Therefore no woman could be bought, not even by the glitter of a wealthy marriage.

As to religion, the population is nominally Roman Catholic, but the last priest fled across the border slightly in advance of the last dollar. So, quaintly, the churches were turned into motion picture houses, schools and poultry exhibitions. As for government, the republic as such, had no affairs to settle, unless it was the management of the export and import trade, which was purely a business proposition conducted by a few skilled men at the “head office”. The countryside settled its own questions, the village its own and the city its own.

Whenever there was a question in dispute, the people interested would gather in the plaza of the nearest town. The band would play “La Paloma” and those who were not nervous about public speaking would make arguments for and against. The majority carried the day. But often the minority won as well as the majority. An instance is related concerning the building of a road in which 70% of the farmers agreed upon a route which left the remaining 30% in no better case than they were before. The minority submitted with good grace and loyally helped build the new road. This proved too much for the victors, who, when their own road was finished, went across the valley and built another road for the special use of the vanquished.

Zapata’s Industrial Union has been called “The Republic of Play”. For the light-hearted peons having so much leisure on their hands, employed it in merriment. They boasted no intellectual joys, for 95% of the population of Indians could neither read nor write. And Zapata had the caring to say that “this did not matter, since civilization has not yet produced and cannot naturally produce anything worthy of a free people’s perusal.” But the country teemed with merry and waggish revolutionary songs and charming ballads in which the people were producing for themselves a literature suited to their enjoyment.

Some months ago it was announced that Carranza’s troops had “pacified” Morelos; whether, despite the death of its leader, the land will stay “pacified” is in question. The state is impregnated with rebel seed. One hundred years ago, a humble priest named Morelos, kept in the field a revolutionary army of 60,000 until he was betrayed and assassinated. When his followers wished to salute him as Generalissimo, he replied “I would rather be remembered as the serf of the people”. He bequeathed his spirit and name to the territory. Since his death there have been eight uprisings in Morelos, like the others the eighth, that of Zapata, is wrecked. It was announced that he was killed by “strategy” and his

body was produced to prove that he was at last dead. His slayer, Col. Guajardo, has been promoted to General in reward for his feat.

A Business Without A Boss, by Mark Starr, *OBU Bulletin*, March 20, 1930

That is what they call the Columbia Conserve Company in its home town of Indianapolis. For twelve years in this land boasting of "rugged individualism" a canning factory has been run by the collective effort of its workers. There in the home of Big Business, workers' control is being consciously developed by the assistance of the Hapgood brothers, the former proprietors. The workers are buying out the shareholders.

Canning tomatoes, beans, chili and such is a hazardous, highly competitive industry. However, the regular staff of about 150 by their workers' council; are running the business successfully. The council literally controls the hiring and firing and the disposal of produce and the general policies of the concern. In a trip through the plant it is the workers themselves who proudly explain the sorting and canning of the beans, the spices and flavours that go to make the various concoctions.

The minimum wage for the five day week [six being the norm at this time, eds.] is based on needs and each single worker under 20 gets \$19.00, those older get \$22.00, while a married man gets \$33.00 regardless of the work he does. At the weekly council meeting, the girl who sticks on the labels has just the same right of decisions as the manager or salesmen who go on the road persuading the jobbers to purchase the "socialized soup". What was a losing concern under the old ways of management has been made to earn profits by the cooperation of the workers. About 1932 the expanded business will be wholly the possession of the workers. In addition to a fixed wage, payment for lost time and a month holiday each year, all the workers and their dependents enjoy free and unlimited dental and medical care. A special credit union assists to get better housing accommodation to tide over any difficult period. If a worker leaves he is given a fortnights pay as recognition of his services, and a pension if unable to work anymore.

Impossibilist Philosophy

Philosophy is discussed in Proletarian Logic, Centenary of Joseph Dietzgen and Dietzgen And Relativity.

Proletarian Logic by “Rab,” Western Clarion, August 1918

The starting point, or rather, the pivotal centre of our logic is the conception of the universe as being a oneness, a unity, an eternal, absolute truth, all embracing, infinite and unlimited. It is impossible to conceive of anything outside the universe. To attempt it would not only be useless, but folly. The parts composing the universe partake of its infinite nature, i.e., of existence. A mahogany chair has the characteristics of all chairs, regardless of where it is found, on earth or in the heavens above. Yet, at the same time, it is finite. The chair is built, wears, breaks and decays into other forms. we cannot know all there is to know about the mahogany chair. We can analyze and dissect it to the smallest particle, but still there is more to find out about it.

However, we can know its classification and function. Though the intellect does not fathom all, yet it is true understanding. We know that it is a chair, not a bed or a table. Still further, we know it is a mahogany chair, not an oak or an ash. All things existing are attributes of the universe, each one being infinite and true but not the whole truth. They are all relatively true, i.e., parts of truth; but only the universe itself is the absolute truth—the whole truth. Within this absolute universe, everything is interrelated and in a process of change, e.g., the evolution of the earth from its original gaseous mass, unable to support life, to its present form with its “wonderful civilization.”

The early materialists of the 19th Century strove at understanding by cause and effect. Dietzgen well illustrates the limitations of this theory by his example of the stone. When we throw a stone in the water, ripples result. Were these ripples caused by the stone hitting the water? The elasticity of the water is just as much a cause, for were the stone to strike the ground, no ripples would result. But a knowledge of the general and particular nature of the water and the stone explained the phenomenon. By using the apparatus of the mind correctly, we come to understand that the world unity is multiform and all multiformity a unity.

Dietzgen admirably states the proletarian character of modern logic in the concluding paragraph in the 11th of his 24 “Letters on Logic” to his son Eugene. Our logic which has for its object the truth of the universe, a science of universal understanding. It teaches that the interrelation of all things is truth and life, is the genuine, right, good and beautiful. All the sublime moving the heart of man, all the sweet stirrings in his breast, is the universal nature or universe. But the vexing question still remains. What about the negative, the ugly and the evil? What about error, pretense, standstill, disease, death and the devil?

True the world is vain, evil, ugly. But these are mere accidental phenomena, only forms and appendages of the world. Its eternity, truth, goodness and beauty is substantial, existing, positive. Its negative is like the darkness which serves to make the light more brilliant, so that it may overcome the dark and shine more brightly. The spokesmen of the ruling classes are not open to such a sublime optimism, because they have the pessimistic duty of perpetuating misery and servitude.

Centenary Of Joseph Dietzgen, by Frank Roberts, *OBU Bulletin*, Dec. 13 1928

The One Hundredth Anniversary Of The Proletarian Philosopher

This month the hundredth anniversary of Joseph Dietzgen, the proletarian philosopher, occurs. His monumental work, “The Positive Outcome of Philosophy” forms the intellectual basis of the working

class movement and without knowledge of it Socialism becomes incomprehensible. His volume on "The Nature of Human Brainwork" is the greatest masterpiece of philosophy ever written and is a contribution equal to the works of Marx and Engels. Joseph Dietzgen was the last line of philosophers who placed the human mind in its proper place in the universe and laid the foundation of a dialectical reasoning.

While bourgeois philosophers searched for truth in the mind itself and the materialists searched for it outside of it, Dietzgen showed that it was neither: that the mind was a process interrelated with all other processes in the universe and that mind and matter interacted one upon the other in the same proportion. So pleased was Karl Marx with Dietzgen that at the International Congress in 1872 he introduced him as "our philosopher." Dr. Pannekoek states Marx had disclosed the nature of the social process of production and its fundamental significance at a level of social development. But he had not fully explained by what means the nature of the human mind is involved in this material process.

Owing to the great traditional influence exerted by bourgeois thought, this weak spot in Marxism is one of the main reasons for the incomplete and erroneous understanding of Marx's theories. This shortcoming is cured by Dietzgen, who made the nature of the mind the object of his investigations.

It is not a hundred years since Dietzgen was born. Science has made great discoveries. The bourgeois logic has already demonstrated its weakness in trying to solve the riddles of the world. Proletarian logic in solving the riddles of the mind gives us assurance that there are no insoluble riddles before us.

Our latter-day scientists know full well the truth of the above statements. The Einsteinian postulates of space-time completely revolutionized the scientific concepts and lifted them out of the morass of the narrow 19th Century materialism. It unraveled problems bourgeois logic could not, and will solve greater ones in the future. Providing such a valuable asset in the hands of the scientist, what greater value it would have in the hands of the proletariat in the struggle against wage slavery.

Joseph Dietzgen died in Chicago in 1888, but left behind him a great legacy for the working class in their struggle for freedom. The greatest weapon of all says Engels. Perhaps in some more enlightened age, they will remember the obscure German tanner, whose genius unraveled the enigma of the human mind and placed thinking on a scientific basis for the first time.

Dietzgen And Relativity by H. Myers, *OBU Bulletin*, Dec. 20 1928

In last weeks issue appeared an article by Com. F. Roberts on the Centenary of Joseph Dietzgen in which he stated that the latter showed how the mind was interrelated with all other processes in the universe and that mind and matter interacted one upon the other in the same proportion.

Based mainly upon teachings of William Minto, late logic professor in Aberdeen University Scotland, the writer will deal with the interrelations of the mind in everyday life. As Com. Roberts remarked, Dietzgen ranks with Hegel and Einstein among the "dialectical" school of thinkers. The old rigid metaphysical school is seen in what Engels in his "Socialism from Utopia to Science" hints at with his "Yea, yea, nay, nay, whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matthew vs. 37) That is in line with the laws of thought of the old Aristotelian logic, and with the logic of every day time-limited life. Dialectical reasoning, however, is unlimited and goes far beyond metaphysics.

Now, properly speaking, thought does not begin until we pass beyond the identity of an object with itself and when we recognize the likeness between one object and others. To keep within self-identity is to suspend thought. When we say Socrates was put to death as a trouble maker" we take into account his relations of likeness with other men and what he has in common with them.

Hegelians express this by saying, "Of any definite existence or thought, therefore, it must be said with quite as much truth that it is not, as that it is, its own bare self." Or, "a thing must be other than itself in order to be itself."

The dialectics of Hegel, Dietzgen and Einstein are in harmony with the doctrines of Change and Evolution. For example, there is that seemingly shocking Hegelian pronouncement that "All that is real is reasonable, and all that is reasonable is real." This apparently makes every "real" evil a "reasonable" evil. So, in a way it does. But what it really means is that, at a certain point in progress, the conditions are reasonable, because nothing else has arrived to take their place. For example, in pioneer Canada ox-cart locomotion was real and also reasonable. Today, steam and electric locomotion, by road and rail and aerial locomotion are the real things while the ox-cart is the unreal and unreasonable.

Today, we feel inclined to deeply sympathize with these old-time backward conditions. But our feelings are liable to be overdrawn, for there is a law of sensibility that a change of impression is necessary for consciousness, because a long continuance of any unvaried impression—results in insensibility to it! Hence the saying "custom blunts sensibility." Poets formulated this principle before philosophers; for instance, the Scotchman, Barbour, in his poem on Robert the Bruce, where he insists that freedom cannot be appreciated unless men have known slavery—"Thus contrar thing is evermare discoverings of t'other are." Or, as that maxim also insists, "We never miss the water till the well runs dry". The reason for the foregoing is that nothing is known absolutely or in isolation, the various items of our knowledge are inter-relative; everything is known by distinction from other things. Thus results that "Every positive thought has its counter-positive, and the positive and its opposite are both of the same kind." It will be noticed that, although every thought is set off and opposed by its counter-thought, yet both have an element of sameness.

A curious confirmation of this law of our thinking says Prof. Minto has been pointed out by Mr. Carl Abel in the "Contemporary Review" of April 1884. In Egyptian hieroglyphics we find, says Abel, a large number of symbols with two meanings, the one the exact opposite of the other. Thus the same symbol represents the strong and the weak; above and below; for and against. This, remarks Minto, is what the Hegelians mean by the reconciliation of antagonisms in higher unities. They do not mean that black is white, but only that black and white have something in common—they are both colors. Just as black and white workers, say we, have also something in common, both wage slaves!

It is this law that produces the principle in language that "two negatives make a positive". When speaking, we, as it were, for the time being divide the universe into two parts, and deal with only one of these to the exclusion of the other (yet similar) part. For example, during one of his western debates Joseph McCabe slightly sarcastically referred to his place of residence (London) as "a not unimportant city". Here, for MacCabe's purpose the world is divided into important cities and not important cities, and as he affirmed that he did NOT live in any UNimportant city it therefore followed inevitably that he DID live in the other world section which only contained important cities!

Now we see how our very jokes are unconsciously based upon these laws, and we enjoy their humor although we are as hazy upon the laws that govern them, as we are on the mechanism of our digestive apparatus when eating a good meal, as compared with a doctor who knows about it.

So, whether or not we know it, we are all relativists even when we obey laws of which we are blissfully unconscious, just as unconsciously, we are both working for the Socialist Revolution—both capitalists and workers, Conservatives and Socialists! Who now will dare deny that "we are fearfully and wonderfully made" both mentally and physically?

The Development of the OBU

The OBU movement and its differences with business unionism are discussed in *Future Activity Of Trade Unions*, *The Burning Question Of Trades Unionism*, *Will Industrial Unionism Suffice?* and *What Is The OBU?* Readers will be surprised by *The Closed Shop* and *Industrial Liberty* for its opposition to the closed shop.

Future Activity Of Trade Unions, by W.H.Humphries, *Western Clarion*, April 11, 1908

The recent decisions adversely effecting Trade Unions should cause all trade unionists to seriously consider the future of trade unionism. In so doing we must take note of the character and strength of the forces arrayed against us as well as our own. We must not underestimate either the gravity of the struggle in which we are engaged nor the importance of the issues at stake. The concentration of capital into fewer and fewer hands is a feature we cannot afford to ignore, while the growth of combines and trusts has a vital effect upon the power of trades unionism. With our hands tied just when the enemy is in the height of his power, the outlook is black indeed.

There are some trades unionists who seem to think that we only have to secure the status-quo-ante and all will be well. It is quite clear that even a return to the status-quo-ante will involve considerable expense and hard fighting. Conceding that the object to be obtained is worth the struggle, we have still to consider whether it is better to fight for a loaf than a crumb. We are compelled to fight by our very existence. Might we not as well fight for complete emancipation, instead of merely working for the right to strike, work for the abolition of those conditions which render strikes necessary—that is the private ownership of the means of life?

The right to strike is one thing, the power to strike is another. While the workers, organized into trade unions, were able to take collective action against employers who were fighting each other, the strike, or the threat to strike, was a very effective means of bringing employers to their senses; but the employers are now better organized than the workers. In future, a strike will often prove to be a means of limiting output in the interests of the employer and to the disadvantage of the worker. The limitation of output in the interest of the workers will have to be done in the factory; and not outside it. The strike will be regarded as an obsolete weapon, which though useful in some cases, is quite incapable of affording anything like real protection to the worker.

Our weapon of the future will be organized political action but before we can use this weapon effectively, we shall have to throw aside our trade consciousness and become class conscious. A trade union exists today for the purpose of protecting and benefiting those employed in a particular trade. In future, the purpose of trade unionism will be the protection and ultimate emancipation of the workers as a whole. Disputes which may arise between different unions will be settled by committees from unions not directly interested. Instead of employers dealing with trades in detail, they will have to deal with a comprehensive committee represented by the several trades employed by him. Trade unionists will recognize that they all belong to one great army, and that a blow struck at any section is a blow struck at the whole. The section or trade attacked will be assisted by the entire weight of organized labor.

Each branch of a union will become a working class centre of political education and activity. Political discussion, so long tabooed, will become regarded as an essential part of branch business. The various branches of unions in parliamentary division will form councils to decide what course of action to take in each locality. Conferences will be held between the various councils in each county, while the

national course will be decided by the congress, which will then be the parliament of labor in fact as well as name.

The Burning Question Of Trades Unionism by C.K., *Red Flag*, June 21 1919

Some years ago, one Daniel DeLeon, Socialist, spoke at some length on the subject of "The Burning Question of Trades Unionism". Daniel's remarks were intended to be somewhat of the nature of a fire extinguisher. Nevertheless, the question continues to burn—one might almost say, "heartburn". Not to put too fine a point to it, the discussion which rages (the word is well chosen) in certain quarters, over, and around this subject is acrimonious to a degree.

The result is, that among members of organized labor the idea is very prevalent that between them and the Socialist, the yawning gap is fixed. There is no doubt that the impression exists that the Socialists regard this form of organization into which labor has instinctually grouped itself as a thing to be vigorously denounced and strenuously combated at every opportunity. That this idea is erroneous and arises out of a misunderstanding, for which the trade unionist is not entirely to blame, I shall endeavor to show.

The question as it is at this time generally debated may be stated thus: Has trades unionism bettered the condition of the working class? Will it ever be able to do so? The trades unionist will point to the fact that those trades which have been better organized have generally enjoyed better pay and working conditions than those unorganized, and argue that it is the unions which have procured them this advantage.

The unionist may contend that the standard of living of all labor, organized and unorganized has been raised appreciably during, say, the last 50 years, and it is due to the efforts of the unions. The socialist will, however, point to the fact that the tendency of the development of the processes of production is to demand a more and more efficient worker, that a shorter working day and a better standard of living is necessary to the production and maintenance of such efficiency, and will argue from this that the relative advantage now enjoyed by labor (such as they might be) might have been conceded had no union existed.

The socialist will point out that the competition of unorganized labor, which constitutes a large portion of the whole, will always act to maintain hours and wages at that point which the market warrants and the methods of production make necessary. The unionist counters with the argument that organization is not yet complete: that when all members of all branches of labor have been organized then, competition being eliminated, labor will have things all its own way. This is a beautiful dream, such organization would create no new demand for labor, in short, there would still be more laborers than jobs and whatever competition previously existed outside the unions, would simply be brought inside—but it still would be competition.

The union, as DeLeon pointed out, is the arm which labor instinctively throws up to protect itself against the blows of capitalism. It is labor's response to the stimulus of the environment. The form and mechanism may be modified, but in essence the institution will remain the same—an organization of workers founded, not on class consciousness, but on that recognition of identity of interest that their status inspires. In short, the workers will organize to make the best of their position as workers—not as class conscious wage slaves to overthrow the system.

So far the outlook is as black and hopeless as the most earnest exponent of the "Philosophy of Misery" could desire. But there is another angle from which the subject may be approached. What says our exponent of the "Dialectic" method? We must consider things as they are but also in light of what they once were and—"what is most important in this connection—what they are likely to develop into."

The weapon of the labor union is the strike. In its earliest and simplest form the strike was purely industrial action of local significance. We have long since passed the stage where the strike was directed simultaneously against several different employing interests and have now arrived at the “Sympathetic” stage. At this stage the strike begins, more or less unconsciously so far as the strikers are concerned, to take a certain degree of political significance.

As this stage develops, the State finds it increasingly difficult to maintain a semblance of neutrality. Consequently, each succeeding strike of this nature provides a liberal education for the workers and awakens them to the need for political action—as the Socialist understands it. The logical development of this idea may be seen in the recent action of the “Triple Alliance” in Great Britain. Here the strike has developed into conscious though not necessarily class conscious political action.

Coincident with this evolves the “One Big Union” idea, the development of which will be to make every strike more and more political in nature. There is no doubt that a strike called by an even partially organized One Big Union would be of such scope and magnitude as to make the mere threat of it a tremendous political lever.

Thus it may be seen that, while labor may refuse to be argued into political action by the Socialist, it will inevitably be forced into such action by the inevitable development of that form of organization which it has adopted. That conscious political action is now developing out of trade unionism is proven by the reference to the “Triple Alliance” mentioned above. How rapidly this will become class consciousness will depend upon a number of factors, one of which is socialist education.

If the conclusions reached above are approximately correct—and I believe that events will prove them to be so—then may the Socialist compose himself to contemplate trade unionism with a more tolerant eye than has been his habit hereto. There is a benevolent old gentleman wearing long white whiskers, clad in a nightshirt and carrying a scythe. He is known as “Father Time”. The fact is not generally appreciated but he is a Socialist of the most pronounced revolutionary type. He is very busy among the trade unions these days. He is working for us.

Will Industrial Unionism Suffice? *OBU Bulletin*, January 12 1928

Most thinking workers have come to the conclusion that the craft form of organization is obsolete. The obvious nature of this change has rendered its repetition almost superfluous in working class circles, but sad to say, there are still vast numbers of our class who are not well enough informed to differentiate between a real remedy and a quack substitute. Many of them seeing the futility of the CRAFT division cannot see the equally dangerous character of INDUSTRIAL DIVISION.

As an industrial organization the United Mine Workers of America has no equal on this continent. But can the UMW, in spite of its numerical strength, in spite of its indomitable spirit of its members, win against the master class? The answer is no. And for the same reason that craft unions cannot win—because the purely industrial form of organization cuts the workers into distinct sections, gives them sectional concepts and attempts to fight the struggle alone. Such attempts MUST end in failure. The industrial union advocates will no doubt claim that this can be overcome by affiliating the various unions. This, however, is only true on paper. It has been proven conclusively that this loose affiliation is of no use in a crisis. The tragic failure of the Triple Alliance in Great Britain is a glaring example of the futility of this burlesque solidarity.

The failure of the British General Strike is an even more glaring example. While the workers realize instinctively, the necessity of CLASS action, the sectional viewpoint developed from their sectional

organizations soon creeps in.

The Triple Alliance in Britain, when put to the test, failed miserably, as must all such efforts fail THAT HAVE NOT THE NECESSARY BASIS FOR CLASS ACTION. Certain mushroom revolutionists claim that this failure was due to the perfidy and timidity of certain leaders. Not being subscribers to the great man theory, we do not agree with this view.

The dividing line in industry has almost disappeared, as industry has become more interlocked. A wonderful illustration is presented in this connection in Nova Scotia, where the giant octopus, Besco, not only owns the coal mines, but also the steel mills and all the by-product plants: lumber mills, railroads, ship yards. Surely the advocates of pure industrial unions will not be foolhardy enough to argue that these workers should be organized into separate unions.

The answer to those who would attempt to defend such a suicidal policy is well given by the results of the last Nova Scotia miners strike. The strike was carried out with much suffering for five long months, during which time hunger drove the miners and their families to raid stores for food and clothing, the militia was used against them: some of the miners went to jail, yet no scabs filled the miners' places. Besco got all the coal it needed to fill orders from the United States. This coal was mined by members of the same American Union—the UMW—that was in charge of the strike in Nova Scotia. This coal was transported to Canada by Besco steamships, manned by Besco employees, unloaded by Besco dock laborers, taken over rail by Besco railroad workers.

At the time the OBU came into being, this point was clearly understood by those who played a part in its formation. It was stated in conventions that industrial unions such as the UMW were unable to meet the needs of workers. The need was for ONE UNION FOR ALL WORKERS, which would allow the class concept to be in evidence at all times. The ONE BIG UNION is such an organization.

Had those various Besco employees been organized into one common union in exactly the same way as Besco had organized all the above mentioned co-related industries, how obvious it is that even though the so-called union members of the United States did mine so-called union coal, it could have never been gotten out of America because the transport workers (and the other workers mentioned belonging to the same union, not six or seven unions with different agreements) would have refused to scab on their own members.

What Is The OBU? *OBU Bulletin*, January 5, 1928

Shall Canadian Labour surrender to the organized employers, or shall we prepare for real progress by organizing into ONE BIG UNION? We have no time to waste with satisfied people. They never have accomplished anything in the world's history. All human progress has been made by the dissatisfied ones, the discontented, the people with a perpetual hunger to know, to improve, to advance.

Labour in Canada has no reason to be satisfied. We have lost much ground in the last five years. Unionism has been cursed with the same crookedness and corruption as it has suffered in the United States. But the workers are beginning to apply the remedy by kicking the AFL out of Canada boot and baggage, and starting in to build a new and clean form of organization that corresponds to the need of the times, and it is controlled by the rank and file. Out of the struggle of the One Big Union was formed in June 1919, after the bitter Winnipeg General Strike, and in spite of bitter opposition from the combined forces of the employers and the AFL officials, it has survived, and steadily spread its influence not only in Canada, but in the USA also, where, in 1922, it won the great Lawrence Textile Strike that saved 100,000 textile workers in New England from a 20% wage cut.

What is the One Big Union? The One Big Union is a labour organization that proposes to unite all wage workers in one union, formed on a class basis instead of a basis of craft or industry. It has a common card for all members, regardless of occupation, and the initiation fee cannot be more than one dollar.

Is The OBU a Mass Organization Like the Old Knights of Labor? It is not. The One Big Union does not throw all the organized workers together in one group, but organizes in units that may be formed in any way the workers in a given locality desire. Units may be formed of shop groups, occupational groups, mill groups, job groups, industrial groups, or craft groups, and solidarity is brought about in every locality by closely linking all the units together through a Central Labor Council.

Will the Officials Control the One Big Union As They Do In Other Organizations? They will not. The OBU is based upon rank and file control, and any official of the OBU, either of a unit, a Central Labor Council, or of the General Executive Board, may be recalled at any time by a majority of his own local unit.

Does the General Executive Board Have the Power to Dictate to the Workers in Any Locality? It does not. The G.E.B. has no power whatever over the workers in any organized locality. The Function of the General Executive is merely to keep localities linked together and to carry on organizational work in unorganized localities. Central Labor Councils and isolated units in localities where there are no Central Labor Councils have full autonomy to conduct their local affairs as they see fit.

Would Any Officials be Empowered to Decide Terms of Settlement in Strikes, Apart From the Rank and File? The OBU is a rank and file organization and officials are not allowed to "settle" anything. They are elected to "serve" the membership, not to "rule" them. In case of strikes, the strikers themselves are always the ones to settle things.

The Closed Shop And Industrial Liberty, *OBU Bulletin*, Dec. 29, 1929

The "Closed Shop" is a system advocated and in some instances practiced by the A.F. of L. unions under which they prohibit everyone but members of their union from getting employment. It is dubbed the "closed shop" because its doors are barred against all employees the union does not recognize.

The non-union man may be denied membership in the union having the "closed shop". He may have been expelled or suspended or he may not be desirable as a member because he is too radical or he may be a member of another union not affiliated with the AFL. Each or all of these reasons are used by these closed shop unionists to get other men discharged or prohibited from getting employment.

It should be understood that opposition to the closed shop does not necessarily involve opposition to labour unions. On the one hand, it should be recognized that the closed shop at all times does oppose the freedom of workers organizing into the unions of their choice.

It should be clearly understood that unions are private societies free to exclude or expel members. Some exclude Negroes, some women, some aliens, others apply qualifications of competency and age. Large entrance fees are imposed. Others have conducted profitable businesses in selling licenses to work to outsiders which they call permits.

Not only do the AFL deny the right of men of men to remain unorganized, if they so choose, but they also deny men their rights to join associations of their own choosing.

They attack the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and deny its right to exist. They have driven OBU and

IWW men from jobs by threats of strikes and scabbing. The AFL idea is that there are no rights to organize except in their craft unions.

A compulsory closed shop system confiscates liberty and destroys all possibility of democracy. No individual should be forced to sell his birthright (his freedom of choice) for a mess of pottage. Servitude to a labour union is just as tyrannical as servitude to a state. Whatever else we do, let us shun tyranny. Cling to liberty even though there be at times industrial dissenters and nonconformists.

Today more so than ever before the AFL attempts to put over its "closed shop" policy. Today, more than ever before the radical labour movement must fight this encroachment upon worker's rights. Let's buckle on the harness and take the labour tyrants on in a battle in order to protect our birthright, Freedom of Choice.

The OBU is not out to compel men and women to join its organization. We stand solidly against discrimination or compulsion in any form and on this principle we shall continue the battle which we think should be determinedly waged, not only in the interests of a few, but for the benefit of the working class as a whole.

Socialism or Leninism?

Bolshevism is roundly criticized in *Is It The Dictatorship Of The Proletariat?*, *On Copying The Bolsheviki*, and *Russia Never Was Socialist*.

Stalinist tactics are criticized in *The Eclipse of Trotsky*, *The Red Trade Union And S. American Labor*, and *Communist Hooligans at Their Usual Game*.

The entire concept of leadership—parliamentary, trade union or vanguard party—is rejected in *Jack London And Leadership*, published in the very last issue of the OBU Monthly.

Is It The Dictatorship Of The Proletariat? by John Tyler, *Red Flag*, October 1, 1919

In the last issue of the *Western Clarion*, F.S.F. deals with, but does not explain, what the Dictatorship of the Proletariat means. Shedding tears over Kautsky and the SPGB (Socialist Party of Great Britain) does not tell us what is meant by Dictatorship of the Proletariat. What do we mean when we use this term anyway? Does it mean a dictatorship of a minority?

Dictatorship as a form of government in Russia means disarming the opposition, by taking away the franchise, liberty of the press and combination of opponents. Does the working class have to employ such methods?

A government that has support of the masses has not the least occasion to interfere with democracy. Why fear the few, who oppose working class rule? Let them rave on. Or is it the dictatorship of a small section of the working class over the mass of workers? Can a Socialist system of production be built on this foundation? State organization of production, a bureaucracy by the dictatorship of a small section of the people does not mean democratic control of industry. Socialism presupposes democratic control of industry. Socialism presupposes a working class that is capable of running the wheels of industry more efficiently than under capitalism. Again, a dictatorship can mean civil war. An ignorant working class can easily be induced to support reaction. Chronic civil war or its alternatives, apathy and opposition under a dictatorship, would render the organization of a Socialist system well nigh impossible.

No, F.S.F., you cannot get Socialism by Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Bela Kun, Levien, Leibknecht and others tried your methods, but the result was thousands of workers rotting in their graves. What then are the prerequisites for Socialism? The will for Socialism is the first condition for its accomplishment. The will is created by the gigantic development of industry. Where small production is universal in a society, the masses are possessed of the means of industry. Small production creates the will to uphold the institution of private property.

To the ripening condition for Socialism must be added the maturity of the working class. Whenever the working class desires Socialism, we will have Socialism. It is impossible to have Socialism in a country where small production is general as in the case of Russia. It is also impossible to have Socialism where the vast majority of people do not desire it. In other words, Socialism without democracy is unthinkable. F.S.F. no doubt remembers that Bill Prichard pointed out to the jury trying him, that the SPC expected to get Socialism only through the support of the majority of the population of Canada.

Surely the SPC realizes how dangerous minority rule would be to their party, and the actions of small groups in the Socialist Party of America and other parties to dominate the membership should sufficiently show the dangers of minority rule.

On Copying The Bolsheviki, *Western Clarion*, November 16 1920

At the time of the 1917 Revolution in Russia we approved of the Bolshevik leaders. During the many vicissitudes of fortune that have taken place since, we have seen no reason to alter this position. We understood, as we still understand, that Bolshevism is not Socialism. Our knowledge of Russian conditions, though perhaps meager, was sufficient to acquaint us with the fact that this country was not yet ready for Socialism. Economic and social development had not reached the stage where social ownership of the means of production was possible. A resourceful Socialist minority had been at work for some years. Among the industrial proletariat an extensive educational policy had been carried out. The weakness of the revisionist and reformist elements of Germany, France and England was fully understood long before the Revolution.

A weak ruling class, lacking the means of repression found in highly organized capitalist centres; a peasantry uneducated and consequently devoid of that respect for master class teaching inseparable from well developed industrial communities; a state of war in existence, which spelled starvation, bloodshed, and discontent for the masses; all these circumstances made possible the successful attempt of the Bolsheviki to capture political power. This they did.

Just what procedure our self-educated Simon-pure intellectuals would have followed in such a contingency we are not aware. In all likelihood they would have chosen to remain in wage slavery until they were absolutely certain that a majority were in favor of change. Once they were able to quote a passage from each of the Socialist classics to prove that the time was right, perhaps they would give the proposition their earnest consideration.

To the scientific socialist, the works of Marx and Engels are valued on account of the knowledge they impart. But there is considerable difference between being Marxian students and Marxian worshippers. The one implies a critical study and the other a blind faith. In a general sense the tactics of the Socialist movement are contained in the works of Marx and Engels. But the methods of attack are not absolute or rigid. Even if we take the term "dictatorship of the proletariat"—it was not spoken by Marx till he had seen the effects of the Paris Commune. It matters not, for the sake of illustration whether we accept the term in the Kautskian or Leninian sense. The point that Marx did not employ it in his earlier writing, and found occasion to do so only after a new situation had arrived.

So with us today. We must mold our tactics in accordance with the conditions at hand. This is what the Bolsheviki did. They took control the opportune moment. Whether or not their action will lead to Socialism, by the safest and shortest route, only time will tell. That the methods pursued in Russia are not adaptable everywhere else we know full well. In fact, perhaps in that one country alone could such tactics suffice. Too many enthusiasts rush to the conclusion that "What's good in Russia is good enough here." They fail to understand the situation. In this connection it might be correct to state that while the Revolution was a good thing for Russian workers, as many impartial persons and delegations have testified, it has had a detrimental effect, in many ways, upon the working class movement in other countries.

Many of our students develop into master strategists and tacticians. They not only understand every move the Bolsheviki made, and the reasons for making them, but persist in laying plans of action, and carving the political framework of the political structure that must be built. In short, they have Bolsheviki on the brain.

Russia Never Was Socialist, *OBU Bulletin*, August 23 1929

The *Socialist Standard* for August contains a review of three books: "An Illustrated History of the Russian Revolution" published by Martin Lawrence, "Preparing For Revolt" by Lenin and "Lessons of October" by Trotsky.

It is clearly shown by means of quotations from these works that the leaders of the Russian Revolution were simply acting under the force of circumstances and that the establishment of socialism was not the main thought that guided them.

One of the most particular features of the so-called Communist propaganda is that it has fooled the public into believing that the Communist leaders are Marxists whereas they are simply Russian nationalists who quote Marx the way the devil quotes scripture: that is to say, they use it as a means to a capitalist end.

Here, from the writings of Lenin, Trotsky and the others you have proof supplied that the whole policy of the Moscowites is, and has been from the first, both reactionary and dangerous from the standpoint of the aspirations of the workers of the Western world. The position is that the Third International is the foreign office of Soviet Russia, and her tools and agents which comprise her diplomatic arm, are by means of this organization, endeavoring to further the national interests of Russia. The real working class movement in the Western countries is fiercely attacked whenever it refuses to accept the leadership of Moscow. The wage slaves of all countries outside Russia are looked upon as material to be molded and used.

We have for years endeavored to get the workers of Canada to realize the danger. We are pleased to note that an ever-increasing number are now beginning to do so and to place these so-called communists where they belong. They are tools of a rising capitalist nation whose slaves work for wages and are like the slaves in other capitalist countries, deluded into believing that they are free. Because the capitalist class has not yet appeared in person in Russia is not to say that capitalism is not there. The capitalist class are also there in embryo and a ruling class in the shape of the so-called Communists of Russia are endeavoring to foster their growth and development.

It is owing to "the low stage of development of Russia's productive forces and the incompleteness of her economic and technical organization" that the colossal strain of the World War precipitated Tsarism into the abyss. The state machine had to be reorganized, not in order to abolish the imperfectly developed capitalism, but in order to clear the way for its development. As in the French Revolution, so in Russia, the interests of individuals who had amassed great wealth in any form under the old regime had to be sacrificed to the property owning class generally. This is all the so-called Socialism of Russia amounts to.

With an army in revolt and economic collapse in sight, power passed into the hands of the only party with sufficient organization and understanding to face the task of peace and reconstruction. That this party contained a considerable working class element and possessed also a marked degree of Socialist knowledge, is an encouraging symptom of working class ability and the spread of revolutionary ideas.

The foreign policy of the Bolsheviks has likewise proved but a variant of the old Tsarist policy of intrigue. Instead of assisting the education of the international working class it has financed confusion and the propaganda of criminally futile policies of insurrection, long ago obsolete in Western Europe.

The Eclipse Of Trotsky, by C.L., *OBU Bulletin*, Feb. 9 1928

The sending of Trotsky into exile is causing a number of students of Socialism to ponder, and many who heretofore have been enthusiastic supporters of the Soviet government are now realizing that “things are not what they seem” in the land of the Muscovite. Those who have carefully studied the French Revolution will observe a parallel between the Russian and French upheavals and classify Trotsky as the Russian Danton. In many features the Bourgeois Revolution and the Russian Revolution are the same.

Labor power is a commodity in Russia and sells at the cost of production. Any attempt on the part of the Russian proletariat to raise itself will be ruthlessly suppressed by the Stalin outfit, because within the framework of the capitalist society the working class cannot raise itself “without springing everything into the air.”

This man who proved his worth in the days of trial and error, who stood by Lenin in the hour of danger, this man who created the Red Army, who did the best by his writings and great organizing ability to help the workers win is now sacrificed to the gods of the capitalist world. Trotsky has his faults—who does not? But all through he has proved himself a true soldier of the Revolution.

Let his traducers, the so-called Communist Party revile him: let his enemies who have no other objective in view but to sell Russia to the highest capitalist bidder persecute him, the more they do this the better from the standpoint of his honor. Trotsky stands higher in the estimation of the revolutionary proletariat than at any time since the revolution.

It is up to those who are class conscious to stand by him and so long as he continues to maintain those principles to defend him against his treacherous enemies, the so-called Communist Party.

The Red Trade Union And S. American Labor, *OBU Bulletin*, Sept. 20 1928

In the issues 50, 51, and 52 of the “Red Trade Union International Bulletin” 1928, the resolutions of the last International Congress are published. It is a waste of space to reproduce the long wound rigmarole which changes back and forth every year and always religiously begins with a so-called “analysis” of the capitalist system and ends with pompous praise of Soviet capitalism—“the synthesis”. But when South America is “discussed” we come across many of those bald statements which are stock in trade of the All High Priests in Moscow who dictate to the working class. It is said there again: The Latin American movement suffers from two diseases—Anarcho-syndicalism and Reformism. While this admits the strength of the Syndicalist movement there, they forget that the dictatorship of the Communist Party is no better than the Reformism they complain against. We then read that “an idea of creating a Latin American secretariat is born.” If so, it will be stillborn! We shall see to it that like so many other Moscow monsters this will not live long. We have only to remind them of the much tomtommed Anglo-Russian committee of “union” which returned to where it started in spite of the great “scientific socialist” methods tried by the Muscovite professors of Marxism.

The Anti-authoritarian, libertarian labor movement of South America will know how to put a short end to the Red Trade Union International Latin American bureau hatched in the laboratories in Moscow. The syndicalist movement is neither corrupted nor diseased with party politics and therefore is strong enough to survive all, including the spurious new office of the much tom-tommed RTUI.

Communist Hooligans at Their Usual Game, *OBU Bulletin*, June 18 1931

The Socialist Party of Canada was again subjected to a violent and unprovoked attack at the hands of the choicest scum of the Communist Party Sunday evening last. A group of organized ruffians made the attack when the speaker was inviting questions, the gangsters being led by one who stood in front and gave signals to the rest.

Whilst the meeting had been proceeding, certain communist elements tried to deprecate the statements made, but failed to make any impression on the crowd. And as the matter dealt with did not include the Muscovites and their party, the hooligans were unable to find an excuse to butt in.

Suddenly, however, during the question time a rush was made and the speaker pushed off the box onto other thugs who had worked in behind, one of who aimed a vicious kick at him then ran away. A wild fight then followed, the communist gang making desperate efforts to get Lestor, the speaker, on the ground, but with the aid of one or two friends fought his way through and escaped. The communist gangsters then attacked a harmless old man named Jim McGrath, striking him from behind and then beating him in the face. Why do these loathsome scoundrels resort to this brutal and cowardly method of trying to prevent the workers from obtaining the education that is so much needed at the present time?

There is only one answer: They are being used by a section of the master class for a sinister purpose. Whenever they operate they always pursue tactics which are designed to disintegrate the workers' organizations and strengthen the position of the ruling class. This is the reason they are allowed to make statements on the public platform in many places which, if attempted by anyone else, would result in the speaker being immediately arrested.

The workers of Canada and other lands are now beginning to grasp the fact that the ruling class are able to divide the workers by making use of the Communist Party. The activities of this bunch have at all times been the excuse given for the repressive measures used against labor.

Some time ago we saw much of the tactics, slogans and other weird and wonderful concoctions of this nefarious crew, but they all have failed, and now as a last resort they descend to the lowest strata of savagery in order to escape their inevitable doom. Soviet Russia is a capitalist country in which the workers are enslaved and exploited. They work for wages and suffer the horrors of the wage system and are prevented by a ruthless dictatorship from expressing what they really think.

One thing we note with interest, and that is the changed attitude of the ruling class of the Western world towards the Russian question. They are giving it a sympathetic investigation with the object of duplication along certain lines in their own habitat. State slavery would be the result if they succeeded and the Canadian working class, if they fell for it, would step from the frying pan into the fire.

The workers of Canada who hold the view that we must work out our own emancipation by making the best use of the materials provided by nature and history in this country and operate independently of this alien and degrading influence imported from Moscow are called to unite and put an end, once and forever, to the present intolerable state of things. As the BULLETIN has often stated, we are in Canada and must deal with special Canadian conditions. Our path lies not along the path of Moscow.

We stand for democracy and freedom of speech; Moscow stands for dictatorship and suppression. We hold the view that by education and organization the present social order can be changed into a co-operative commonwealth in which wage slavery and profit are unknown. They stand for violence and bloodshed and their ultimate aim is not the emancipation of those who do the world's work, but bringing the peoples of all countries under the iron heel of the fanatics of Moscow.

Jack London and Leadership, *OBU Monthly*, April 1938

Just prior to his death, Jack London wrote thus, “Will the proletariat save itself? If it won’t, it is unsaveable... I am not bitter: I am only sad in that the proletariat seems to perpetuate the seeds of its proletarianess.”

By which London meant that the working class seems to perpetuate itself as a working class, and yet London saw clearly that if the workers are to be saved, they must do it themselves. He did not entertain the illusion that someone could take the workers by the collar and drag them into freedom.

Were London alive today he would restate the above with emphasis. This in view of the fact that at no time in the history of the working class movement has there ever been such a flock of self-appointed leaders both in the economic and parliamentary wings of the labour movement. Leaders everywhere, leaders in the old craft form of organization, leaders in the CIO, leaders in the CCF, leaders in the Communist Party, all striving to gain ascendancy in their particular field, all, placing before the workers their particular brand of salvation, “Believe in me” and like the Moses of old, we shall lead you to the land of milk and honey. Yet in spite of years of effort put forth by these gentlemen, the working class are still looking for a way out of their present difficulties.

The One Big Union is the only organization that today comes before the workers and preaches the gospel of “Abolition of Leadership”, of control of the organization by the rank and file: the only organization that gives the membership the right to decide what they shall pay in the form of monthly dues. The only organization that correctly understands the message as stated by London, that the working class cannot be led, but whatever intelligent action they must take must be on an understanding of the problems that confront them in present day society. If the workers can be led anywhere not knowing the why and wherefore, by any particular brand of leaders, they certainly can be led anywhere else by any particular brand of leaders.

No, fellow workers, blind leaders leading the blind will get us nowhere—only to chaos, and you can be sure that the message proclaimed by the OBU since its inception, that of building a movement wherein the membership directs the destiny of such a movement, is the only correct basis upon which to build and while other organizations may for the time being seem to make some progress, especially in the parliamentary field owing to the fact that as London said, the workers still want to be led: they still want to follow the path of least resistance.

This state of affairs will not last; there will come a day when the workers will realize the futility of leadership; they will assert themselves; they will throw off the yoke of reactionary leadership and when that day comes the OBU will come into its own. The workers will then realize that the work at hand is the building of a movement that has as its objective, the working class organized on the basis of understanding, marching toward the ultimate goal, economic freedom. Such an organization, fellow workers, is the OBU. Do your part in the great struggle that lies ahead by signing its application form, elsewhere in the MONTHLY and show your willingness to become a member in this great movement.

Strikes and Struggles

Long forgotten labor battles are discussed in Law and Order In Drumheller, Nova Scotia Miners Put Down Lewis Tyranny, and The Anyox Civil War. The fight for democracy and women's rights are examined in The Sons of Freedom and Reflected Glory of Males.

Law And Order In Drumheller, *OBU Bulletin*, November 29, 1919

Americanism Rampant on British Soil

In District 18 that was Americanism 100% efficient, has shown its sinister front on British soil. The story is only being told in part after some months of suppression by the kept press. Below are some of the stories of the victims of the illegalities:

Robert MacDonald made the following statement: "I was a member of the United Mine Workers and with the big majority of the members of our local I voted in favor of withdrawing from the international and becoming part of the OBU." "About seven o'clock on the evening of Saturday, August 9th, I was on the street in Drumheller when I saw a number of men coming towards me. One of these men I had seen cleaning windows around the town but I did not know his name.

He said to the others, "Here's another OBU guy, take him away." They hustled me into a car driven by one of the officials of the Standard Bank.... One man showed us a handful of loaded shells and another said, as he pointed to a beam, "We are going to hang you all from that beam." Another said, "I wish we had some bombs, we'd damn soon clean out the valley."

"A bunch of the men drew off in the corner of the barn to have a consultation. After they had their talk they hustled each one of us into a car. They put me in a car owned and driven by J. H. Eakin, manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce in Drumheller, and on the seat with him was William Henderson, owner of the Jewel and Western Glen Mines. There was a man on each side of me. The car drove at high speed to Munson, twelve miles, then about eight miles further, when they said to me, "Unload and keep going." It was early Sunday morning when I reached home and found my wife in a state of collapse.

"About noon a neighbor woman came in and said that the news had gotten round that I was back and they were coming to get me. That again frightened my wife, so I arranged to get out, walked across country to Bainton, and Caught the train to Calgary."

John Kent, secretary of the Wayne Local, made the following statement:

"Together with the entire membership of our local, I voted for withdrawing from the United Mine Workers. It was about two o'clock Monday morning, August 11, that I was awakened by my wife and told that men were surrounding the house. There was a knock at the door and I asked what was wanted. There was no answer, but I heard someone say: "Snatch that screen door off." I grabbed an axe and asked them to come in. They did not come in so I went out on the step with the axe in my hand and saw a number of the men, several of whom were pointing revolvers at me. I stepped back into the house and at least six of them followed me. My wife, badly frightened, was standing in her night dress, but that made no difference to the housebreakers. Threatened as I was with guns, there was no use offering resistance, so I put on my coat and vest and went with them. They marched me down the track, some of them constantly showing their revolvers. They did not attempt to strike me or ill-use me.

We waited a few minutes and another gang came with President Christophers, and a few minutes later with Albert Young. They marched us up to the hill where there were a lot of waiting autos. I was out in the first auto and taken to the Veterans Club in Drumheller. This was about half past three in the morning. I should judge there were about seventy men in the hall and John F. Gallagher was made

chairman. He made a speech denouncing Christophers and myself and was particularly hard on me because I had been the chief witness against him in court when he was charged with having sold foodstuff which was the property of the Wayne local. He said that I was the leader of the Bohunks, an OBU man who had been putting stuff into men's heads and getting them out on strike.

Then they made me stand and asked me if I would go back to the United Mine Workers. I told them how the international had acted in 1906 and again in 1911. Someone shouted, "Give him the full penalty." After they went at Young and Clapham. Shortly after ten we were placed in charge of five guards with revolvers and ordered to march. They took us in the direction of Munson and showed us a hill and told us to get over that"

Thomas Patterson Thompson made the following statement: On the evening of Saturday August 9th, I was at the Drumheller Cleaning and Dye Works, when Sam Joffe and Tom Boyce came in and told me that about 200 men were looking for me. A few minutes later a number of men came in the front door and some others in the back door. A man called William James said I had to get out of town. I tried to argue but the men behind me pinioned my arms and I was rushed out the front door. They pushed me into an auto belonging to Cameron, a job painter. They drove to the barn at the Manitoba Mine and there found J. O. Sullivan and Bob MacDonald in charge of the guards who were acting under A.J. Briggs. I asked him what the matter was and he told me they were rounding up all the "Scotch renegades."

The men were all excited and ugly and someone suggested that we should be hanged. Gibson, a former bank manager came in and looked us over and seemed much pleased. A man named William Himmelman brought in another miner in his big green car. I noticed in the barn, W.E. MacDonald a grocer from Midlandvale, Charlie Stanley, head mechanic at the Manitoba Mine, William Henderson, owner of the Western Gem Mine and another man I had seen at the Bank of Commerce and had been told he was the manager. The Drumheller justice of the peace, Sibbald, was there. While I was in the car with a man on either side of me, Henderson came up and shook his fist at me. He said: "Thompson, didn't I tell you we would get you?" He further said: "Hanging is too good for you." He seemed much excited and at one moment I thought he was going to smash me with his cane. They took me toward Drumheller. While in the car they started to go through my pockets. I resisted. They held my arms and took some letters from my mother and other articles from me. After they had looked them over they seemed disappointed and one of them said: "Chuck them in the road." About half way over the Red Deer bridge one fellow suggested that they blindfold me and they bandaged my eyes. They asked me how much money I had and I replied: "I have a couple of dollars, I reckon." They held my hands and found something over \$25 dollars in my watch pocket of my trousers.

After a while they stopped the car and unbandaged my eyes. I saw that W.W. Madison, real estate agent, was also in the front seat. Maddison told me: "Never come back to Drumheller, or the next time we will take you out in pieces." I then said to Maddison: "If you are a gentleman you will make them give me back my money as I wanted to send some of it to my mother." He told them to give me back my money and one of them handed me some bills. I started away from the car and counted the money and only found four dollars. One of them said: "If you say I've got your money I'll smash your face." They then started toward Drumheller and I walked all night till six the next morning, when I reached Delia and took a train to Calgary.

Nova Scotia Miners Put Down Lewis Tyranny, *OBU Bulletin*, April 11, 1929

The miners of Nova Scotia are again in a state of revolt against the dictates of the district officers. The

rank and file are determined this summer to dispose of the Lewis dictatorship and to put a stop to the compulsory check—off that J. L. Lewis and his gang are most concerned about. The conditions that these workers had to tolerate, as a result of the tyranny of Besco, the UMW and the Nova Scotia government, is acknowledged to be disgraceful throughout the universe.

The rank and file in their locals are supporting a resolution demanding a referendum on secession from the UMW. This resolution has been supported by the majority of locals in the district. Individual locals have decided if the District Executive refuse to grant a referendum, each local will act in its own interest and follow the policy outlined to them by the One Big Union.

The OBU is the organization that the workers have to build, and once established will function in the interests of all the workers. The agitation by the OBU has brought results to the Building Trades workers in most of the towns in the province, an increase of 10% having been gained. The laborers on the highway have got a five cent per hour increase and a nine hour day in place of the ten hour day. The private contractors in Glace Bay reduced the pay of their slaves from \$3.25 to \$3.00 a day. A number of the men met and decided to put on a campaign of organization for the OBU. As a result they had the 25 cents a day immediately restored. The effects of the work of the OBU are now bearing fruit in all parts of Nova Scotia. There is no doubt but we shall make great headway during the coming summer as the men are dissatisfied and determined to change things for the better.

The Anyox Civil War by T.E., *OBU Bulletin*, March 9, 1933

As Told by Reporters to a Mass Meeting at Prince Rupert

For years the Granby Company has been operated by American interests: for years huge profits have gone to the States from this Canadian mine. Now copper is so cheap the American interests want the Canadian government to subsidize them. The following will show what the B.C. government is doing.

During the last six months the miners have received a cut in wages amounting to \$1.50. Last week the men asked for a raise and a reduction of 10% in the price of food sold in the company stores. This being refused, the miners held a meeting and decided to strike.

On Friday, February 3, the men gathered for a march to the beach to meet the men working there and make the strike complete. The miners having heard of the police “billies” took the precaution of wearing their miner’s hats. In order to reach the town it is necessary to cross a narrow bridge. On arrival at the bridge the men were stopped by eight police, who demanded that they return. Well, the men at the back, not seeing what was taking place at the front just pushed ahead, and the men at the front were pushed into the police, who, without hesitation, commenced to beat up everyone within their reach. A free for all took place, the result being that three miners and two police were sent to the hospital and one of the miners may lose an eye as a result. When the strike was declared the Anyox hospital was cleared of all patients: the condition did not matter—out they had to go. Why? Read on.

On Saturday no less than five planes were speeding to the smelter town, and one gunboat, all bearing armed forces. These were quickly dispatched from Prince Rupert, and we got a glimpse of how quickly a force could be gotten together. By Sunday night a force of about 70 men was patrolling the town to settle the dispute between masters and men.

The miners received the sum of \$2.75 a day. Out of that \$40 a month is deducted for board, compensation, income tax etc. The camp is overrun with bedbugs and when one man complained to the clerk about such conditions he was fired. The company pets must be protected. It was suggested that the armed force would do more good if they cleaned out these pests, and no one would kick if they took some with them on their departure.

Well, that is the story to date with the men standing out. A few days ago, however, a bunch of active men to the number of eight were placed aboard the company freighter, Griffco, in an apartment six by nine feet, and were kept there for sixteen hours before being released for exercise. By the time more leaders were picked up, numbering 32 men, who were then shipped to Prince Rupert with orders never to return. These men were not given time to collect their belongings and were not given the pay that was due them. They arrived in Prince Rupert with only what they stood in. That, comrades, is the answer of capitalism to the workers—machine guns, airplanes and bayonets. Will the workers ever get wise to themselves?

The Sons Of Freedom, *OBU Bulletin*, August 29, 1929

The Doukhobours are in trouble again and are threatening to go on the rampage clothed in nothing but the garb of righteousness. The Sons of Freedom, as they call themselves, are Christian communists, who do not believe in war, exploitation or government. They hold that the earth is for man's sustenance and that all should have access to the wealth Mother Nature provides. One of the reasons they get in bad with the authorities is because they refuse to allow their children to be educated and they decline to pay taxes -they want to be free.

One may have sympathy with their ideals without endorsing the particular method they adopt of accomplishing what they have in view. They object to government and their instinct is correct: government implies a governed, and no one governs others for their own good. Government was first introduced to enable rulers to rob: the state and the slave appear on the pages of history at the same time. The state is the club, the power that compels obedience and was originally designed to keep slaves in order to enable their masters to take from them what they produced. There are those who hold that this is its main function today.

Our friends the Doukhobours may try to resist what our masters have decreed shall be, but eventually they will be compelled to yield to the commands of the authorities. They object to their children being educated on capitalist lines and we do not blame them for this. They realize that when the agents of the capitalist class get their work in, the children will leave the land and go to the cities.

The master class, however, claim their slaves and demand the right to educate them and train for exploitation the children of those they hold in bondage. The Sons of Freedom will not be permitted to exempt themselves from exploitation and will be eventually compelled to permit their youngsters to be doped in the orthodox manner. We can understand and sympathize, but they are in the same boat as ourselves and freedom for us we know to be impossible until the system of capitalism goes by the board.

Reflected Glory of Males, by "A Woman" *OBU Bulletin*, May 25, 1933

How often have we heard it said that women cannot be organized in a working class movement: that you cannot get them to meetings. So many demands are made by the home that the unpaid mother is justified perhaps in saying she is too tired to rush out and come home to get supper ready.

But last week the conclusion was forced upon me that women are not always too tired to attend meetings, for I found that when the advertising Johnny was slick enough to give a handout of some of his wares on a draw ticket, with a cup of tea thrown in, the women were there like flies around a honey pot.

On two different occasions recently, I attended (at the urgent request of friends) two meetings. My name was supposed to swell the number of names required to make these particular meetings a success financially. As it happened, one name would have not made much difference because the place was

crowded—about 400 women were present. The afternoon was warm and sunny and both meetings were in the basement, so there was no attraction to stay indoors. Some mothers had taken the children not of school age along, too.

The performance was from 2:30 to 5 o'clock. During that time you sat and listened to the merits of the goods displayed—flour, soap, varnish and other commodities by speakers employed by the firms represented. In each case the emphasis was laid upon the fact that the goods displayed were made in Winnipeg, that by buying these goods you were helping some poor, needy person, whom you perhaps knew to retain his job.

A check-up of the wages given to workers in our city might not make good advertising for Winnipeg products. There must have been working women among the listeners whose daughters could not support themselves on the wages given by firms in our "fair city".

Let me give an account of two other meetings I attended, in direct contrast. Both meetings were for women, the subjects being "Unemployment and Its Causes" and "Unemployment and Its Cure". The meetings, speakers and subjects were extensively advertised. There were present about 20 women at one place and 30 at another.

It is surely a reflection on our intelligence as women that a subject of such vital importance as unemployment and the educating of ourselves to discuss and solve our own problems should be left in the hands of men. Women are still, I fear, the reflected glory of their male relatives. Their public efforts seem still to be directed towards electing men to public office. Women have to organize themselves and think for themselves, not only on their own behalf, but for the betterment of the children they have born, the children who are undernourished, who have no future as far as working for a living is concerned.

Women can turn out in hundreds for a draw ticket, women must turn out in thousands on their own behalf before conditions will be changed. Knowledge and organization will do much toward that end. Time should not be wasted on individualism or political jobbery. They should organize for themselves and their children and be ready to meet conditions. They should take time to attend meetings that teach the class struggle.

Working Conditions:

The wretched working conditions often found in the “Roaring Twenties” are exposed in *Loggers Live In Squalor*, *Prostitution Demanded Of Girl Waitresses* and *Young Slaves Are Cheap*.

Loggers Live In Squalor, *OBU Bulletin*, December 20, 1927

From the Atlantic to the Pacific, conditions in any of the lumber camps in Canada could not possibly be worse than those that exist in the camps of Northern Ontario. It is high time the workers took action to remedy these conditions, and there is only one action they can take which will be successful, that is: Organize. At the present time, no organization exists and the workers are at the complete mercy of the lumber barons. Groups of workers keep shifting from camp to camp hoping that the next camp would possibly be fit for a human being to live in, but alas, they look in vain, for they find the next camp just as bad as the one they left.

The bunkhouse is the most important of conditions to a lumberjack, for this is the only home he will have during the long winter months. To call this bunkhouse a home would exceed the human imagination, for workers are jammed into small boxes made of logs, 38 persons to each one, which allows six foot of space per man. No washroom is provided, consequently one tub on the bunk house stove has to do the duty for all. This results in the bunkhouse being full of steam and stench from the clothes and socks hanging up to dry. Moreover, the space being so limited, the men cannot walk upright. There is no ventilator, and the windows are all nailed down. This is not an extreme case but is typical of all the camps... The Gibson camps are well known for these same conditions and also leaky roofs which permit the water to continually drip on the men's beds... What a comparison between these sleeping quarters of the slaves and the sumptuous sleeping quarters of their masters, who wine and dine on the parlor cars between here and Ottawa.

Prostitution Demanded Of Girl Waitresses, *OBU Bulletin*, Sept. 20, 1928

New York—(F.P.)—Prostitution is demanded of girl waitresses sent out to many hotels in the summer months. Others are robbed of their wages. Boys are frequently beaten up by their employers. Workers of both sexes are sent long distances, at their own expense, often to find that no job awaits them.

These evils of the private employment agencies and summer hotel keepers were revealed to the Industrial Survey Commission by Mrs. Lillian Sire of the State Labor Department, during hearings conducted to frame a state license law for job sharks.

Flappers from 16 to 20 are at a premium in these resorts, Mrs. Sire testified. If she refuses to yield to the demands of customers and bosses, she finds herself stranded 100 to 300 miles from the city. Older women sent to these waitress jobs are turned down, or fired soon after they go to work.

Sent to work as a busboy, a youth was made to do porter work too heavy for him. He was beaten, turned out penniless and walked 135 miles back to New York, living on apples picked by the wayside.

Many resort keepers fire their workers after the first week, splitting job fees with the employment agencies back in the city. This is known as the three shift system, with one crew on the job, one on the way back and another coming. One boss made \$100,000 in this manner.

A woman with a small child had wages deducted for the baby's food. Then she was denied any food at all for the child. Finally her clothes were thrown out the window and she was forced to leave without

any money. The woman complained to the Sheriff, who becoming impatient knocked her down with his fist. She set out down the road carrying her baby. Her feet swelled so she had to discard her shoes. Tottering along, she was hit by a bus. A leg was amputated but nevertheless she died and the tot was sent to a public institution.

No redress exists for these workers, Mrs. Sire told the commission. It takes six days for a hearing, and then the employer may ask a continuance. In the meantime the complainant may be beaten up or threatened to leave town.

Young Slaves Are Cheap, *OBU Bulletin*, May 9, 1929

The Labor members have recently attempted to obtain a minimum wage for boys employed in Manitoba. In the course of the discussion of this matter, S.J. Farmer quoted from a report prepared by the Bureau of Labor and declared that there were scores of boys working for \$4.00 a week or less, and stated that their hours of labor were as high as 69 a week. We do not know what our readers think of this deplorable state of affairs, but it certainly should receive attention at the hands of the working class.