

STEEL STRIKE

HAMILTON 1946



By Ken Stone

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The enormous diesel loaded with huge I-beams geared down. "All right fellas," said the young steelworker taking the microphone, and speaking in an even voice, "this is what we've been waiting for. Are we going to let them take the bread out of our mouths, out of the mouths of our families? I want you to stand there right in the middle of the road when this truck comes down the road and let it come at you!"

A line of police marched slowly in front of the truck, cajoling the crowd all the while "to keep moving." The truck inched forward in its lowest gear.

"OK now, fellas, we have first aid materials here. I want you to slow it down. . . That's right. . . slow it down. DON'T GIVE GROUND!"

The police line met the forward mass of strikers. The strikers didn't budge. But the diesel kept on coming right up into the backs of the police.

"Alright, now," said the young steelworker, "lean on it. Push on it. Make it stop."

The driver frantically floored the gas pedal. The engine roared. But the truck was stopped.

"All together now," continued the steelworker, over the shouting and the roaring diesel, "PUSH."

The cops were getting squashed against the radiator and front fender of the diesel as it was pushed back, back down the piece of road outside the gate, back through the gate, far back into the Steel Company plant yard. It was pushed by hundreds upon hundreds of rand-and-file workers, from the steel plant, from the Westinghouse plants, from Firestone rubber, and by friends and relatives of the strikers. The crowd cheered wildly.

The diesel was sent twice more against the crowd, and twice it was pushed all the way back. The police arrested the most prominent leaders. Still the strikers commanded the gate. The strike was saved.

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Canadian Party of Labour

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Dick Steele, a Communist, and one of the people responsible for organizing the United Steelworkers in Canada.

Saul Alinsky, biographer of Mine Workers leader John L. Lewis, and no friend of the left, points out in reluctant admiration:

In 1933-34, when the AFL smashed the spirit of unionism, it was the left-wingers who zealously worked day and night picking up the pieces. . . and putting them together. . .

When the autoworkers, filled with disgust, built huge bonfires with their AFL membership cards, it was the left-wingers who kept fighting against the disillusionment and cynicism that swept the workers. It was they who kept organizing and organizing and organizing. . .

Every place where new industrial unions were being formed, young and middle-aged Communists were working tirelessly. . .

The fact is that the Communist Party made a major contribution in the organizing of the unorganized for the CIO.

In Canada, this bit of union history is identical. All the industrial unions involved in the '46 strike were formed under the leadership of communists. Dick Steele, an old CPer, was the man singly most responsible for the establishment of the Steelworkers' Organizing Committee in Canada. He was later removed by Charles Millard, Steelworkers 1005 misleader. Steele was killed in action in World War II. Hamilton Rubberworkers might be surprised to learn that their union's foundation was laid under the leadership of the old CP Workers' Unity League (affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions). Even to this day members of the old Communist Party control the bureaucracy of the United Electrical Workers. Most Canadian industrial unions, in fact, were built up by communists: the Canadian Seamen's Union (busted by Hal Banks' Seafarers' International Union); the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (sold by the Communist Party to the Steelworkers in 1967); the Autoworkers; the International Woodworkers; etc.

Before the War there was virtually no federal or provincial legislation concerning arbitration, conciliation, and the whole strike procedure in general. Strikes were organized and fought without conciliation, during contracts, without strike funds, and often under the leadership of the Workers' Unity League. They were a real test of strength.

During the War, the government saw the obvious danger in the workers, drive to organize industrial unions. The capitalists' profits were being threatened. Thus, the first Canadian labour legislation — PC 1003 — was born. It was an Order-In-Council from the Federal Cabinet, and it provided the machinery for the recognition of unions, for negotiations and conciliation, and for compulsory arbitration. This legislation (one of the severest of Western capitalist countries) was so successful in retarding union organization by preventing war-time strikes that it remains the basis of Canadian labour legislation today (the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act and the Canadian and provincial Labour Relations Acts).

All the three Hamilton locals of Steel (USWA), Electrical (UE) and Rubber Workers (URWA) had been granted charters as early as the mid-Thirties. Yet none managed to negotiate a contract until 1945, and they were poor contracts at that. During the war-time wage-price regulation, moreover, (which is similar to the legislation being advocated today by the New Democratic Party and by parts of the Rand and Woods Reports of the government) prices rose an average of 30% while wages remained virtually stationary. And, needless to say, this was one of the most industrially productive periods in Canadian history.

This smooth exploitation of Canadian workers was not wholly the work of the government and the businessmen. The Trade and Labour Congress volunteered a no-strike pledge to the bosses for the duration of the War. They won the rank and file to this by lies and a promise of a post-war millenium to the workers. The main proponents of the pledge were members of the old Communist Party, then under the name Labour-Progressive Party, whose main line at the time was "a united front against Fascism," a line that was never meant to provide for a united front against the working class.

The bosses, however, did go on strike. During the War, companies were put on the cost-plus system; that is, their profits were determined as a fixed percentage of their costs. The federal government initially set the percentage at 5%. But the companies refused to produce at less than 10%. And they won out.

The end of the War brought an end to the feather-bedding, and consequently a speed-up for the workers. Coupled with the speed-up came immense lay-offs (by 1946, at Hamilton

Westinghouse, 1000 had been laid off), and the problem of unemployed demobilized soldiers, who were soon known in the plants for their refusal to take any crud from the foremen. The industrial workers of Hamilton 'enjoyed' in 1946 no statutory holidays with pay, no health and welfare plans, no company-financed sick benefit plan, little or no job security of seniority protection. They were eligible for one week's vacation for up to ten years of work and two weeks thereafter. They worked 44 and 48 hour weeks under pretty rugged conditions. (They are still pretty rugged.) Their unions were legally recognized, it is true. But their strength had never been tested in practise. There was no union checkoff, and stewards had little scope for union activities. The workers were still working at Depression wages, due to the wage-price regulation. At Westinghouse, the labour (minimum) rate for men was 60¢ an hour and 38¢ for women. The top rate for a tool and die maker on piece work was \$1.05. A woman piece worker could make 60¢. At Stelco the minimum rate was 64-1/2¢ an hour. To top it all off for the workers were the raised expectations they felt due them as a result of the victory for which they had scrimped and sacrificed, risked their lives, and lost friends and relatives.

Both the unions and the bosses were getting prepared for a showdown, and it was increasingly apparent that the whole Canadian struggle was to be focussed on one battleground — the Steel Company of Canada Hilton Works on Hamilton Bay.

The Elements Combined, a history of Stelco commissioned by the company and written by William Kilbourn, reads like a capsule account of the development of Canadian industry. Stelco was born in 1910 of a merger that controlled the production of steel from ore-refining to finishing. It arrived at the climax of the cartelization of industry (concentration of production) around the beginning of the century and along with the development of Canadian finance capital — the working partnership in industry of the banks and the capitalists. By 1946, the tentacles of this giant of monopoly capitalism reached into all sectors of Canadian economics and, of course, politics. By 1960, from a relatively small position in the primary steel industry, making only one-tenth of Canada's steel ingots, it had become the largest Canadian-owned industrial company selling in the Canadian market, producing one-half of Canada's steel ingots.

In 1946 Stelco had assets of 113,011,893.66 and declared a net profit of \$4,159,259.55 for 1945 (about \$4,000 surplus value off each worker). In 1944 each share of common stock yielded 48.4% profit. Needless to say, the rapid growth of industrial unions challenged that profit.

Facing this and other giant monopolies were the union organizations, though weak and divided, yet peopled by militant rank and filers.

The CCL had set up the machinery for strike co-ordination. It was called the Wage Coordinating Committee and was to have



Labour Day, Cape Breton, 1946.

sub-committees in local areas. In Hamilton it was to have coordinated the strike timetable and demands for Steel, Electrical and Rubber Workers with the Autoworkers in Windsor. Thanks to the Steelworkers anti-communist leaders it was a notable flop.

These misleaders hoped to make a deal with the three big Canadian Steel companies — Stelco in Hamilton; Algoma in Sault Ste. Marie; Dominion steel in Sydney, Nova Scotia — and avoid a strike. Even for bureaucrats, however, the Steelworker misleaders were an incredible bunch. Charles Millard, National Director, also a lay preacher and W.C.T.U. temperant, once stated, "I sometimes think it's wrong for the labour movement to go for shorter hours because it gives them more time to spend in the beer parlours." After a career of trying to sell out the steelworkers, as big wheel in the CCL, and as government trustee on the Seaway during the government cleanup of the Seafarer's International union, Millard ended up as Canadian representative on the International Conference of Free Trade Unions, the American breakaway from the Soviet-established World Federation of Trade Unions. Larry Sefton, international representative in 1946, said during the strike: "I'm against strikes in principle." Today he is head of District 6 of the Steelworkers, and he is number one man in the union.



Larry Sefton, veteran sell-out union leader, has scuttled strikes for two and a half decades.

Of the three locals, 1005 at the largest plant was the weakest organizationally. It didn't participate in the brief strike of 1943 at Algoma and Dosco. In fact it wasn't until late '42 that a real movement toward unionization began in the plant. Earlier in the Thirties some hard-fought attempts had been made but it took the birth of industrial unionism to give the right impetus.

In the 1942 campaign the union men initiated a certificate vote — a vote of the workers to choose between the company's Works Council and the union as collective bargaining agent. One of the petition books for the vote fell into company hands. The first name in it was one of the leading militants — a communist. He was fired on the spot Friday afternoon. Meetings went on all weekend and as a result the company rehired him without a fight. The union men then ran for and won 9 of the 11 seats on the company's Works Council. At the first meeting they demanded recognition of Local 1005. When the company refused they resigned. A certification vote was soon held, the union was accepted by two-thirds of the workers, and the local negotiated its first contract in 1945.

It was still in a pretty precarious position. The workers had won no wage increase. They also still had no union checkoff, which meant that by 1946 the union had only about 400-500 dues-paying members out of a work force of about 5000 men. And they



Workers shut down Algoma Steel.

had yet to face trying to win a peace-time contract.

In 1945 the autoworkers at Ford in Windsor had fought for and won the first big peace-time contract, large wage gains, and, most important, the dues shop, the compulsory check-off under the new Rand (recently of wage control fame) formula. The formula provided for compulsory payment of dues to the union but voluntary membership in the bargaining unit. The American Steelworkers had also just won the compulsory checkoff and a base rate of 97-1/2¢ an hour.

Not all the odds, however, were stacked against the workers. They did have the benefit of Communist leadership in winning the strike. Now, it is the people who carry the battles to victory, and so it was in '46. But if there was one person who more than any other gave the leadership that enabled the rank and file of Hamilton to win, that man was Bill Walsh. Walsh was a member of the old Communist Party at the time who had worked in the Workers' Unity League in Ontario and who was the man singly most responsible for the formation of the Rubber Workers' in Canada, before being interned and then later serving overseas in the War. Walsh, then 35, was sent down to Hamilton by the United Electrical Workers as district representative in January 1946. He was demobilized there along with thousands of other veterans at the Kenilworth Avenue trade school-barracks.

The organization of UE at the two Westinghouse plants on Barton Street and on Longwood Road was as shaky as the Steelworkers'. Of a total of about 4000 workers, only about 200 paid dues to the Union. The contract of 1945 gave no security to the Union; it was government imposed. And there was no strike fund.

By the time of the deadline for the strike vote the UE Local 504 had signed up about 1800 of the 4000 Westinghouse workers. It was an exciting time, what with frequent labour rallies downtown and in Woodlands Park, right in front of the Barton Street plant. Woodlands Park, within marching distance of Stelco, was to become the focus of mobilizations for the summer strikes. (Soon after the strikes, the City of Hamilton, with Sam Lawrence as Mayor demolished the pavilion, erected a six-foot fence around the entire perimeter and turned the Park into the athletic field that it remains today.) Without the required majority membership, the 504 leadership were obliged to invite all the Westinghouse workers to vote in the strike ballot. The result was overwhelming. At the July 2nd meeting so many workers turned up it was too crowded to take the vote. A secret ballot in Woodlands Park was arranged and again the results were overwhelming. The workers were ready to fight. Even some office workers tried to join the union.

Things were somewhat less hectic in Local 113 at Firestone Tire. As early as 1944 the workers had been won to the idea of industrial unionism. In that first certification vote the union won 962 to 177. The 1200 Hamilton rubber workers of 1946 voted overwhelmingly to strike.

The demands were fairly uniform in all three Locals and across Canada: UE Local 504 was going for de facto union recognition (that is for the compulsory check-off, freedom of operation for stewards, etc.) for a wage increase of 25¢, for the

40 hour week, for time and a half for overtime, for more paid vacations, and for equal women's pay for equal work. There were absolutely no demands concerning pensions or health and welfare plans. The Rubberworkers were seeking a 20¢ per hour increase and time and a half for the last eight hours of their forty-eight hour week. The Steelworkers' original demand was for 19-1/2¢ more and the forty hour week. With that increase Steelworkers on the minimum rate would be grossing \$33.60 for a forty hour week. The Toronto Welfare Council two years earlier had estimated the minimum necessary to support a family of five was \$38. U.E. workers painted the slogan "25-40" all over the sidewalks of Hamilton's Barton Street. The slogans were warnings of the coming storm.

Workers all over Canada were already on strike, or planning to be: the Seamen, Woodworkers, Fur Workers, Quebec Textile Workers, Chrysler Autoworkers, and those at General Motors in Oshawa. Tens of thousands of striking workers all told. Even the Alberta and Saskatchewan farmers went out that summer.

And this at a time when PC 1003 was the law of the land: a law that made it virtually impossible to beat the boss. But thousands and thousands of Canadian workers defied it. All the strikes in Hamilton that year, for example, were "illegal," and all but one ended in victory. It was several years before union bureaucrats managed to squeeze the rank and file into respect for anti-labour legislation.

On May 30th, however, before any of the industrial unions

had hit the bricks, sixty-eight of the seventy men of the composing room of Hamilton's daily Southam newspaper, "The Spectator" (better known to its enemies as "The Scabator,") the city's only daily, walked out. (The two remaining were the foreman and his son.) The dispute arose over what amounted to Southam's attempt to bust the union right across the country. Along with members of Local 129 in Hamilton (craft unions like the ITU tend to organize all their members employed by various companies into city locals,) typographers walked off Southam papers in Vancouver, Edmonton and Ottawa. They were already on strike in Winnipeg.

Southam called on the organization of professional strikebreakers the big newspaper monopolies still maintain in North America. These "rats" were paid \$150. a week with free room and board, while the strikers had been receiving only \$42.25. The Spectator scoured the rural Ontario countryside and the little-organized Maritimes for printers. They went as far as Scotland and Australia to find men who didn't know a strike was on. These men they brought over on the condition that they would pay back the cost of the fare so much each week. The Pressmen's International office ordered its members to respect the contract they had. Only one pressmen out of fifteen disobeyed the International and marched on the typographers' picket line. The Stereotypers International office, on the other hand, left it up to the individual stereotypers conscience. Six of the nine stereotypers stayed out.



Typographers picket the Hamilton Spectator.



Hamilton Steelworkers pack Local 1005's strike vote meeting.

Despite mass pickets of Steelworkers, Rubber and Electrical Workers, sometimes ending in fist-fights and arrests, the workers never managed to close the *Spectator*. The typographers did start another newspaper which began as a bi-weekly, and then progressed to thrice-weekly. In 1949, it is interesting to note, the union felt able to go daily but at the same time unable to run the paper in its own name; Eaton's and other non-union giant advertisers were not about to deal with a union-owned paper. The union sold the ownership of the paper to an ex-brewery owner who ran the paper less than efficiently for about two years — the circulation manager, it was later found out, was in the pay of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. Nonetheless, in about two years the paper was getting on its feet. Just then, the ex-brewer was prevailed upon to sell out.

But that was not the sum total of the typographers misfortunes. They had been successfully harassing the *Spectator*, with great public support. Most of the strikebreakers were either rural people unfamiliar with labour struggles or printers imported from afar not knowing a strike was on. Their guilt feelings permitted the local to have them switched to other union papers as soon as they became trained to their particular tasks, or else sign them up in the ITU. Local 129 had 45 out of the 100 strikebreakers signed up, when they found out that the Pressman's Union had already signed up the required fifty-one percent for that union to become sole bargaining agent. The 68 typographers, none of whom ever went back to the *Spectator*, were left completely out in the cold.

The immediate effect of the ITU walkout on the *Spectator* (besides a marked deterioration in its appearance) was the hardening of the Southam paper's already built-in anti-labour bias. Says Alan Histed, then local president, now one of five ITU district representatives in Canada, "The *Spectator* generally used its editorial columns for anti-union propaganda. This is typical procedure for newspapers, especially before disputes are likely to break out with their own employees. They try to brainwash the general public." "Our men then fought like tigers. It's hard now to get the feeling of the times then but our men were at every labour demonstration, every picket line, in 1946 and after. The industrial union men let us speak quite often at the rallies, but they didn't hold the ITU in very high regard. 'Craft unionism is as dead as the dodo,' they used to say." At the same time the controller, "without prejudice to the final settlement," was to apply to the appropriate War Labour Boards for an immediate increase in wages! Just two days before in the Commons, Labour Minister Humphrey Mitchell, formerly a member of the International Union of Operating Engineers in Hamilton, in his famous "ten-cent speech" outlined just what a

fair non-inflationary wage increase might be — 10¢. That generous offer also happened to be what all the monopolies were offering.

The steelworkers meanwhile were chafing at the bit. On May 23rd some three thousand union-card holders voted 99% in favour of a strike. The misleaders managed to have this vote disqualified and another scheduled. This vote, as well, was overwhelming. But about two thousand non-unionized steelworkers were still left out in the cold.

The misleaders did their best to aggravate the cynicism and pessimism of these workers. They repeatedly postponed the date of the strike and making it seem as though it would never take place. First it was set for June 29th, then July 12. Finally, it started on Monday morning July 15.

The postponements only gave Stelco more time to prepare. Unlike the other two steel plants where union solidarity shut down production completely, Stelco, with the full cooperation of all levels of government, was prepared to keep the plant running. An airstrip was built in the northeast corner of the works, and a license to operate obtained from the federal government. Extra help was hired in July, 400 of them high school students. They were given an immediate raise of 10¢ and paid triple time (\$1.59 more per working hour than the steelworkers were getting) — for 24 hours a day. The latter was an illegal practise according to the labour laws. Barbed wire, licenses for food and great quantities of alcoholic beverages were procured at a time of shortages and rationing. Cots for 2000 were transported from the Kenilworth Avenue barracks. Raw materials were stockpiled in vast quantities. Security was tightened up. The Stelco bosses even tried to coax the workers into the Independent Steelworkers Assoc., their "union."

The bosses were ready. It was to be war, class war. On the Company side was the entire machinery of the state, from City Hall to Parliament, the police both local, provincial, and national, and the mass media — all of which Stelco did not hesitate to use. The workers, on the other hand, saddled with a union misleadership, lacking the foundations of solid industrial unionism, and without the solidarity of the workers in the crucial plant, had only to count upon their own militancy, the solidarity of their brothers and sisters in other unions, friends of the labour movement, and Communist leaders (whom they generally didn't recognize as such since the party policy was one of general anonymity of members.)

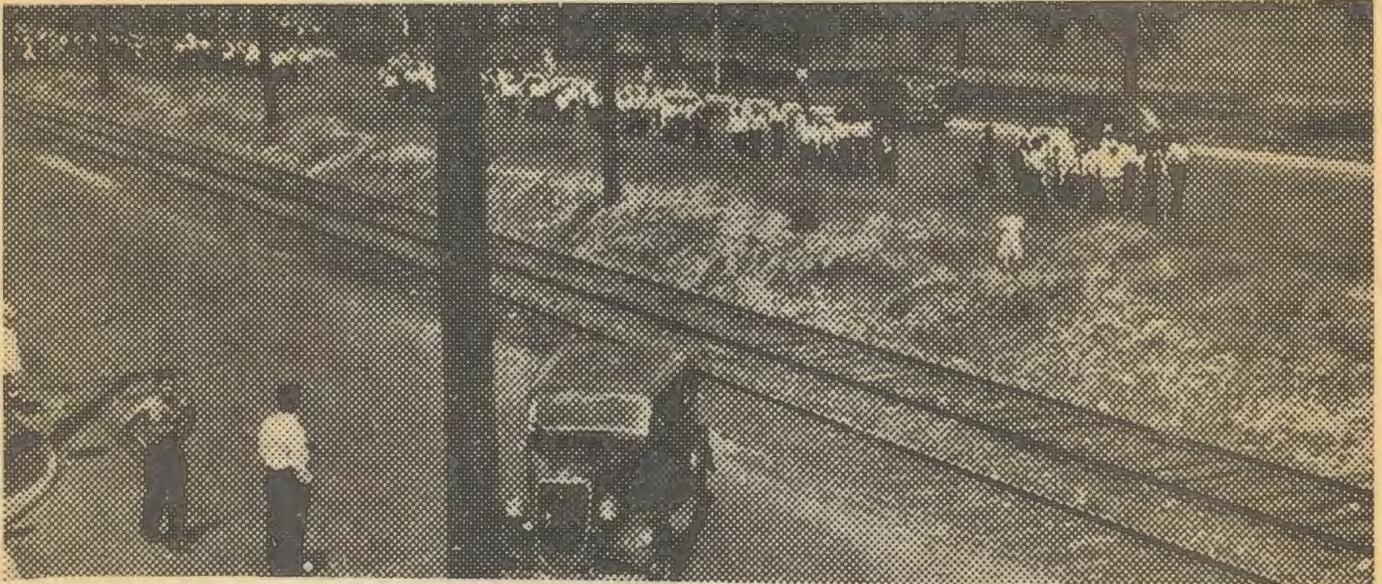
It was a real test of strength — one of the longest (81 days) and hardest-fought strikes in Canadian history. And it was won by the workers. The lesson should be clear.



II. The Struggle

On the first morning of the steel strike, Monday July 15, the leadership of UE (Rubberworkers at that time had no office of their own and worked out of the UE office) arranged for a mass meeting of their workers at Woodlands Park. Off-shift workers from International Harvester attended in large numbers. The UE picture files records the event as follows:

One morning a brother from Local 1005 came to announce Stelco workers had just voted to strike in support of labour's just demands and UE 504 marched to Stelco picket lines. . .



Workers march to Stelco at the strike's beginning.

The march of course was no accident. The UE sound truck led the way blaring "Solidarity Forever" — "When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run, There can be no greater power anywhere beneath the sun, Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one; For the union makes us strong. . ." — picking up workers and their friends all the way through working-class Hamilton, until the march was several thousand strong as it approached Stelco's main gate on Wilcox Street. The spirits of the steelworkers at the picket lines soared. But the workers didn't stop at the Stelco gates. Dozens of Steelworkers were already climbing the fences to eradicate the plant of its scabs when Charles Millard was given the UE microphone. "This is Charles Millard speaking," he said. "This is not the way to do things. We must keep our heads. There must be no violence. This is a democratic country." Millard thought that being beaten was democratic!

He succeeded in getting the steelworkers to climb down from the fences, thus smashing the virtual certainty of winning the strike on the very first day. The UE leaders had not planned on workers climbing the fence and they were not prepared to argue against the official leader of the Steelworkers at such a time over the tactics of the strike. Besides Millard and the Steelworker officials there was no rank and file organization in

the plant. The workers, moreover, had little experience in strikes. The misleaders controlled by default.

That night Millard and his bunch sponsored a meeting of their own. . .

The hall was packed with a crowd considerably larger than the local's entire membership. . . The speeches and replies to questions were fired with a barely restrained enthusiasm. Their assessment of public sympathy was confident, and the Italian

community of the North End was particularly thanked for its warm-hearted support. There was little left of the old Lodge ritual that had once marked meetings of the ancient Knights of Labour, with its solemn mystery and secret signs and passwords. There was none of the aristocratic exclusiveness of the craft unions. The comradely designation "Brother" was one of the few outward vestiges that remained of 100 years of union history, and even this symbolised the mass democracy of the new industrial unionism as much as it stood for a link with the past. The meeting erupted in a burst of evangelical fervour with a rousing "sermon" or two, a roaring rendition of "Solidarity Forever," and then solemnly succumbed to the spell of the moving words of the greatest of the labour folk songs:

Last night I dreamed I saw Joe Hill
As plain as you or me.
I said, "Why Joe you're ten years dead,"
"I never died," said he.
"I never died," said he.

(Kilbourn, page 190)

Meanwhile there were about 2000 scabs in the plant who were idolized by the Spectator and pampered by the company. The union men were itching for a fight. And it was not long in coming:

In the small hours of the morning just four days after the beginning of the strike, some of the men inside attempted to run a train out of the Stelco main gate and across the Burlington Street traffic artery. As the shunting engine approached the gate, the pickets were driven back to cover by a hail of bricks hurled out of the darkness behind the engine's powerful headlight. Then some of the brick-throwers moved out front and tried awkwardly to pry the gate and the switch open — an important detail neglected until that moment. (This is an error. The reason the train couldn't get through was that the workers rolled an enormous boulder onto the tracks.) The picketers emerged onto the roadway again to grab the fallen bricks and to retrun fire. Reinforcements rushed around from the other gates to join them. (The union phone list was pressed into service. A thousand men and women were on their way to the gate in ten minutes.) The workers at nearby International Harvester dropped their tools in mid-shift to run to the aid of their brothers. For one wild and hectic half hour the night was filled with a hail of bricks and shouts. After that the men gave up trying to pry the gate open and the train shunted back towards the plant again. From then on there always plenty of volunteer pickets for the night shift.

Several days later a TH&B Railroad engine shunted towards the Burlington street gate from the other side to go in for a train-load of steel. The switchmen

dropped off. A big picketer moved up with a steel bar in his hand and informed him that if he touched the switch he would regret it. The switchmen didn't move.

(Kilbourn, page 191)

Most railmen had refused already to cross the picket lines. The TH&B was the last train that approached the plant during the strike.

After this incident the strike settled down to a long but exciting siege. The Stelco picket line was impassable. Except for the Royal Mail truck and the city ambulance, nobody but nobody who looked as if they could help in making or shipping steel was allowed in.

Whole families were split, sons from fathers, wives from husbands, cousins from cousins. The Spectator carried a story of one young steelworker who every day picketed the plant in which his father was scabbing. Maclean's (October 15, 1946) carried other accounts:

The nights before the strike started at the Hamilton works of the Steel Company of Canada, George Washburn and his wife, both Stelco employees and union members, went to work together. Although the strike hadn't yet been called, it was clearly imminent. The Washburns agreed the 11pm to 7am shift would be their last before the walkout.

"I haven't seen him since," Mrs. Washburn said, nearly two months later. "He phoned me on the Sunday from the plant, and said, 'I'm staying in.' That night I took the three kids down to the Wilcox gate and we marched in the picket line. I've been picketing my husband ever since."

In the third week of the strike Tony Rocco, a striking labourer, applied for union relief and began feeding his

VIOLENCE FLARES AT STELCO

Five Men Hurt In Heavy Fight At Plant Gates

Violence flared in the three-day-old strike at the Hamilton Works of the Steel Company of Canada early this morning when well over 500 workers and strikers battled at the railway gates of the company's property on Burlington street east. Five union picketers were treated at the General Hospital for head and leg injuries. The union charged that 300 company men, "armed with pick handles and rubber hose," attacked the pickets. Steel Company of Canada officials said that the company men were attacked while they were removing ties blocking the rail spur line into the plant and opening the railway gates to allow a train to enter.



Scab jeered by picketers. Nothing but the Royal Mail and a city ambulance got through the line.

wife and five small children on \$1.43 a day. Inside the plant an acquaintance of Tony Rocco's, a head-roller named Harry Maynard, was drawing wages of \$120.00 a day, six days a week.

During the fifth week of the strike Joe Bolanzo flew across the picket lines to get married. The day he tried to walk back in, his three cousins were on the picket line. "Get the scab!" his cousins yelled.

"A mob of pickets started after me," Balanzo said afterward. "I ran."

The Steelworkers picket line became the focus for all of activity in Hamilton. During the day, an average of 500 - 1000 women, men, and children marched on the line.

On warm nights it was different. The line was often good-natured then, even festive. The women and kids from the workingmen's homes nearby would stroll down after supper and fall in parading four and five abreast until the little circle became a deep oval, with its upper end stretching to within 100 yards of the unfenced company offices at the top of Wilcox Street. They'd sing and cheer a little. They laughed quite a lot. The broadcast music from the picket tent rose above their voices in brassy fits and starts. . . "Here's a lady — Mrs. Donovan — just gave a two-dollar bill. How about a hand. . . Here's fifty pounds of frankfurters from Acme Butchers."

(Maclean's, October 15)

Activity on the Steelworkers picket line substituted for quiet at the other struck plants. The workers had shut both Westinghouse plants down tight. And they kept them that way. On one occasion, Westinghouse imported a trainload of scabs from Quebec. Walsh, however, mobilized electrical workers, rubberworkers, steelworkers and typographers to mass at the CNR station. The terrified scabs, confronted by hundreds of strikers yelling at them in a language they didn't understand, turned tail and ran. Another time Westinghouse tried breathing life into its company union. Walsh and a bunch of electrical workers charged into the Wentworth Arms Hotel, where the finks were having their meeting, flushed them out, and held a meeting of their own. "The picket line at Firestone was so quiet it was spooky," reminisces John Lumsden, then publicity director of Local 113, now retired after 41 years in the plant.

"Our fellows looked forward to doing a shift at Stelco especially at night when the scabs used to climb the fence to try and visit their homes. Boy, those were the days. . ."

Solidarity with the workers' cause in Hamilton was something else. The workers at Pigott Construction refused to cross the Steelworkers picket line. When it was explained that the work they were hired to do would have absolutely no bearing on the strike they still refused to cross the line. The rail companies tried again to get trains into Stelco. The railmen again refused to move the trains. Local merchants donated large quantities of supplies to the unions. Many extended credit to the workers. Farmers near Hamilton donated whole fields of crops and dug deeply into their winter stores to do so.



Over loud-speakers outside the gates orders are given to the assembled pickets.



Street dances were held often. Len Salci and his band gave a free night of entertainment.

On July 17, Mayor Sam Lawrence marched at the head of a parade of 10,000 workers and declared himself "a labour man first and chief magistrate second." Bill Walsh was chairman of the march.

Yet it was not only in Hamilton that the significance of the steel strike was realized. The Cornwall textile workers sent \$1,400, in cash, to Local 1005. Local 200 at Windsor sent \$16,800. The Mine Workers at Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, sent \$1,000. This amount was the total collected in an extended campaign to give to Local 1005 one day's pay every week (The money was needed: there was no strike fund and 800 men were on union relief — \$5. a week for a man, \$10. for a family man. Only 300 strikers obtained the necessary permits from the union to seek other work.) Workers used to come from all over Canada down to the



July 17 march of 10,000 workers.

Wilcox gate just to be able to say, "I was at the steelworkers' picket lines in Hamilton. . ." Myrtle Williams' Show, which had entertained troops overseas, came down to Stelco to entertain the strikers. Both Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger also appeared and sang for the people.

Local 1005 was organized for the long siege.

Staff organization, communications and transport, the three fundamentals of any military operation, had been arranged by the union. . . In the Barton Street basement that served the union as its welfare headquarters there hung a large wall map on which the City of Hamilton had been divided into eleven areas. The addresses of all the strikers were listed in an accompanying index, according to the areas in which they lived. For each area there was a captain. Each captain had divided his area into sections and appointed a section captain for each.

To supplement this chain of command the Union had established a primitive but efficient telephone network. Beside his or her home telephone each of twenty volunteer "operators had a prepared list of telephone numbers — the numbers of the strikers who owned telephones. Between thirty and forty automobiles manned by union squads were on a constant twenty-four hour stand to.

A Steelworkers Ladies Auxiliary was formed soon after the strike began. As a response to a union call for help over the radio, hundreds of steelworkers' wives and daughters flocked to the basement of the Markeen Gardens where they helped with the food preparation, paperwork, and telephone communications. Before the strike was over the Steelworkers Ladies Auxiliary had prepared some 300,000 sandwiches for the picketers. Italian women from the North End, as a special treat and in addition to their other work, regularly brought great tubs of spaghetti down to the picket line. The Auxiliary was also responsible in a large part for the soliciting of foodstuffs and other supplies for the strike effort.

While the Auxiliary's official role was only one of support for the striking steelworkers, as the strike continued women began to take more and more of an active role in the picket line itself. One steward (at the time) described them as "a very strong part of the picket line" and "very militant."

The UE and the Rubberworkers also formed Ladies Auxiliaries. The Tribune (the Labour-Progressive Party newspaper) quotes the UE leaders describing the women UE



Signing in for picket duty.

workers and Auxiliary members as the "most energetic" workers for the strike.

Behind the gates, the company was no less well prepared. Besides the regulated work and relaxation periods for the scabs (including Sunday services led by a shipped-in clergyman), Stelco created the Stelco Family Service and the Stelco Wives Auxiliary, which puts themselves at the service of the scabs' families. The most important need of the besieged company — raw materials for production and food for the scabs — was satisfied by boat and plane. Before the end of the strike Stelco's two fast planes and eleven watercraft, including a tugboat, had provided for 6500 secret man-movements, 500,000 meals, production of 108,000 ingot-tons of steel (40% of normal), and the shipment of 6500 tons of steel.

The workers, of course, didn't take this kind of thing sitting down (or even picketing). A small light plane was hired by Local

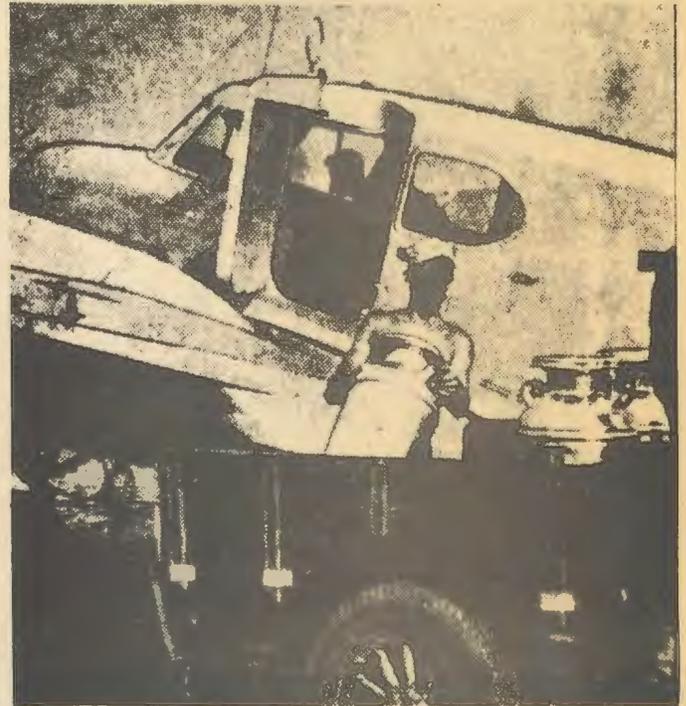


Women's auxiliary at work.

1005 to leaflet the plant with passes for any scabs who wanted to get out. The union plane, while making a pass over the plant, was attacked by one of the faster company planes. A gunless aerial dogfight ensued over the picket lines in which the pilots, both air force veterans, struggled to force the other away from the plant. The union plane did manage to leaflet and several scabs took advantage of the safe-conducts.

The Steelworkers also bought a speedboat, the Lucie, powered by huge twin Chrysler outboards, as well as a motor launch, the Whisper, that had belonged to a rum-runner interned with Bill Walsh during the war. The launch, claimed to be the fastest vessel on the Bay, cruised at 40 miles per hour "proudly out on the bay like some toothless old European gunboat." She was bought by the union to keep the steelworkers morale up for the siege. "We never had orders to swamp or harass any of the company boats," said a Whisper crewman. But they got into plenty of scraps with them anyway.

The federal government, of course, established a committee to study the problem and the UE leadership organized a 600 person automobile cavalcade to Parliament Hill in Ottawa on the week-end of July 27.



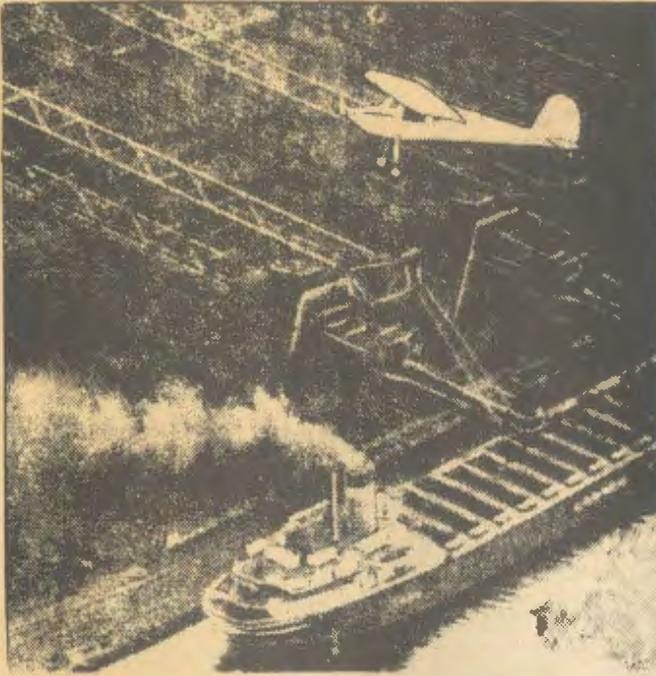
Milk for scabs brought into Stelco by the company plane.

At the end of the first fortnight of the strike the first two steelworkers were arrested and convicted for "threatening" scabs' homes, and Millard sent back a sellout compromise which the steelworkers duly rejected in vast numbers. The rank and file was in a fighting mood.

And it was also learning to organize for itself. Giving the strike a powerful extra punch was the job of the Commando Squad, a spontaneously organized group of young militants. The group contained a few communists who were not in leading positions. In fact, the Party frowned on the Squad's activities. Besides dealing with the scab's real estate (the word "scab" painted in ten foot high letters would be found on their homes in the morning), the Commando Squad took it upon itself to harass the scabs' sleeping quarters in the plant.

Every couple of nights the Squad moved under the cover of darkness against Stelco's eastern frontier. There beside the inlet near the city incinerator where some wartime corvettes were being scrapped was the scabs' sleeping quarters. Searchlights taken from the corvettes scanned the barbed wire fences.

Suddenly, a few 22 shots would ring out. . . The searchlights went dark. While a diversion was being created somewhere else.



Despite attacks by company aircraft, the Steelworker's plane drops leaflets over Stelco.

wire clippers would cut the barbed wire and forty or fifty men would charge over to the sleeping quarters to smash in all the windows and toss in a few firebombs. . . The place was never burned down, but then the scabs never got a decent night's sleep either.

At Lasalle Park in Burlington, the Squad saw to it that the scabs who landed at night by the Stelco boats were given a proper reception. Big steelworkers of eastern European descent didn't learn much English working at Stelco. All they used to say while grabbing the scabs with one big hand was "Shove money up ass, lousy scab!" and then beat the scabs with the rubber hose in the other. Hundreds of naked scabs were found in the mornings lying on or running around the roads into Hamilton.



A scab gets his house painted!

The bosses tried a counter — movement for "law and order." This campaign, fostered by the Steel Company and the Spectator, was led by a City of Hamilton controller, Nora Frances Henderson, "a hardy veteran of the feminist movement." (The large hospital on the Mountain in Hamilton is named after her.) Controller Henderson demanded that the provincial and national police be brought in. On August 2nd she made it known that she intended to test her "right" to enter the plant.

Her tiny figure against the wide expanse of pavement made a dramatic picture that was placarded across the front pages of the nations newspapers, a symbol of the right of all citizens to go about their lawful business free and unmolested.

(Kilbourn , page 192)

The men stood aside to let the scab controller through. The women picketers, however, saw to it that by the time she reached the plant gate she was just dripping in spit from head to foot.

On August 8th the showdown took place at City Hall. On one side was Henderson and a number of aldermen. On the other stood a Communist alderwoman, Helen Anderson, Mayor Lawrence, and a few other aldermen and controllers. Unfortunately the Communist Party concentrated more on Helen Anderson's pretty appearance, than on her solid politics.

That day the UE leadership had the following unsigned leaflet distributed:

At The City Hall Tonight

To help the companies in their fight to smash the strikes and the Unions, Controller Henderson is:

- (1) Trying to deny families of strikers their right to relief.
- (2) Trying to get Provincial and Mounted Police brought into Hamilton (at the expense of of the citizens of Hamilton.)

Tonight, Thursday, the City Council will meet to decide these matters. Exercise your democratic right to:

- (1) Contact your Alderman and Controllers and tell them what you think of these matters.
- (2) Come to the City Hall tonight, Thursday, at 730 and see how your aldermen and controllers vote on these crucial matters.

RELIEF FOR STRIKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN NEED:

KEEP THE OUTSIDE POLICE OUTSIDE. THEY CAUSE TROUBLE WHEN THEY COME IN.

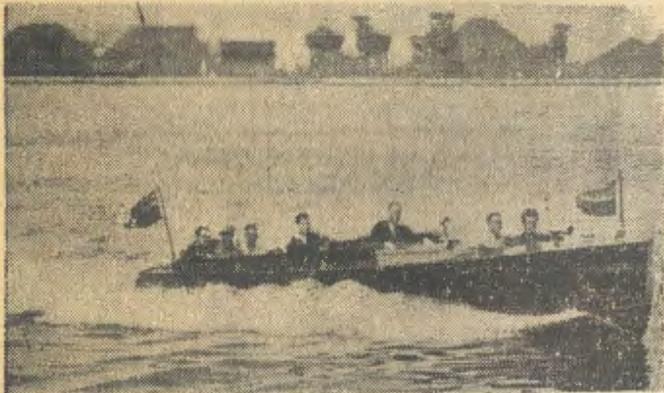
The galleries were packed. The stairwells were packed. The narrow canyons of streets surrounding the old City Hall were jammed with about 10,000 people. They were singing the Internationale,

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation,
Arise, ye wretched of the earth,
For justice thunders condemnation,
A better world's in birth.
No more traditions chains shall bind us,
Arise, ye slaves; no more in thrall
The earth shall rise on new foundations,
We have been nought, we shall be all.

as well as "We'll hang Nora Frances from a sour apple tree." Inside, in a narrowly won vote, it was decided that the police would not be called in. At the same meeting aid for strikers was vetoed as well as beds for striking seamen. The problem,

however, of making a 400 acre piece of land in Hamilton's east end available as an "industrial park" was sent to committee. Lawrence and Anderson were mobbed by the crowd. Henderson and other pro-police officials were jostled and booed. The Spectator labelled it all "Black Thursday" and printed an hysterical editorial. The strikers had won, temporarily. The "proper channels" had operated in their behalf, for the time being.

Meanwhile, down by the Bay, the Whisper had been seeing a lot of action. The company boats which landed at various ports on Lake Ontario were given hot receptions by union men. The Stelco tug had big wire screens fitted around to withstand the volley of rocks tossed at it as it passed through the canal between the Lake and the Bay. One union man was arrested on August 3rd in a skirmish at the Lasalle Park docks where the company was loading whiskey and scabs. On August 5th, a Communist and two others were arrested for boarding a scab boat during a skirmish. The four were charged with assault and put in the Barton Street jail for terms of two and three months. Several other strikers were given jail sentences about this time for "intimidation."



The "Whisper" in action.

Part of the reason for the Spectator's hysteria in its "Black Thursday" editorial was the result of action on the typographers' picket line. The ITU leaders had planned a show of strength to frighten Spectator drivers into refusing to take the papers out and thus effectively close the paper. Mass support from electrical, rubber, and steel workers was on hand. No one anticipated violence. . . One of the Spectator foremen, however, offered one of the drivers a ten dollar bill to drive through the picket line. The driver rammed into the line and injured several workers. A riot ensued in which the truck was overturned and the driver beaten up. Eight were arrested; four were acquitted. The four later convicted were, interestingly enough, a typographer, a steelworker, a rubberworker, and an electrical worker.

About this time the Spectator published the latest Department of Labour statistics. For the first six months of 1946, 92,280 workers had been out on 117 strikes lasting 1,626,296 days. This was an increase of 1,061,371 mandays over the first six months of 1945. In June alone there were 70,688 workers out on 36 strikes for a total of 985,188 mandays.¹² In Windsor, two UAW leaders were arrested for sedition in the continuing union-busting campaign of 1945-46. They were allegedly "compelling employees of Chrysler Corporation of Canada to abstain from working for the said corporation. . ." Elected leaders of the Canadian Seaman's Union and the United Textile Workers of America in Quebec had been arrested on similar charges earlier in 1946. The leader of the veteran's association, a Communist, who had been leading occupations by homeless veterans and their families of empty barracks and other unoccupied structures, was also arrested and convicted. The AFL flunkies meanwhile issued a barely veiled anti-communist statement blaming the suffering from all the strikes on "a small proportion of workers (who) used the strike for political purposes."

In Hamilton, Local 1005 estimated the cost of the strike to the company at \$3,000,000 or three times the cost of the 15-1/2¢ wage increase to which Millard had succeeded in lowering the demands. The picket line was still as tight as a drum. The police chief, Joseph Crocker, admitted, "It would be foolish for the police to create an incident by attempting to escort two or three men back inside. It would only cause trouble."

The class allies of Stelco, however, were still on the move. One of the alderman started the machinery necessary to calling a special meeting of City Council after the Mayor refused to call a special meeting of the Police Commission. The pretext for the emergency situation was probably the incident two days earlier, in which a city controller injured two picketers in trying to drive through the steelworkers picket line. The controller was acquitted of all blame in court.

Mayor Lawrence yielded to the bosses pressure and called the Police Commission meeting. It was held on August 19th on the assembly floor of the Council Chamber of the old City Hall. Both Bill Walsh and Larry Sefton sat just the other side of the wooden rail separating legislators from spectators. The vice-president of Stelco was flown dramatically out of the plant in a light plane. Lawrence, rather elderly at this time, presided. The Chief of Police sat to his right.

The company man began, "What's this city come to, etc. . . We want the right for people to go in and out."

Lawrence leaned over to the Police Chief, "Are you having trouble down there, Joe?"

"No," replied the police chief, "no violence. Everything is under control."

"Are you short of men? Do you need reinforcements?" asked Lawrence.

"No, we're handling everything fine," the Chief of Police answered.

"Well, gentlemen," said Lawrence to the other members of the Police Commission, "you heard what the Chief said. We need no outside police."

He was bringing the gavel down to end the meeting when Sefton jumped up and asked permission to speak. He was duly introduced by the Mayor. Sefton began to speak, "I give you my personal word that any person who wants to go in or out of Stelco along with any goods will not be interfered with."

Walsh and Sefton left the building together, Walsh was furious. "Selling out your own strike is one thing," he was heard saying on the City Hall steps, "but you're trying to sell ours out as well!"

"Don't you fool me, Walsh," retorted Sefton, "I'm against strikes in principle. You Reds, You're only interested in strikes to have blood run down the gutters."

Next day the picket line was open. Trucks and scabs were pouring in and out. Alderman Hannah called off the emergency meeting of City Council. According to Alan Histed, "It looked as if steel was washed up."

That evening Walsh mobilized seven or eight key militant union leaders, some of whom were Communists. They spent the entire night calling people to be at the Wilcox gate the next morning. A young steelworker, whose name no one remembers, was chosen to grab the steelworkers' tent microphone at the appointed time.

Early the next morning many hundreds of workers gathered at the Wilcox gate. With their unexpected appearance, many hundreds more workers, mainly steelworkers, started flocking to the gates from their nearby homes.

The enormous diesel loaded with huge I-beams geared down. "Alright fellas," said the young steelworker taking the microphone and speaking in an even voice, "this is what we've been waiting for. Are we going to let them take the bread out of our mouths, out of the mouths of our families? I want you to stand there right in the middle of the road when this truck comes down the road and let it come at you. . ."

A line of police marched slowly in front of the truck, cajoling the crowd all the while to "keep on moving." The truck inched forward in its lowest gear.

"OK, now, fellas, we have first aid materials here. I want you to slow it down. . . That's right. . . Slow it down. . . DON'T GIVE GROUND!"

The police line met the forward line of strikers. The strikers didn't budge. But the diesel kept on coming right up into the backs of the police.

"Alright now," said the young steelworker, "lean on it. Push on it. Make it stop."

The driver frantically floored the gas pedal. The engine roared but the truck was stopped dead in its tracks.

"All together now," continued the steelworker, "PUSH!"

The cops were getting squashed against the radiator and front fender of the diesel as it was pushed back, back down the piece of road outside the gate, back through the gate, far back into the steel company plant yard. It was pushed by hundreds upon hundreds of rank and file workers, at least two thousand all told, striking workers from the steel plant, from the Firestone rubber plant, from the Westinghouse plants, and by friends and relatives of the striking workers. The crowd cheered wildly.

The diesel was sent twice more against the workers, and twice it was pushed all the way back. (According to some accounts, at least one policeman turned around and pushed against the truck. One steelworker, now at Otis Elevator, is said to have been inside the cab punching the driver out.) The police arrested the most prominent leaders during that day and the next as the steel company repeatedly tested the lines. All eight strikers arrested were under the age of nineteen. Still the strikers commanded the gate.

USWA's impenetrable picket line, removed by mis-leader Sefton, now nowhere to be seen, was established and held again by the rank and file. The strike was saved.

Mayor Lawrence's friend Joe, Police Chief Crocker, on

August 23rd decided to call in the OPP and RCMP. "To these workers," he said, "scabs are like a red flag to a bull." 16 500 cops arrived in a matter of two or three days.

The situation was tense. If the cops were to be used to keep the gates open (so reasoned the Party), then the strike would surely be lost and there would probably be bloodshed. Steelworkers all over Hamilton started walking out in sympathy as a reaction to the calling in of the cops. 275 walked out of Frost Wire; 150 left Stanley Works; Norton Company shut down as its workers marched together to the Wilcox gate; large numbers walked out of Union Drawn Steel.

The Command o Squad was fully prepared. It wasn't scared like the Party. Thousands of axe handles were stashed in working peoples' homes along Burlington Street. Thousands of feet of barbed wire were stolen from Frost Wire and Steel. Veterans volunteered their steel helmets and souvenir tear gas grenades.

The Party, however, wanted the Commandos to cool it. It decided to take the offensive in a "safer" way. Another night meeting was held at which a number of veterans from the Kenilworth Avenue trade school-barracks were present. It was decided a march of the veterans on behalf of the strikers would be attempted. It would go to the Stelco gates.

The march began on the morning of August 28th from Woodlands Park. It picked up workers by the hundreds as the UE sound truck blared in front, all the way down Barton to Kenilworth. The workers were singing the union song,

If the cops set in the way,
We're gonna roll right over them,
We're gonna roll right over them,
We're gonna roll right over them,
We're gonna roll the Union on.



Cops are powerless when workers close the picket line.



In a show of force for the RCMP and the OPP, veterans join the march of 25,000 to the Stelco gates.

They were adding verses like, "If Sefton (Millard) gets in the way, we're gonna roll right over him. . ." The UE sound truck, however, tried to squelch those verses.

Outside the trade school a mass meeting was held. There were "workers in coveralls and workers in uniform. Thousands of UEers poured out of the school." An old CP-sounding resolution was passed which said on behalf of the vets that "the calling in of the police was a betrayal of all we fought for" and that the march of about 25,000 strikers, veterans, their families, and friends of the working people was on its way. The vets marched in perfect military order down Kenilworth and along Burlington to the Stelco gates.

The march was a success. The OPP and the Mounties were never used except on the company boats' shuttle service for scabs across the Lake. They were billeted safely in the naval barracks and in motels on the Mountain and outside Hamilton. The cops were scared of all those axe handles. They rarely ventured out from there and even more rarely in uniform. Waitresses refused to serve them when they did. The name of Hamilton was Solidarity.

The company reopened negotiations.

Meanwhile, back down by the Bay, the Whisper was still hassling the company boats and getting hassled by the Harbour Police. Five more Whisper crewmen were arrested and convicted for intimidation and under various laws. The Whisper itself was impounded by the Harbour Police, Sefton, the nominal owner fined, and a ten mile-per-hour speed limit imposed on Hamilton Bay.

Kilbourn, government controller, at this point ordered a vote to be taken by the workers on a proposed settlement (less even than Millard wanted.) The steelworkers rejected the terms of the settlement and participated in the biggest labour day parade Hamilton had ever seen. Despite all the fire of his earlier "sanctions" he couldn't enforce a single fine on the thousands of "law-breakers" in the Hamilton strikes.

On September 25th the Whisper was impounded again. The impounding was a reaction to the Whisper's (with a maximum crew of 15) attack on the Helena, the company tug with 56 scabs aboard, at the canal at the mouth of the Bay where 45 other union men were raining large rocks down on the scab boat. The attack on the Helena, in turn, was a retaliation for the injuring of all nine of the Whisper's crewmen when scabs had pelted them

with chunks of slag a few days earlier as they were shoulder deep in sewer-like water of the Bay (polluted by Stelco, Dofasco, etc.) trying to dislodge the union board after it had run aground near the Hilton works. The scabs were never charged under the law.

More and more strikers were getting arrested and convicted as the Commandos stepped up its campaign of terror against the scabs and their families — painting houses, phone calls, etc. A total of 92 charges were amassed against 52 strikers before the end of the strike.



A member of the "Whisper" crew shows rocks thrown at the union boat.

Everyone knew the end of the strike was near. In a last desperate move, the Company tried a back to work movement — a vote of all the steel workers, inside and outside, on a company offer. The Registrar of Deeds for Hamilton conveniently offered his services to count the ballots. The idea, however, was vetoed by a scared Attorney General.

On October 1, the workers voted to settle. The final terms had been reduced to 10¢ an hour retroactive to April (the end of the last contract) and 13¢ at the recommencement of work. The Dosco workers did not get wage parity. But the strike was won. And so was industrial unionism in Canada.

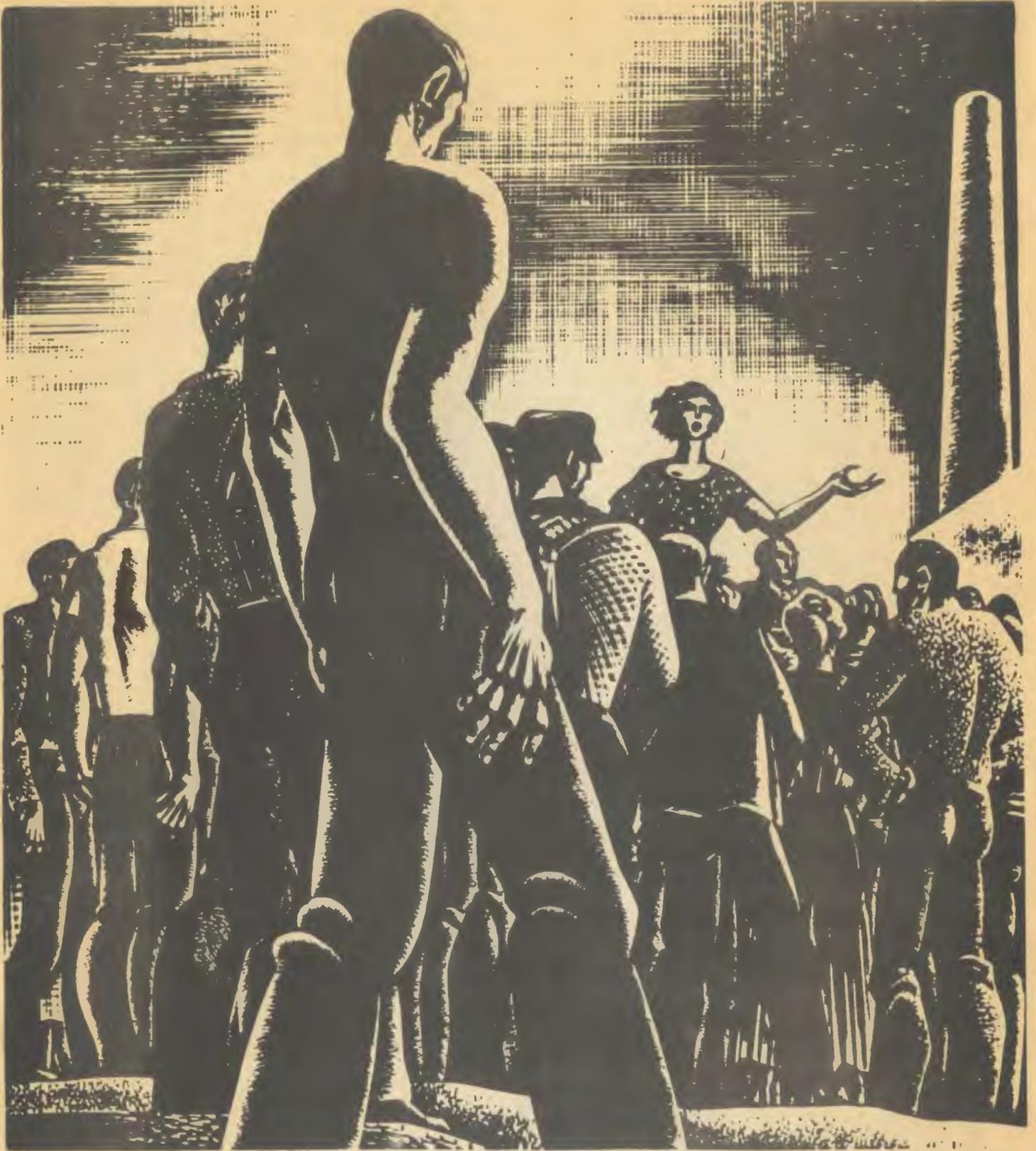
UE and Rubberworkers settled soon after. Big wage and working conditions gains were not made that year. But the of-

ficial recognition of the unions by the bosses paved the way for those in the next contract.

On the night of the victorious settlement a large crowd of strikers wandered out of the pubs in which they had been celebrating and down to the Wilcox Street gate. The police arrested one of the rowdier workers. The crowd was angered and forced the police inside the Stelco gate house the windows of which the workers proceeded to kick in. They also threatened to burn the place down (with the police inside) unless the man was freed. The police complied. In typical style, the Spectator reported, "The rioters were believed outsiders and not steel union men."



Strikers' wives jeer scabs as they scurry out of Stelco at the strike's finish.



The Persecution - by K.S.

III. Analysis of the Strikes

As Bill W. Swallow this? There is a funk in the steel about this analysis. Want of this analysis is an attack on C.P. as main enemy not Stelco etc.

People think that Canadian history is dull. It isn't. But the history we learn in school is. That history is the bosses' history. It tells of the ruling class squabbling among themselves in parliament. Or it talks of culture as though most of us are too dumb to have any. It tries to tell us how great parliamentary "democracy" is — but how you have to be really clever to be a politician. Its whole purpose is to impress our kids with the power and importance of the bosses. All it does is bore them to death.

The real history of the Canadian people isn't dull. That history tells how ruling class finks like Nora Frances Henderson get covered in spit from head to foot, how scabs get fire-bombed, and scab diesels are put in reverse. The real history of the Canadian people is not only exciting, it's very useful. It shows what power workers have when they get together. It tells what the vast majority of people want to know: how we can beat the boss.

This pamphlet has attempted to relate just a piece of that history. It leaves, though, one question unanswered. Why, after such a great victory for the organized working class, are conditions at Stelco, and all other plants, miserable, oppressive, and inhuman.

As we have seen, members of the old Communist Party of Canada played a central role in the formation of the industrial unions. In the Hamilton strike it was the fighting spirit of communists like Bill Walsh who helped give it a dynamic punch. Communists by the large come from the ranks of militants who realize that militancy is not enough. Winning battles in the plants is not enough: workers must have political control over the whole country. One swallow doesn't make a summer, nor one strike a decent life. As long as there are bosses, then for workers there is trouble. The aim of communists to replace the bosses' rule with a workers' rule.

How the gains of the 1946 strike have been lost, then, must mainly be an account of (and is) wrong with the old Communist Party.

Its most startling fault was fear. It was afraid of its aims, it was afraid of communism. This comes out clearly in a '46 editorial in the Party's newspaper, The Tribune. The Editorial "Sweat, Blood and Steel" was about the strike and called, of all things, for the ouster of Labour Minister "strikebreaker Mitchell." What good would that have done? "Strikebreaker Mitchell" is long since gone. He's been replaced by a whole line of others. Currently "Strikebreakers Trudeau and Kierans" seem to be in the running. No matter who the labour minister is, no matter what party runs the parliament, parliamentary "democracy" serves the bosses and not the people. We communists want to say goodbye to parliaments run by the capitalists, and establish a state that serves the people. A peoples government would put democracy where it really belongs — on the shop floor — and not in some debating club on Parliament Hill. Parliaments only mask where the real power lies in capitalist society — in the board rooms of Stelco and the other big corporations. No communist could suggest that what was needed to make things better was a change of Labour Minister. Yet that was what the old Communist Party proposed. Real communists are revolutionaries. They claim that what is

needed is a new state altogether, a state run and controlled by the workers.

The old Party was afraid of that. It tried to pretend that a bosses' state could be used in the interest of workers. Tim Buck, the party leader claimed Parliament's biggest problem was its failure "to settle strikes now tying up Canada's chief industries." That was a communist speaking! Not bloody likely. Anyone could see that parliament and the whole state machinery was being used to put down the workers: the siege preparations at Stelco, the arrest of strikers; the protection of scabs; the anti-worker laws contrived at a moment's notice; etc. But the old party pretended not to see. It ran candidates for election at all levels of government. In the Hamilton elections that fall it even backed Sam Lawrence for another term as mayor. So much for the Communist Party's idea of using a bosses' state in the workers interest.

Infested with a fear of facing what had to be done, the Party sank into opportunism, an ideological weakness that results in dishonesty, and failure. Opportunism showed itself in two ways.

First, was the Party's work around the United Front Against Fascism. The policy originated in 1935 at the Seventh World Congress of Communist Parties, and was used to cope with the frightening rise of fascism. However, in Canada it was treated as a call to abandon militancy, and to dilute communism with liberalism, social democracy, and other ideologies of the bosses. For example, in the pre-war Steelworkers Union, a rival caucus was formed in opposition to mis-leader Millard. It was headed by Harry Hunter, a communist who had helped to form the original Steelworkers Organizing Committee in Canada. With the initiation of the United Front, however, the caucus fell in behind Millard. The Communist Party was the main advocate of the no-strike pledge! "Labour unity" was used as a slogan calling for unity with rotten agents of the capitalist like Millard and Sefton.

On top of this, the Party had a general policy of anonymity. A member usually kept his membership secret. This was partly a leftover from days of illegality, but in the main it was a lack of confidence in communism and the people. Excepting the leaflet urging workers to appear at City Hall (and that was unsigned) and regular issue of the Tribune, no sizeable amount of literature was circulated by the communists in the summer of

Contrast anonymity with a policy of openness. That means you say what you really stand for, revolution. Of course it also means you have to believe what you're saying — that workers have enough on the ball to rule the country they've built. The Communist Party's anonymity allowed its membership and everyone else to foster doubts in the possibility of socialism. Since then the Party has degenerated with a vengeance. Now it is quite open about its aims. After all, why not? It has lost so much confidence in itself and in the Canadian working class it no longer aims for revolution.

Industrial Unionism

From the workers point of view the industrial unions were a great gain. They provided the instrument to win wage gains and better conditions. The contrast between the victories in steel, rubber, auto and the electrical industries in 1946 and the

very very chm

(Expansive to 1948?)

simultaneous defeat of the craft ITU is a case in point.

From the bosses viewpoint the new unions were a serious setback, but one they soon learned to handle.

They used the best weapon they have: the State. The anti-labour legislation in Canada has been a success up to now in curbing militancy by moving fights from the factory and picket line into the courtroom.

Against this workers only had a rotten Communist Party and their trade unions. Karl Marx long ago pointed out that although unions are very necessary they aren't (nor can they be) revolutionary organisations. They're not designed to attack the causes of exploitation and oppression-capitalism. Rather they fight the symptoms — low pay, bad working conditions, etc. This accounts for the possibility of regulating them by anti-labour legislation, etc. — of containing them within the bosses' State.

In all this the bosses' have found a useful ally too. The sellout union bureaucrat whose job is to say: "Don't fight, we'll get fined!" They don't talk about how all those '46 strikes were illegal. Nor do they talk about how unions were formed in days when there were no funds and no strike-pay. They talk scare-talk because they're scared. They know if capitalism goes so does their cushy jobs. These fakers have turned unions into businesses, aimed at amassing large bank accounts, from dues, and holding them.

They're scared of losing their fortune alright. It's no wonder. Nothing remains the same. Workers all over Canada are getting more scrappy — and a real communist party is starting up. What is needed now is rank and file control of unions: a national rank and file movement on a plant by plant basis in every industry in the whole country. This movement requires communist leadership with the revolutionary working class ideology of Marxism-Leninism.

The unions must be put back into the control of the workers in order to fight and win the immediate battles over the symptoms of capitalism — wages and working conditions. Only the steel-hard unity of a mass rank and file movement in every union can have the power to oppose the bureaucrats and bosses to win these gains. And out of these fights against the symptoms of capitalism will come the new working class Communist leaders and the class political consciousness necessary to step up the fight until we've won.

What is needed not only to build that movement but to stop it turning sour and losing its gains is a revolutionary communist party. One that isn't afraid to beat the bosses, bureaucrats or any of their friends, once and for all. A party that can WIN. A party that can help build SOCIALISM, working-class democracy, in Canada. That party is the Canadian Party of Labour.



IV. The Canadian Party of Labour

The Canadian Party of Labour and its newspapers, the Canadian Worker and L'Ouvrier, are dedicated to the Canadian working class of both English and French-speaking nations as well as to the working class of the entire world — black, brown, white, red and yellow.

The only way our class can ever have a decent life is by overthrowing the bosses' governments and establishing the **DICTATORSHIP OF THE WORKING CLASS**, a system of effective democracy for the workers and effective repression for the capitalists.

When this is done, we can build a new society, with no exploitation of man by man, a society in which the working people collectively own and control the factories and farms; a society of socialism.

Until this is done, the capitalist class will continue to hold the trump card — their armies, police, and courts. The reforms we win in day-to-day struggle will be whittled away.

The bosses are organized so we must be organized. This is why the workers need the communist party. The Canadian

Party of Labour invites all those who wish to join the fight to join our fighting organizations. We have learned that without the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism, applied to the specific conditions of advanced capitalist bi-national Canada, there can be no revolutionary practice here. So, besides struggling wherever we are, the Canadian Party of Labour sees as its most important task for the present the spread of communist ideas to the class through The Canadian Worker and L'Ouvrier. For this end, we have established sellers' collectives of friends of CPL who criticize the paper and sell it regularly at schools and shops. We have also created readers' groups for people who want to learn more about the Party by studying The Canadian Worker and L'Ouvrier.

The formation of the Canadian Party of Labour is a declaration of class war. It proclaims to the capitalists that we intend to wipe them out. With the Party as the general staff in the vanguard of the proletarian army, there is no force on earth that can stop the masses of Canadian people from trampling the bosses underfoot on their long march to socialism.

CANADIAN  **WORKER**

Canadian Party of Labour, Monthly *"Workers of the World, Unite!"*

Vol. 7 No. 11 July 1970 10¢

SMASH RACISM

Unite With Immigrant Workers See Page 3

Terror Bombings Aid Bosses

Real Victims Are Workers See Page 9



Auto Showdown in the Making See pages 3, 6, 7, 8

 **L'OUVRIER**

Organe en langue française
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VOL 7 NO 1 JUILLET-AOÛT 1970 10¢



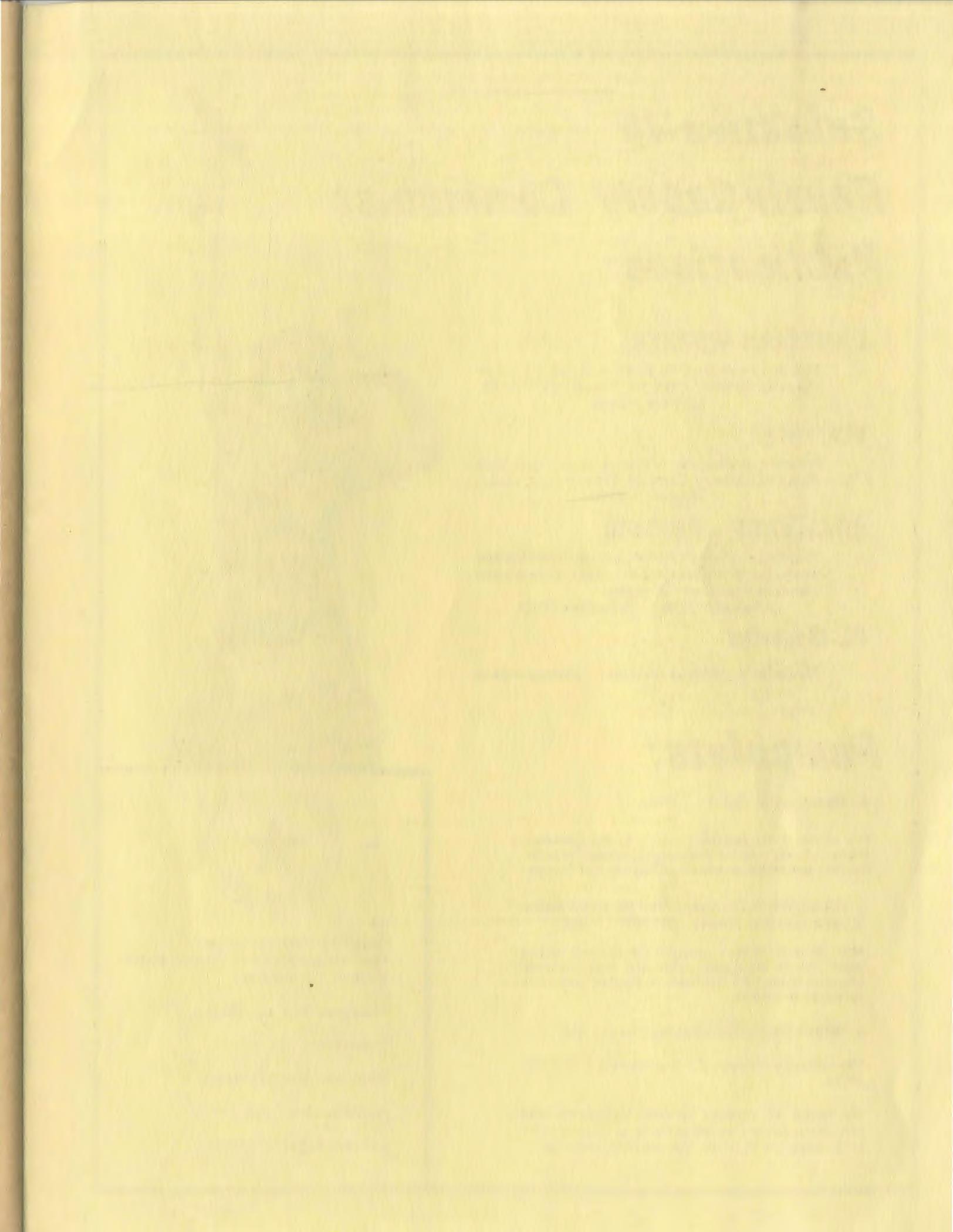
LA GREVE TOURNANTE EST UNE GREVE PERDUE

**LES TRAVAILLEURS
DES POSTES
PEUVENT GAGNER** voir page 3



This pamphlet was prepared on the basis of several talks with participants in the strikes of 1948, articles in the Hamilton Spectator, The Toronto Globe and Mail, Macleans Magazine, and the Canadian Tribune. A list of specific references is available on request.

Did they really read this



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