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The Ideas of Gustave Francq on Trade
Unionism and Social Reform as Expressed
in Le Monde Ouvrier / The Labor World,
1916-1921.

by Geoffrey Ewen

Thesis presented to the School of
Graduate Studies of the University
of Ottawa as partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

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INTRODUCTION

Quebec labor historians have devoted most of their attention to the Catholic trade unions. In consequence there has been little work on the American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions, the Internationals. A recent study of the Catholic unions, Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930, by Jacques Rouillard has a chapter on the opposing ideologies of the AFL and the Catholic unions.¹ Robert Babcock in Gompers in Canada dealt briefly with the failure of the AFL to respond to conditions in Quebec before World War I.² But in view of the fact that the AFL membership was always larger than their rivals', there is an obvious imbalance in research.

This thesis proposes to contribute to correcting this situation by studying some of the ideas of Gustave Francq, a prominent AFL leader and the editor of the bilingual weekly Le Monde Ouvrier / The Labor World, the organ of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council (MTLC). It is true that a D.E.S. thesis from the University of Montreal, "Le Monde Ouvrier / The Labor World (1916-1926), An Analysis of Thought and a Detailed Index", contains some biographical material on Francq and summarizes the contents of this

1 Jacques Rouillard, Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1979.

2 Robert H. Babcock, Gompers in Canada: a Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1974.

weekly.¹ But it presents neither Francq's program for the AFL in Quebec nor does it explain the steps he took to implement it. This thesis will attempt to fill this gap.

Born in Belgium in 1871, Gustave Francq immigrated to Canada at the age of seventeen. He found work as a printers' devil in Quebec city and soon demonstrated his natural sympathy with labor when he walked out with the unionized printers during a strike. He then joined the Typographical union. Over the next decade he became an important figure in the Quebec labor movement. In 1904 he helped to rebuild the Labor Party of Quebec. In 1909 he became president of the MTLC and a year later he was chosen as vice-president of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada.² While remaining prominent in the trade union movement he acquired the ownership of the Mercantile Printing Company.³ Although now an employer, he turned his operation into a

1 André E. Leblanc, "Le Monde Ouvrier / The Labor World (1916-1926): an Analysis of Thought and a Detailed Index", D.E.S. Thesis (History), University of Montreal, 1971.

2 Ibid., p. 13.

3 Ibid., pp. 15-16. In this respect, Francq's career is similar to that of another Quebec trade union leader, Michel Chartrand, who ran a small printing operation in Longueuil in the early 1960's before being elected president of the Conseil Central of the Confederation of National Trade Unions in 1968. (Nick Auf der Maur and Robert Chados et al., Quebec: A Chronicle 1968-1972, Toronto, James Lewis & Samuel, 1972, pp. 89-90.

union shop in Montreal.¹ This commercial venture succeeded because of its obviously pro-labor bias; the firm received a good deal of business from trade unions.²

One of Francq's great interests was labor journalism. As early as 1906 he had become the editor of a shortlived bilingual paper, Vox Populi, an organ of the MTLC. Two years later he tried again with L'Ouvrier which actively supported the Labor Party of Quebec but unfortunately only lasted about eight months.³

In 1916 a number of prominent members of the MTLC including Gustave Francq decided to publish a new journal, Le Monde Ouvrier / The Labor World. In this venture Francq was the managing director. But after fourteen weeks of financial loss it was handed over to Francq. This was supposed to be a temporary arrangement - the original group could take it back whenever it was able to assume all the obligations - but in fact the arrangement became a permanent one since The Labor World never really became self-financing.⁴ It was always intended to be self-supporting. At first it sold for five cents an issue but this was lowered to two cents for most of the period under review. But it

1 Leblanc, "Le Monde Ouvrier", p. 16.

2 Ibid., p. 16.

3 Ibid., p. 15; Alfred Charpentier, "Le mouvement politique ouvrier de Montréal, 1883-1929," Relations Industrielles, 10 (March 1955), p. 84.

4 Ibid., pp. 16-18.

also depended to a large extent on advertising from private business. Nonetheless the Mercantile Printing Company often had to subsidize its operation. Although financially independent, The Labor World was the official organ of the MTLC and spoke for the Labor Party of Quebec.¹ It contained local, national and international labor news but it often included matters of general interest to readers such as comments on sports. While 8,500 copies of The Labor World were printed when it first appeared in 1916, its readership was probably of more modest proportions and at a low point in 1921 it had a circulation of about 3,500.²

The Labor World provides the principal source for a study of Francq's ideas. It is the only one of his journalistic ventures for which all of the issues have been preserved. Francq destroyed all of his private papers towards the end of his life. The Labor World is also the only official organ of the AFL union movement in Quebec during the years between 1916 and 1921.

Francq wrote on a wide range of topics and no attempt was made to deal with all of them within the scope of this thesis. The following chapters examine only selected issues of particular concern to his program for the AFL in Quebec. By far the largest proportion of his editorial writing dealt with Catholic unions. A smaller but still significant number of his editorials were dedicated to radical unions. The

1 Ibid., p. 17.

2 Leblanc, "Le Monde Ouvrier", p. 24.

intensity of his interest in this question and its importance is also readily apparent in descriptions of MTLC and Labor Party meetings where radical unions produced divisions and heated debates throughout 1919. This was also the subject of his only political tract. The Labor World was dedicated to social reform and Franco addressed himself to many current causes: two of the most pressing at this time were workmen's compensation and prohibition while compulsory education was of particular concern to Quebec society. Other labor reforms about which Franco wrote were the minimum wage and the eight hour day; I have omitted these from the discussion because they were of minimal concern at this time. Unemployment insurance was also of interest to Franco but it was considered a very distant and long range goal; no analysis of it is undertaken here. Labor political action was another issue that commanded much of Franco's attention during these years. Some of the issues that are not included here were his running comments on federal, provincial and municipal politics that did not directly concern the Labor Party. The only issues on which Franco wrote a body of editorials but that are not examined here are electoral and municipal reform.

During the first few years almost all the editorials in The Labor World were signed with pseudonyms. Based on style and content, I am assuming that those under the pen name Le

Vieux Chercheur were probably Francq's own work and that unsigned editorials also reflect his views, especially as these usually appear to have been written by the editor himself.

The Labor World generally contained two English and two French pages, although Francq usually wrote in French. He set out his ideas mostly in editorials but they are also given in many of the reports describing MTLG and Labor Party meetings because he was often an active participant.

Most of the editorials in The Labor World were written by Francq. Of the seventeen editorials that touched on the One Big Union, the Winnipeg General Strike and radical union methods that form the subject of the first chapter, Francq signed seven and published ten others unsigned. There were forty six editorials on Catholic unions: thirty four by Francq; two by Le Vieux Chercheur; six were unsigned; and the remaining four were written by other journalists. On labor politics the editor placed his name under at least fourteen, his pseudonym under three more, eighteen were unsigned while sixteen others were signed by his colleagues. On workmen's compensation he signed seven, left one unsigned and printed three by other writers. Most of his ideas on compulsory education were spelled out in a single open letter from The Labor World to Premier Gouin but there were also two unsigned editorials on the subject and he made a useful if passing reference to it in a signed editorial

on another topic. On prohibition there were about two hundred articles in English and French that were given editorial prominence. This is the one case where Francq probably did not write most of the editorials. Almost two thirds were unsigned while another third were signed with such pseudonyms as Otto Wynn and Le Rouget. Three were signed by Francq, four by Le Vieux Chercheur while one other appeared as an open letter from The Labor World to the provincial premier.

Before the First World War the labor movement in Quebec had been slower to develop than in other provinces. This was due partly to linguistic reasons but mainly because of a late and limited industrial development. The labor movement was by no means passive, however, as the province came second only to British Columbia for industrial conflicts. Much of the industrial development was in low skilled but labor intensive industries such as textiles and shoe making that were characterized by low wages, long hours and poor working conditions. Quebec City, and particularly Montreal, the site for most industrial growth, had some of the longest, largest and most violent strikes in the manufacturing sector.¹

Trade unions in Quebec never represented more than a fraction of the labor force. Even after the period of extensive growth following World War I their membership accounted for no

1 Stuart Marshall Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66, Study No. 22 of the Task Force on Labour Relations, Ottawa, Information Canada, 1968, pp. 86-88.

more than 14% of the labor force. By 1916 war production brought an end to the unemployment that had helped to keep labor unions weak. But union members still had to face a large number of impediments to effective organization that included employer hostility and government legislation that put constraints on workers but not on employers. The labor movement even had difficulty gaining the support of many workers. Most unions were organized along craft lines as the highly skilled and least replaceable workers were the easiest to organize and held the strongest bargaining position.

The Labor movement was also weakened because it was divided into opposing movements. The International unions, affiliates of the AFL had approximately two thirds of the province's unionized workers within its ranks and constituted the major union grouping in Montreal.¹ The National and Catholic unions made up the remaining third and were strongest in Quebec City and in smaller industrial centers. The membership of the Internationals in 1918 in Montreal, was estimated to be about three quarters francophone² and included most anglophone and immigrant union members. The National and Catholic union members were mainly francophone.³

1 Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher and Jean-Claude Robert, Histoire du Québec contemporain, Boréal Express, 1979, p. 270; Harold Logan, The History of Trade Union Organization in Canada, Toronto, MacMillan, 1928, p. 316.

2 Rouillard, p. 36.

3 Linteau, p. 475.

In Montreal, then, the major union central was the Montreal Trades and Labor Council made up of representatives from the International unions. On the executive of the Council, Francq was annually re-elected as corresponding secretary from 1916 to 1921. Francq lost his position only once for a brief period in 1917 when he found himself at odds with the members of his own union local over his support for conscription. Invariably, he continued to represent his union at every TLC annual meeting. In 1918 he became the principal lobbyist for the TLC at the provincial level when he was chosen as chairman of its Quebec executive. Many of the leaders of the MTLC, including Francq, controlled the Labor Party of Quebec until its reorganization in 1917 and considered themselves as the moderates whenever conflicts arose with radical trade unionists. Radicals seem to have been few if vocal at MTLC meetings but they gained increasing control over the Labor Party after 1917. While Francq resigned his executive position as corresponding-secretary of the Labor Party at the beginning of 1917 when he began to re-evaluate the role that organized labor should play in politics, he continued to attempt to exert a moderating influence as an outspoken party member.

The establishment of The Labor World in March 1916 coincided with a genuine crisis in the relations between capital and labor in Canada. Throughout Canada there

began a period of unprecedented union growth and of more strike activity than ever before.¹ This rise in militancy not only benefited AFL unions in Canada but provided the momentum for the establishment of Catholic unions in Quebec and for the rapid if shortlived rise of the industrial unionism of the One Big Union in western Canada. In November 1917 the Russian revolution brought the Bolsheviks to power, encouraging many socialists in Europe and North America to hope for change.² Meanwhile in allied countries organized labor had achieved enough importance to gain a share or voice in the direction of the war effort. In the United States the AFL had representation on wartime subcommittees.³ During the war radical trade unionists in Canada began to advocate the general strike as a tool of working class struggle, an idea which was to be put into practice in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Such direct action was considered by the governing authorities as a threat to their legitimate powers.⁴

1 Stuart Marshall Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66, Study No. 22 of the Task Force on Labour Relations, Ottawa, Information Canada, 1968, pp. 158-159, 185.

2 Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada: A History, Toronto, McWelland and Stewart, 1975, p. 7.

3 Leo Wolman, The Growth of American Trade Unions, 1800-1923, New York, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1924, p. 36.

4 David J. Bercusson and Kenneth McNaught, The Winnipeg Strike: 1919, Don Mills, Longman, 1974.

In 1919 Francq set out his own views on this crisis between labor and capital in a pamphlet entitled Bolchevisme ou Syndicalisme, lequel?¹ He argued that it was unreformed capitalism that led to social unrest and that bred bolchevism:

C'est le capital - non pas le TRAVAIL ORGANISE - qui a semé ce qui produit aujourd'hui le malaise et le mécontentement. 2

Bolshevism was the result of "un système qui trop longtemps a enrichi le petit nombre et appauvri le grand nombre." It was a reaction to the injustice, cruelty and exploitation that brought such misery to the lives of most workers.³ But Bolshevism meant "la désorganisation sociale":⁴ the world was threatened by a "dictature d'un prolétariat d'autant plus dangereux qu'il est ignorant, d'autant plus cruel qu'il n'a jamais connu autre chose que la violence."⁵

Although opposed to revolution, Francq believed that substantial reform was necessary. The major agent in the achievement of this aim was to be the "force constructive, ... le grand mouvement "trade unionist" international."⁶ The mission of the labor movement was to do away with the

1 Gustave Francq, Bolchevisme ou Syndicalisme, lequel? Montreal, Le Monde Ouvrier, 1919.

2 Ibid., p. 24.

3 Ibid., p. 4.

4 Ibid., p. 24.

5 Ibid., p. 5.

6 Ibid., p. 25.

absolute rule of capital and thus alleviate the necessity of a Bolshevik style revolution; it would achieve these goals by inducing capital to provide security and comfort for workers and in this way bring in a better social order:

Le syndicalisme ouvrier, au lieu de pousser à la rébellion, cherchait à supprimer le bolchevisme en essayant de s'interroger entre les deux dictatures, celle du travail et celle du capital, pour obtenir la coopération des deux. 1

The reforms Francq thought necessary were set out in a Charter formulated at the International Labor Conference in Berne, Switzerland in February 1919 which Francq attended as part of the Canadian delegation.² It advocated such measures as limits on the length of the working day, minimum wages, unemployment insurance and workmen's compensation.

Meanwhile in reaction to conscription in 1917 the TLC decided to support independent political section and called for the establishment of a national labor party.³ In general, labor political movements had some success: the Independent Labor Party in Ontario formed a coalition government with the United Farmers of Ontario in 1919.⁴

1 Ibid., p. 24.

2 Francq reproduced the Charter in Ibid., pp. 26-30.

3 Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974, p. 309.

4 Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada: 1827-1959, Toronto, NC Press, 4th edition, 1978, p. 216.

Even the old political parties showed more interest in the labor question. In 1917 the Borden administration appointed Gideon Robertson, a trade union leader, to the Senate and made him Minister of Labor. The new leader of the Liberal Party after the war, Mackenzie King, had been a Minister of Labor and had written an important book on industrial relations.¹ Under his influence the Liberal convention of 1919 adopted as part of its platform the terms of the Labor Convention associated with the League of Nations and incorporated in the conditions of peace.²

Franco has been described by his contemporary rival, the Catholic trade unionist Alfred Charpentier, as a socialist.³ This opinion was repeated by Robert Rumilly and also by Anglophone historians such as Terry Copp and Desmond Morton.⁴ Yet in 1911 Franco was removed as vice-president of the TLC by radical trade unionists who consi-

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- 1 William Lyon Mackenzie King, Industry and Humanity; a study in the principles underlying industrial reconstruction, New York, Houghton Wifflin, 1918.
 - 2 R. MacGregor Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1958, p. 300.
 - 3 Alfred Charpentier, "Le mouvement politique ouvrier de Montréal 1883-1929," Relations Industrielles, 10 (March 1955), p. 87.
 - 4 Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty; the Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1975, p. 138; Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People, Ottawa, Deneau & Greenberg, 1980, p. 93; Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Montreal, Editions Bernard Valiquette, Vol. XII, p. 102.

dered him a Liberal.¹ What then would be an apt description for Francq's social and political thought? In fact Francq claimed to support some socialist principles: he thought that for a country to control all the means of production and transportation was probably a good thing.² In a statement of editorial policy, The Labor World even claimed that "We are in favor of socialism." But it did not claim to be a socialist paper since its aim was exclusively to promote the policies and principles of the labor movement. Francq considered socialism an impractical and utopian proposal since "the people of Canada in the great majority have not the character that would make socialism a success."³ He supported socialism in principle but not in practice. He limited his advocacy of public ownership to public utilities, such as the municipal tramway system, the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company and the railroads.⁴ And Francq never condemned the profit motive.

Francq saw the trade union movement as a force standing for democratic principles, freedom and social justice:

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- 1 Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930, Kingston, Industrial Relations Centre, 1968, p. 116.
 - 2 Francq Bolchevisme, p. 6.
 - 3 The Labor World / Le Monde Ouvrier, "The policy of the "Labor World," 16 April 1921, Supplement. Hereafter cited as The Labor World. French language editorials always appeared in the top right or left hand corner of the first page so their titles and page numbers have not been cited. Titles and page numbers have been included in the references to articles, news notices and English language editorials.
 - 4 The Labor World, 20 July 1918; 31 July 1920; 4 December 1924.

Il représente vraiment le travail et ce qu'il y a de meilleur dans la société. Il défend la liberté, la justice, et la démocratie contre le terrorisme, l'injustice et l'autocratie. 1

If capitalists were rational they would co-operate with organized labor to gain reform through peaceful and democratic means. To resist was to provoke a polarization of forces that could lead to class war: "Il faut que toutes les classes envisagent carrément le problème, c'est la révolution ou la réforme sociale."² To solve the problems of labor was the best way to fight Bolshevism and defend democracy.

The crisis in labor relations in Canada lasted roughly between 1915 and 1921. During these years Franco may be described as a laborite; he may have thought that ideally the capitalist system should be replaced but his program was meant to assign a leading role to the labor movement within a capitalist system. As we shall see, to carry out his program he was compelled to defend the international unions from the attack of radicals on the one hand and Catholics on the other. These are the themes of the first two chapters. But he also set out a program of social reform, the subject of the third chapter. To round out his thought it would be necessary to deal at some length

1 Franco, Bolchevisme, p. 25..

2 Ibid., p. 24.

with his ideas on politics. But unfortunately this would require a much longer thesis. Hence it is proposed in the fourth and last chapter to touch lightly on this question.

RADICAL TRADE UNION ACTION

Although organized labor supported the war, they opposed military conscription because they feared that the militant trade unionists might be drafted. In 1916 the government took what turned out to be the first step towards conscription by instituting a registration of manpower. The Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC) did not oppose this measure but tried to get reassurance from the government that conscription would not follow. Arguing that the sacrifices demanded by the war effort at least had to be evenly distributed, TLC leaders proposed conscription of wealth before conscription of manpower.¹ When Borden announced conscription on May 18th, 1917, several labor bodies in the West reacted vehemently and proposed opposing compulsory military service "by any means" including a general strike.² Ontario labor leaders reiterated their staunch opposition to conscription of manpower before that of wealth.³

Borden's measure for conscription caused a split at the TLC convention held in Ottawa in September 1917. The TLC executive recommended that the Congress protest

1 Martin Robin, "Registration, Conscription and Independent Labor Politics," Canadian Historical Review, XLVII, 2, (June 1966), p. 122.

2 Ibid., p. 127.

3 Ibid., p. 134.

against conscription but opposed any action to hamper application of the law.¹ They suggested opposing conscription through the ballot box but most of the western delegates wished to combat the measure by a general strike.² But there were also a few labor leaders who openly supported conscription.³ Incidentally Francq was among those who spoke in favour of conscription.⁴ In the end the executive stand was upheld by the moderates 136 to 106 after a tense and animated debate that lasted two days.⁵

Francq opposed the radicals' call for a general strike over the conscription issue at the TLC convention. Because the purpose of the TLC was to press for favorable labor legislation, it had no jurisdiction over the International unions; hence it had no power to call strikes. Moreover a general strike would mean the breaking of existing contracts and organized labor always kept its agreements with employers. A general strike would be disavowed by most International unions and their Canadian counterparts. Even

1 Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, Proceedings of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, 1917, pp. 141-142.

2 Ibid., pp. 144-155.

3 Ibid., p. 155.

4 Ibid., p. 146.

5 Ibid., p. 155.

if a general strike were called, it would hurt workers more than anyone else since they often lacked savings to fall back on; he pleaded with his radical opponents: "Ne perdons pas notre force économique pour faire le jeu d'un parti politique, ne divisons pas nos rangs pour une question passagère." Francq believed that a general strike against conscription would be welcomed by many professional men and merchants in Montreal, who expect workers to make all the sacrifices; these "parasites qui vivent du travail" would not strike themselves.¹ Apart from his objections to a general strike, he also believed that constituted authority must not be opposed through civil disobedience: "When a law is passed, obey it."²

At the Ottawa Convention the Dominion TLC adopted a resolution favouring the formation of a national Independent Labor Party along the lines of the British Labor Party to fight in the general election of 1917.³ Labor candidates were fielded in Quebec, Ontario and the West but were unable to win any seats. This failure did nothing to convince the supporters of a general strike that they had been wrong.

Although he had spoken in favour of conscription, Francq had voted for the resolution recommended by the TLC executive and supported by moderates at the convention. Consequently, at the Montreal Trades and Labour

1 The Labor World, "La conscription, la grève générale et le congrès ouvrier," 29 September 1917, p. 1.

2 Ibid., p. 146.

3 Ibid., pp. 43-44.

Council (MTLC) meeting following the convention a motion of censure against him was proposed and one delegate even demanded his expulsion from the Council. But the motion of censure was defeated; all but eight of the seventy or so delegates opposed it.¹ A few days later, on October 6th the matter was brought up again at Local 145 of the Jacques Cartier Typographical Union where Francq was censured and removed as the local's representative on the MTLC.² This in turn meant that he had to resign from his position as secretary of the MTLC.³

Francq then tried to clarify his position in greater detail and this time, while defending the principle of conscription, he condemned the actual measure of the Borden government. He denied betraying his mandate as a MTLC delegate to the Congress. He had supported the resolution that opposed the principle of conscription and this was the stand that had been taken by the MTLC. He explained that to have sided with those who voted against the executive recommendation meant supporting a general strike and the MTLC had not authorized him to support direct action.⁴

1 The Labor World, "Le Conseil des Métiers Refuse de Censurer Son secrétaire," 6 October 1917, p. 1.

2 The Labor World, "Je suis censuré," 1e October 1917, p. 1; "Why I Am No Longer Secretary of the Montreal Trades & Labor Council," 3 November 1917, p. 4.

3 The Labor World, "Why I Am No Longer Secretary of the Montreal Trades & Labor Council," 3 November 1917, p. 4.

4 The Labor World, "La Conscription, La Grève Générale et le Congrès Ouvrier," 29 Septembre 1917, p. 1.

In 1918 western labor continued to be more bellicose. In Winnipeg, it engaged in a virtual stoppage of work to support the right to strike of municipal employees. The militant use of strike action worked in other instances as well, such as in a dispute involving five thousand dockyard workers in British Columbia employed on contracts for the Imperial Munitions Board. Such successes increased the support for radical trade union leaders.¹

In September 1918, the TLC convention in Quebec city was again the scene of violent disputes between western radicals and the moderates from Ontario and Quebec. Western delegates attacked many of the Congress' policies and its leadership. They condemned the Congress executive for accepting conscription and for appointing labour representatives to government commissions. But their most radical proposal was that the Congress accept the principle of industrial unionism. All the resolutions proposed by western radicals critical of policies and craft union orientation of the TLC were defeated. To make things worse, the radicals lost the election when their opponents chose Tom Moore, a stable and moderate trade unionist, as president of the TLC.²

1 David J. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men; The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union, Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978, pp. 64-65.

2 Ibid., pp. 68-69.

Francq condemned the "ultra-radicaux" at Quebec city. He disapproved of the obstruction, insularity and fanatical narrow mindedness of delegates who used the annual meeting simply to promote their "utopies" and who were "imbus de l'idée que tout ce qui ne vient pas d'eux est incomplet et inefficace." He objected to the radicals' call for direct action which would have made of the TLC a political force.¹ As envisaged by some of the men who later led the One Big Union (O.B.U.), a general strike had two purposes: it ought to be used to back fellow workers in a wage dispute; or to force the government into making political or legislative concessions.² Such had been the intention behind its proposed use against conscription. Francq summed up their position this way: "Des lois, il n'en faut plus. Les pouvoirs publics, c'est nous. Plus de chefs, plus d'organisation." He thought that society could not continue to exist under such conditions:

Les pouvoirs publics existent et la société ne peut demeurer que si elle est organisée. Or, toute organisation implique l'existence de règlements et de chefs préposés à l'exécution de ces règlements.

Such syndicalist methods as the general strike were unnecessary under Canada's democratic system. Francq wanted workers to play an important role in the administration of government but this

1 The Labor World, 21 September 1918.

2 Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, pp. 82-83.

was to be achieved through building a working class party and using the electoral process.¹ He rejected the use of the general strike as a political weapon; parliamentary pressure was the only legitimate way of influencing the government.

Western delegates understood the reasons for their defeat. Because of the long distances, the cost of transportation always resulted in their reduced representation. At Quebec city they were slightly more than ten percent of the delegates. Some of them formed what was called the Quebec caucus and decided that trade unionists from the west should meet together in Calgary before the next convention. Unhindered by delegates from Ontario and Quebec, they would be able to put their own proposals into practice.² Meanwhile, all radicals whether in the east or west were deeply angered in October 1918 because the Borden government issued three Orders-in-Council: the first prohibited strikes and lockouts until the end of the war; the second outlawed fourteen radical organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World and the Social Democratic Party; the third banned assemblies and publication in a number of languages that were described as 'enemy alien', such as Russian, Ukrainian and Finnish,

1 The Labor World, 21 September 1918.

2 Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, p. 70.

making it almost impossible to organize immigrant workers.¹ These actions confirmed radical union members in their view that the TLC was obviously wrong in attempting to co-operate with the government. Clearly the only language which it would understand was the general strike.

In March 1919 radical trade unionists including those who were members of the Socialist Party of Canada gathered at the Western Labor Conference in Calgary. They were in a militant mood, passing resolutions supporting socialism, opposing political repression and rejecting political lobbying by organized labor.² They proceeded to condemn craft unions and to call for an industrial union. They then decided to break away from the AFL and to form the One Big Union. The O.B.U. was to be a centralized organization bringing all workers together without dividing them according to craft or industry.³

Francq did not comment at any length on the founding of the O.B.U. at the Western Labor Conference, perhaps believing that left alone the secessionist movement would quietly dissipate. But the short news notices began to express the criticism that would consistently appear

1 Stuart Marshall Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66, Study No. 22 of the Task Force on Labour Relations, Ottawa, Information Canada, 1968, pp. 167-168.

2 Ibid., p. 170.

3 Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, p. 85.

in The Labor World: "To do away with all craft unions is highly impractical. It looks like I.W.W."¹

Before the O.B.U. organized to take action, a strike of building and metal trades workers began in Winnipeg in May 1919 when their employers refused to recognize the Metal Trades Council which represented the various unions involved in the dispute. The strikers wished for recognition of their bargaining unit and increased wages. Two weeks later the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council called a general strike in sympathy with the metal trades workers.² From the onset of the strike, members of the Canadian government, including Gideon Robertson, the Minister of Labour, refused to concede that the strikers grievances were legitimate and wrongly claimed that the O.B.U. had organized the general strike to establish a soviet form of government. To defeat the O.B.U., it set about to break the strike.³ On June 6th it quickly passed an amendment to the Immigration Act to allow it to deport some of the strike leaders without a trial. Finally on June 17th it had the strike leaders arrested. A few days later armed police fired into a demonstration to call

1 The Labor World, "Labor the World Over", 22 March 1919, p. 4.

2 Jamieson, Times of Trouble, p. 176.

3 David Jay Bercuson, "The Winnipeg General Strike Collective Bargaining and the One Big Union Issue," CHR, LI, 2 (June 1970), pp. 164-167.

on Senator Robertson to explain his actions.¹ Soon afterwards, almost six weeks after it had started, the strike was called off.²

The TLC executive clearly disapproved of the strike.³ Like the government, they feared that the Winnipeg General Strike was connected to the O.B.U.⁴ On June 24th, just before the strike ended, TLC president Moore had accused the Winnipeg TLC of taking over powers and authority belonging to the International unions.

The initial reaction of The Labor World to the Winnipeg General Strike was sympathetic, blaming the metal trades companies for refusing to recognize the Metal Trades Council. It was sceptical of the government's stand:

Two conclusions are ours - that is as we stated without any news - first, we do not blame the sympathy strikers for their action and, secondly we do not believe that there was the slightest thought in the mind of the same labor leaders of Winnipeg for any Soviet or any other form of government but British. 5

1 David J. Bercuson and Kenneth McNaught, The Winnipeg Strike: 1919, Don Mills, Longman, 1974, p. 90.

2 Jamieson, Times of Trouble, pp. 176, 184.

3 Robin, "Registration, Conscription and Independent Labor Politics," C.H.R., pp. 182-183.

4 Ibid., p. 183.

5 The Labor World, "What is the News of Winnipeg," 24 May 1919, p. 3.

But after this first favorable editorial, Francq stated more than once that he preferred to withhold judgement on the subject until he knew all the facts: "il vaut mieux ne pas discuter ni les raisons ni les causes de cette grève."¹ His dilemma was that although he opposed general strikes he believed that the metal trades unions in Winnipeg had a genuine grievance. There was also considerable uncertainty as to "the part played by certain forces in the Winnipeg strike and especially the "One Big Union."² Francq may have been sympathetic to the strike but he was being influenced by the TLC executive. The claim of the authorities that the aims of the strikers were political and even revolutionary might be true.

At the same time the editor of The Labor World condemned the government for its actions in Winnipeg. Soon after the arrests he remarked, at a Montreal TLC meeting, that the strike leaders had been summarily arrested and that it appeared that they were going to be judged and deported in an arbitrary manner. He then proposed a resolution that was adopted unanimously by the Council:

Que ce Conseil des Métiers et du Travail
de Montréal proteste contre l'arrestation
sommaire des grévistes de Winnipeg,
membres d'unions ouvrières, et exige
qu'ils soient jugés par un jury dans un
tribunal ouvert, conformément à la loi,
et que de plus ce Conseil condamne énergi-

1 The Labor World, "La Grève de Winnipeg," 28 June 1919, p. 1.

2 The Labor World, "First Hand News of the Strike", 12 July 1919, p. 3.

quement le système suivi par le gouvernement dans le règlement des difficultés ouvrières. 1

Through the columns of The Labor World he opposed "the villainous arrest of certain leaders occasioned by Star Chamber legislation from Ottawa, and the gross injustices practiced by the fatuous, conceited, arrogant powers that be both in Winnipeg and Ottawa." Referring to the changes to the Immigration Act, he criticized acting Minister of Justice Meighen "who put through that law over night" and then went up to Winnipeg "with the air of one who had usurped an Empire." It did not want "labor leaders to be railroaded into the penitentiary without a fair trial," and believed that the arrested men should be considered innocent until proven guilty.² Francq was a member of the MTLC sub-committee that dealt with requests for aid from Winnipeg. He helped a delegation of representatives from Winnipeg organize a meeting to raise money for the jailed leaders.³

But Francq had not changed his mind about the general strike since he had condemned it at Quebec in September 1918. Repeating some of the same arguments, he continued to object to it because it had political connotations. In

1 The Labor World, "Contre les Arrestations Arbitraires," 21 June 1919, p. 1.

2 The Labor World, "First Hand News of the Strike", 12 July 1919, p. 3.

3 The Labor World, "Plus de Terrains de Jeux," 19 July 1919, p. 1.

condemning the Winnipeg General Strike he insisted that trade unions must not use the economic power of a strike as a political weapon if they wanted to remain economically effective. Moreover they had to be non-violent and trade unions had to eschew revolutionary methods.

A general strike polarized labor and capital provoking tensions that could lead to an open confrontation. Such a polarization usually worked to the detriment of organized labor. This was partly because it often turned public opinion against the strikers and the labor movement.

Another reason to oppose the general strike was that it threatened the collective bargaining process that had helped to improve wages and working conditions for many workers. To hold on to the gains made by individual unions, agreements between employers and workers had to be respected. But a general strike implied a "violation des contrats de travail librement consentis et acceptés de part et d'autres." Francq thought that for bargaining purposes, employers should be dealt with individually rather than lumped together and treated as a unitary group whose interest irreconcilably opposed those of labor. A general strike punished "une quantité d'industriels qui sont en parfaite harmonie avec leurs ouvriers et contre lesquels ceux-ci n'ont aucun grief et ne touchent ni de près

ni de loin à la dispute en cause."¹

To an open letter to The Labor World that argued that the threat of a general strike was enough to ensure acceptance of the workers' demands, Francq reported that past experience showed on the contrary that general strikes were usually ineffective.² He was probably thinking of the Winnipeg General Strike of which he wrote after it had collapsed that "il est à espérer que la leçon sera salutaire et qu'elle portera des fruits."³ There was little chance of success for a strike for workers without financial support. On the other hand, individual strikes often succeeded because the striking workers received financial assistance and moral support from workers who were still earning a salary.⁴

At the 1919 TLC convention in Hamilton the Congress executive came out forcefully against the Winnipeg General Strike. TLC secretary Hayes declared that its aims were political rather than economic. It was only after this meeting that Francq took a definite stand against the strike in Winnipeg. Echoing the TLC executive line, he repeated Hayes' argument that the strike leaders wanted "de s'emparer du pouvoir industriel et politique de ce pays." He condemned the general strike because it endan-

1 The Labor World, "La Grève de Winnipeg," 12 July 1919, p. 1.

2 Ibid.

3 The Labor World, "La Grève de Winnipeg," 28 June 1919, p. 1.

4 The Labor World, "La Grève de Winnipeg," 12 July 1919, p. 1.

gered democratic principles:

aucune société, qu'aucun gouvernement ne pourrait donner justice ni être durable, s'il ne représentait pas la volonté du peuple exprimée au moyen du bulletin de vote et n'était pas le résultat d'une action autocratique d'une minorité, fut-elle ouvrière, capitaliste ou militaire. ¹

When the Winnipeg General Strike began the O.B.U. had not yet organized; it was only in June that it began to take shape. In the west it set up a number of locals, but the response from the east was much less enthusiastic; it succeeded in establishing only a few locals in southern Ontario and only one in Montreal.² By the end of 1919 there were some 40,000 O.B.U. members, mostly in western Canada. A number of radicals sympathetic to the O.B.U. remained within the TLC and these were able to speak up at the Hamilton convention of the TLC in September 1919.³

Francq was bound to oppose the O.B.U. because it was a movement to break away from the TLC and because it advocated the general strike. But he also clearly objected to it because it

1 The Labor World, 27 September 1919.

2 Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, p. 161.

3 The Labor World, 27 September 1919.

was an industrial union. He continually referred to the "doctrines fallacieuses des promoteurs de la 'One Big Union,'" and after the Hamilton convention he pointed to disastrous situation resulting from their application in Western Canada, probably referring to the Winnipeg General Strike.¹ Concerned with the effectiveness of trade union organization, he saw no reason to accept innovations that disrupted successful and established organizations. He opposed the principle of industrial organization that undermined the craft unions that had proven successful in the past. He based his distrust of new forms of organization on experience: "La plupart des syndicalistes - et je suis moi-même de ceux-là - qui ont été dans le mouvement un certain nombre d'années ont passé la période des illusions."²

It is probable that Francq's opinion on industrial unionism was expressed by Colin McKay, an occasional correspondent for The Labor World. McKay believed that the "fallacy" of the O.B.U. lay in its centralization of control over all aspects of union activity into one organization. This concentration of decision making power may have been helpful in gaining concessions on wages and working conditions but the O.B.U. by its very nature could not deal with the specific problems of each trade. He suggested that craft organizations such as

1 The Labor World, 27 September 1920.

2 Gustave Francq, Bolchevisme ou Syndicalisme, lequel?, Montréal Le Monde Ouvrier, 1919, p. 25.

the typographical union were more successful and powerful than industrial unions such as miners' associations because they had more local autonomy and were more democratic with greater member participation.¹

Francq objected to the unbending and stubbornly perverse attitude of O.B.U. supporters: "Le "radical" comme le "réactionnaire" est impatient; et, presque toujours intolérant."² He believed that the heckling by the O.B.U. sympathisers of the Congress executive and their attempts to disrupt the Hamilton convention in 1919 made them more enemies than their arguments alone could have done:

On ne gagne rien à chercher à empêcher les autres d'exposer leurs opinions ou défendre les principes qu'ils ont professés depuis de longues années et en lesquels ils voient un moyen sur et pratique d'améliorer les conditions des travailleurs.

He disliked them for demanding the freedom to expound their doctrine while refusing others the same right and becoming infuriated whenever someone expressed an unfavorable opinion on industrial unionism.³ Referring to extremists like those of the left, he said that "la plus grande partie du désordre provient du fait que quelques-uns sont trop imbus de leur conception particulière et ne veulent pas se soumettre au verdict de la majorité."⁴

1 The Labor World, "Trade Unionism vs One Big Union," 10 July 1920,

2 Francq, Bolchevisme, p. 25.

p. 4.

3 The Labor World, 27 September 1919.

4 Francq, Bolchevisme, p. 25.

The problem with radicals was that "voulant s'émanciper trop vite (ils) tombent dans des excès regrettables et font plus de tort que de bien au mouvement ouvrier."¹ He feared that the advances won by organized labor were endangered by the O.B.U.'s radical methods. Extremists on both the labor and the capitalist sides made agreement between the two difficult or impossible.² The O.B.U. and the Montreal Gazette, which attacked organized labor, shared the same natures: "Les uns et les autres font une oeuvre de destruction."³ The radicals in the labor movement, like the reactionary anti-union employers, who wanted to use "la force brutale" to destroy trade unions, were all "les ennemis du progrès et de la bonne entente."⁴

While believing in the class struggle, Francq wished Labor and Capital to co-operate to avoid "une rébellion insensée."⁵ The moderate elements on both sides ought to work together to mitigate the effects of the class conflict for the benefit of the whole society. An "entente entre le capital et le travail" would bring peace and prosperity.⁶

1 The Labor World, "Parons au Danger," 11 August 1917, p. 2.

2 The Labor World, 19 July 1919.

3 The Labor World, 2 August 1919.

4 The Labor World, 19 July 1919.

5 Francq, Bolchevisme, pp. 24-25.

6 The Labor World, 25 September 1920.

Francq did not want labor unions to be romantic or utopian; only by being realistic could they advance the cause of labor:

Sans avoir réussi à faire régner sur cette terre les conditions qu'on voudrait voir (le travail organisé) a cependant fait énormément pour l'avancement et le bien-être de la classe ouvrière. 1

He believed that "Qu'un pays contrôle tous les moyens de production et de distribution, c'est réalisable et nécessaire pour le bien commun," but he did not want to achieve this all at one stroke through a general strike.² Trade unions should advance the cause of progress by piece meal change through "une évolution naturelle modérée" without threatening the social system.³

Francq believed that radicals such as those advocating the O.B.U. wanted to become "les maîtres souverains". Some even welcomed violent confrontation because they saw "le bien être et l'émancipation de la classe ouvrière que dans une révolution sanglante."⁴ He described such radicals as extremists who:

1 The Labor World, 27 September 1919.

2 Francq, Bolchevisme, p. 6.

3 The Labor World, 25 September 1920.

4 The Labor World, 19 July 1919.

ne connaissent que l'éternelle négative,
 qui sont contre tout et ne suggèrent jamais
 rien, qui démolissent toujours sans jamais
 rien édifier, qui insultent, pillent,
 tuent, commettent les pires attentats
 pour atteindre un idéal chimérique

and he stressed the difference between "le vrai trade unioniste" and anarchists who advocated "le désordre, le chaos."¹ Evidently radicals such as those in the O.B.U. were bent on destruction because they believed the present system worthless yet they proposed no concrete alternatives to help emancipate the workers.²

In Montreal, the O.B.U. had organized a small group of radical supporters into a precarious and short lived unit. In addition, there were "silent members" who would not openly proclaim their support. Most of these were immigrants; very few were francophones. For the most part the O.B.U. was an anglophone organization in Quebec. A good deal of its literature was printed in English although it did manage to publish a bilingual newspaper.³

In response to the O.B.U., the MTLC acknowledged that closer co-operation between different craft unions within the same industry was sometimes necessary but suggested that this should be accomplished through a central body

1 The Labor World, 11 August 1917.

2 The Labor World, "Smashing Blow At 'One Big Union,'" 3 May 1919, p. 3.

3 Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, pp. 161-164.

on which each trade had representation, a suggestion that did not threaten the existing form of craft organization. As to the O.B.U. itself, the majority of the MTLC delegates disapproved of it for dividing labor and thus aiding the exploitation of workers by the capitalists.¹

Although radicals were but a tiny minority in the MTLC, they were a proportionately much larger group in the Montreal section of the Labor Party. Consequently it was there that there was a significantly close fight between the supporters of the O.B.U. and of the craft unions. The whole issue arose in June 1919 when a motion was proposed to approve of the O.B.U. in principle. As a Labor Party member, Francq was at this meeting and spoke up against this motion. He warned that by endorsing the industrial policy of the O.B.U., the Labor party was taking a stand in opposition to the MTLC which had rejected the O.B.U. a few weeks earlier by a vote of 73 to 3. Despite this plea the resolution was passed by a vote of 30 to 21. Because it was supported by most of the socialists and opposed by most of the trade unionists, this endorsement became a major point of contention in what was a running battle between the two factions. Editorials in The Labor World soon denounced the socialists in the Labor party:

1 The Labor World, "Smashing, Blow At 'One Big Union,'" 3 May 1919, p. 3.

De quel droit, des délégués socialistes qui, en général, ne sont pas membres d'aucune union ouvrière, dictent-ils aux trade-unionistes le genre d'organisation ouvrière qu'ils devront avoir? 1

Some union locals threatened to withdraw their delegates from the Labor party unless it changed its position.² Francq did not give up; he returned to the point in August 1919; he warned that Labor Party "doit se soumettre ou se démettre." He asked belligerently which organization best represented the aspiration of workers in Montreal:

Est-ce le Parti Ouvrier, est-ce la O.B.U. avec leur dangereuse doctrine de tout détruire d'abord, de mettre tous à terre, sans se rendre compte si jamais on sera capable de rien relever? Ou bien est-ce le Conseil des Métiers et du Travail, le Congrès des Métiers et du Travail, la Fédération Américaine du Travail et les unions ouvrières qui, par un travail incessant, mesuré, pondéré, sage tendent non pas à détruire, mais à construire et à reconstruire encore. L'espoir d'arriver un jour à faire régner la justice, et avec elle, la plus grande somme de bonheur possible pour la classe des travailleurs? 3

The issue unfortunately threatened to further divide the working class: It was reported that in the MTLC "c'est la lutte des modérés contre les extrémistes qui commence".⁴

1 The Labor World, "La 'One Big Union,'" 7 June 1919, p. 1.

2 The Labor World, "Chronique Ouvrière Locale," 16 August 1919, p. 1.

3 The Labor World, 16 August 1919.

4 The Labor World, "Au Conseil de Métiers et du Travail," 20 September 1919, p. 1.

The question was finally settled however in favour of the supporters of craft unionism at the provincial convention of the Labor Party where moderate trade unionists were in the majority. After an animated debate involving twenty speakers, by a vote of 78 to 54, the Montreal section was censored for having endorsed the doctrines of the O.B.U.¹

The O.B.U. represented a considerable threat to the TLC executive: in the first place by its industrial strategy it threatened to undermine the principle of craft unionism on which the Internationals were built; in practical terms it represented an important secessionist movement.

The use of the general strike for political ends threatened the collective bargaining process because it meant that contracts were broken. Contracts had to be respected because they preserved the gains won by organized Labor. Moreover a general strike threatened to polarize capital and labor and to provoke an open confrontation. Franco was horrified at the position of the O.B.U. on class struggle which he took to be revolutionary. He believed that the class struggle had to be contained within well defined limits that kept the struggle non-violent and he wanted social and political change accomplished through traditional processes and institutions.

¹ The Labor World, "La Convention du Parti Ouvrier," 22 November 1919, p. 2.

CATHOLIC UNIONS

In 1919 the International unions were threatened not only in the west by a radical movement like the O.B.U. but also by a conservative one in the form of the Catholic unions. As World War One began, the catholic clergy and especially l'Action Sociale Catholique began to organize Catholic unions.¹ At first these efforts were not very successful but in 1917 under the influence of Abbé Fortin, who later became the general chaplain of the Confédération des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada, most national unions in Quebec, representing a third of all provincial membership, agreed to become explicitly Catholic unions.² As of 1918 Catholic unions began to meet annually in conference.³ In 1920 a congress was arranged for the next year in Hull where the constitution of the Confederation of Catholic Workers of Canada (CCWC) was to be drawn up.⁴ Between 1916 and 1921 the number of Catholic unions rose from 23 to 110, an increase due largely to the conversion of the national unions and to an expanding economy that favoured unionization in the years from 1917 to 1920.⁵

1 Jacques Rouillard, Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1979, pp. 7-10.

2 Ibid., pp. 205-8, 216.

3 Ibid., pp. 216-219.

4 Ibid., pp. 218-219.

5 Ibid., pp. 214-216.

Until late in 1919, Franco paid little attention to the Catholic unions attacking them only occasionally in the Labor World during its first years of publication. But in that year, many of the Catholic newspapers in Quebec, such as Le Droit, L'Action Catholique, Le Devoir and L'Action Française, actively participated in a propaganda campaign for Catholic unionism. In April and May 1919, Henri Bourassa published a series of articles in Le Devoir criticizing the International unions.¹ L'Action Sociale Catholique claimed that the turning point in public and worker acceptance of their criticism of the International unions came in July and August 1919, when supporters of Catholic unionism declared some strikes by International unions to be unjust and immoral.² Catholic newspapers tried to discredit the Internationals by giving wide publicity to some acts of violence that had occurred.³ One strike was particularly significant because an employer and a Catholic union combined to break an International local at the Davie shipyards in Lauzon.⁴ Responding to attacks at its annual meetings in September 1919, the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada set up a special committee

1 Ibid., p. 224.

2 Deux grèves de l'"Internationale" aux chantiers Davie et à la Dominion Textile, Québec, L'Action sociale catholique, 1919, p. III cited in The Labor World, 15 November 1919; and L'Action Catholique, 13 août 1919.

3 The Labor World, "Autour d'une question de principe," 16 August 1919, p. 1.

4 Rouillard, Les syndicats nationaux, p. 286.

to deal with rival union movements.¹ It was only two months later in November 1919 that Francq began to counter attack. Meanwhile the Labor World and its editor were becoming the subject of acrimonious attacks in L'Action Catholique of Quebec city, the organ of L'Action Sociale Catholique. In addition the National and Catholic Unions of Montreal (NCUM), established in July 1920, published twenty-five tracts written by both Church and lay personalities with a total distribution of 250,000.²

The main criticism in L'Action Catholique and these tracts was that the International unions were unpatriotic and anti-Catholic. In one of the tracts, Alfred Charpentier, who later became president of the Confederation of Catholic Trade Unions of Canada, asserted that French-Canadians belonged to International unions because they lacked self-confidence: "To ask the Americans for their approbation in matters quite personal to any union, such as strikes, working agreement and organization; to make those Americans an annual gift of nearly a million dollars, is to show dependance and even slavery." French-Canadians ought to free themselves by administering their own affairs

1 Ibid., p. 268.

2 Harold Logan, The History of Trade Union Organization in Canada, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1928, p. 328. Labor Canada has English translations of all 25 tracts.

in Catholic unions.¹ Another spokesman for the NCUM, G. Hogue, objected to the attitude of International unions towards the French language:

Les ouvriers canadiens aiment leur langue
et ils sont fatigués de la voir méprisée
et foulée aux pieds dans un grand nombre
d'unions américaines. 2

Gérald Tremblay, the secretary of the NCUM claimed that "by the fact that they (the International unions) are neutral, they are anti-Christian and anti-Catholic."³ L'Action Sociale Catholique asserted that "la plupart des agents de la Fédération américaine - du moins, dans nos milieux - se montrent violemment anti-cléricaux."⁴ It also argued that International unions threatened the economic interests of both workers and employers. Presumably American companies by making concessions in their plants in the United States could bribe International unions to order a strike in a local of one of their Canadian competitors.⁵ International unions were condemned for advocating the class struggle: "Les Unions internationales,

1 Alfred Charpentier, La question ouvrière, tract No. 5, Montreal, National and Catholic Unions of Montreal, 1920, p. 1.

2 G. Hogue, La question ouvrière, tract No. 3, cited in The Labor World, 9 October 1920.

3 Gerald Tremblay, La question ouvrière, tract No. 18.

4 Deux grèves de l'Internationale, p. IV, cited in The Labor World, 15 November 1919.

5 Ibid., p. V, cited in The Labor World, 15 November 1919.

c'est la révolution en germe."¹ It considered that the TLC "prône des réformes dangereuses frisant le socialisme et contraires, parfois, aux enseignements de l'Eglise."²

The Catholic unions appealed to the patriotism of Canadian workers, offering autonomy and opposing the foreign intervention of the AFL.

Francq became irate when accused of being anti-national:

Je comprends parfaitement que ces messieurs ne trouvent pas agréable que je répudie avec preuve à l'appui leurs avancés; mais de là à dire que je fais oeuvre anti-nationale en défendant les unions internationales, il y a une marge et une grande. 3

He asserted that he has proven himself patriotic not only to his native Belgium but:

depuis plus de trente ans que j'habite le Canada, je puis me flatter également d'avoir servi mon pays d'adoption avec toute l'âme et l'ardeur d'un fervent apôtre de la démocratie et du fair play britannique. 4

It was "anti-patriotique d'isoler l'ouvrier canadien-français catholique" at a time when efforts were being made on an international scale through the League of Nations to promote international legislative measures to improve the condition of the working class.⁵

1 Ibid., p. 30.

2 Ibid., cited in The Labor World, 15 November 1919.

3 The Labor World, 6 November 1920.

4 The Labor World, 16 October 1920.

5 The Labor World, 1 November 1919.

Francq refuted the charge that Canadian locals were subservient. When the Catholic unions maintained that only local leaders could understand the needs of Canadian workers, Francq replied that this was precisely the reason Canadian International locals had complete autonomy to decide on the agreements they accepted. At the same time there were advantages to belonging to a large organization because on this continent "les ouvriers ont les mêmes problèmes à résoudre et travaillent pour les mêmes compagnies industrielles."¹ To the allegation that Canadian International locals sent large sums of money to the United States without getting any equivalent in return, Francq retorted that they received sick benefits, unemployment insurance, old age pensions and death benefits, all much more valuable than the amount they paid out.² To the charge that the International unions failed to protect the rights of the French language, Francq replied that this was a lie, that the French language was honored in the International unions. To prove his point he explained that in cases of disputes involving different interpretations of the French and English texts of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council (MTLC) constitution, the French language took

1 The Labor World, 9 October 1920.

2 The Labor World, 23 October 1920.

precedence.¹ Catholic union spokesmen also accused the International Unions of anti-clericalism. L'Action Catholique tried to prove this charge by citing such offending passages from The Labor World such as this one written under the pseudonym Pierre Ponce:

Contrairement aux unions internationales... les unions catholiques sont... mesquinement fermées à tous ceux qui ne font pas aveuglément acte de soumission, en toutes choses, à nos autorités religieuses. 2

L'Action Catholique claimed that:

Quand au but poursuivi par l'écrivain, il est bien visible: semer la défiance et la haine contre les autorités religieuses coupables d'après l'organe de M. Francq, d'exiger des ouvriers une soumission aveugle, de leur enlever toute liberté de penser par eux-mêmes et les "mener indûment par le bout du nez." 3

Francq began his rebuttal by denying charges of anti-clericalism. He challenged L'Action Catholique to name the organizers of the AFL unions in Quebec who were supposed to be violently anti-clerical.⁴ His position had always been that any member was free to hold the religious convictions of his choice but "les unions internationales,

1 The Labor World, 9 October 1920.

2 The Labor World, "Choses et autres", 4 October 1919, p. 1, cited in L'Action Catholique, 6 December 1919, p. 1.

3 L'Action Catholique, 6 December 1919, p. 1.

4 The Labor World, 13 December 1919.

de par leurs constitutions et leurs règlements, ne peuvent discuter - ni ne discutent jamais - les questions religieuses."¹

Francq pointed out that partisans of Catholic unionism maintained that religious neutrality in workers associations was an error condemned by the Church. They even claimed that labor organizations had to be Catholic because "c'est la volonté de l'Eglise. L'Eglise veut et la volonté de l'Eglise, c'est la volonté de Dieu."² If this was so, why had Catholic unions left the field to the International unions for half a century?³ He ridiculed the newly found concern for organized labor on the part of "tous ces dignes acolytes - tant supérieurs qu'inférieurs - qui... condamnaient impitoyablement toute tentative d'organisation" until they started their own movement.⁴ Catholic leaders were taking advantage of the difficult struggle of the International unions to overcome the indifference of many workers to trade union organization, the hostility of employers and the refusal of government to accept the right of trade unions to exist.⁵

1 The Labor World, 5 August 1916.

2 G. Hogue, La question ouvrière, tract no. 3, cited in The Labor World, 9 October 1920.

3 The Labor World, 3 July 1920.

4 The Labor World, 11 September 1920.

5 The Labor World, 6 November 1920.

In the United States, American Catholic cardinals considered it an honour to open AFL conventions with a prayer. Only in Quebec were the International unions condemned by the Church. Mgr. Bruchesi not only refused to preside over the inauguration of the annual TLC convention in Montreal in 1920, but he also recommended that Catholic workers leave the AFL. Yet the consequences of following Bruchesi's council would be for workers to:

renier la forme d'organisation qui leur a permis d'améliorer leur salaire et leurs conditions de travail pour être ensuite livrés sans défense et sans protection à la rapacité de certains patrons. 1

Francq disagreed with the tenent of Rerum Novarum that "the social question...is above all a moral and religious question."² While acknowledging the Pope's infallibility in matters of Catholic doctrine, he denied that this authority extended over industrial relations.³ Because their objective was to protect "les intérêts spirituels d'abord et matériels ensuite," Catholic unions threatened the effectiveness of the Labor movement in

1 The Labor World, 3 July 1920.

2 Rerum Novarum, cited in Edmond Lacroix, La question ouvrière, tract No. 1.

3 The Labor World, 12 October 1918.

social and economic matters that ought to be its primary concern.¹ The fact was that to combine religious with socio-economic questions "c'est courir à un échec certain et manquer son but, car tôt ou tard l'un des deux intérêts prendra le dessus."²

Francq distinguished between the clergy in its function of religious leadership and its individual members engaged in temporal such activities such as working in trade unions. In such a role, a priest had no more right to respect than any other individual doing the same thing:

Quand un prêtre descend de son piédestal sacerdotal et se lance dans la mêlée, nous nous reconnaissons le droit et le devoir de lui tomber dessus tout comme le plus commun des mortels. 3

He reproached the Catholic clergy for attempting "sous couvert de religion" to assume an authority over the Labor movement to which they had no right:

Ce à quoi nous nous objectons c'est que des hommes profitent de l'emprise qu'ils ont sur le peuple, du fait de leur caractère sacerdotal, pour violenter les consciences, dénigrer d'une manière scandaleuse tous ceux qui ont l'audace de différer d'opinion avec eux sur une question économique. 4

1 The Labor World, 5 August 1916.

2 The Labor World, 28 August 1920.

3 The Labor World, 16 October 1920.

4 The Labor World, 1 November 1919.

He insisted that the Labor World attacked neither Catholicism nor Catholic priests when they carried out their religious functions:

Notre politique est claire et franche sur ce point, nous laissons à chacun pleine et entière liberté de croire et de professer n'importe quelle doctrine ou religion: nous n'attaquons ni l'Eglise, ni les dogmes, ni les membres du clergé dans leur caractère de prêtre. 1

Defending the International unions from Catholic attacks was only part of Francq's task. He also believed it necessary to demonstrate that Catholic unions were unable to protect the interest of the workers: they provided poor leadership, divided workers along religious and linguistic lines, and denied the doctrine of the class struggle.

Francq denounced the inexperience of ecclesiastics in labor relations: "On peut être un très saint abbé et un parfait ignorant en économie politique et sociale."² When the Semaine Sociale in June 1920 was held to promote Catholic unions, he observed that the speakers were hardly in a position to give advice on salaries and working conditions since they had never labored "à la sueur de leur front." These "théoriste[s] amateur[s] were ignorant of all the "sacrifices, toutes les privations, tous les déboires" of a

1 The Labor World, 16 October 1920.

2 The Labor World, 27 July 1920.

worker's life. Since most were members of the clergy, few of them even knew what it was to raise a family. They knew their subject matter at second hand and failed to understand the vast difference between theory and practice in social and economic questions.¹ Consequently, they produced "des gaffes monumentales" when they tried to tend to the spiritual and material needs of workers at the same time.² Francq repeatedly pointed to cases where a strike had been mismanaged by these leaders who did not have a "sens pratique des affaires."³

Moreover, that Catholic unions were subservient to the religious authorities was harmful to their own workers. The veto given to the Bishop in the constitution of the Corporation Ouvrière Catholique of Three Rivers might not only violate the conscience of these workers, it also endangered their material welfare. This was the case in 1918 when the Archbishop of Montreal ordered Catholic teachers to desist in their attempts to form a union.⁴ Francq contrasted the Catholic unions whose members were forced to accept the advice "tout paternels de leur aumonier,"

1 The Labor World, 3 July 1920.

2 The Labor World, 31 January 1920.

3 The Labor World, 9 July 1921.

4 The Labor World, 7 December 1918.

with the International unions where the members were "les maîtres souverains."¹ Because its membership made its own decisions, the International unions were superior: "Après tout, il n'y a que celui qui souffre qui sent son mal."²

One of the most odious aspects of Catholic unions was that they were open only to Catholics: "c'est le principe de diviser les forces économiques ouvriers suivant leur religion que nous combattons."³ Catholic unions based their appeal on prejudices rather than on reason, especially when they invoked "les haines...de religion."⁴ Moreover divisions along religious lines would encourage conflict between different groups in society and might even bring a return to religious strife at a time when Canada was just recovering from the bad effects of the conflict over Regulation 17 in Ontario and conscription.⁵ Catholic unions might create anti-Catholic feeling. One of the resolutions of the Congress of Catholic Unions in 1920 called on municipalities in Quebec to oblige contractors to give preference to the Catholic unions. Although they asserted that this step would ensure industrial

1 The Labor World, 9 October 1920.

2 The Labor World, 3 July 1920.

3 The Labor World, 2 July 1921.

4 The Labor World, 10 September 1921.

5 The Labor World, 2 October 1920.

prosperity by improving relations between employers and employees, it might begin "une véritable guerre de religion." Francq asserted that "il faut ne rien connaître de la formation ethnique du Canada pour oser avancer une théorie pareille... ou être atteint d'aliénation mentale."¹

Already in 1920 a Protestant trade union movement was being formed in Ontario to counter that of the Catholics in Quebec.² Although a majority in Quebec, Catholics were but minorities in other provinces and would be victimized in any trade union conflict over religious issues.

Since Catholic and non-Catholic workers all had the same material interests, they should work together "dans une vaste fraternité universelle" to protect their common interests:

Ouvriers...
de toute croyance vous tous qui travaillez
ensemble, qui avez les mêmes besoins et
les mêmes peines, groupez-vous, unissez-
vous, soyez solidaires les uns des autres
et votre sort à tous améliorera. 3

The advantage of the International unions was that they were open to all workers:

seules les unions internationales neutres
peuvent protéger efficacement les ouvriers
dans notre pays et notre province peuplés

1 The Labor World, 24 July 1920.

2 The Labor World, 2 October 1920.

3 Ibid.

comme ils le sont d'ouvriers catholiques,
d'ouvriers protestants, d'ouvriers juifs,
de croyants et d'incroyants. 1

He also accused the supporters of Catholic unions of being inconsistent; they objected to labor principles of internationalism but supported those of religion.²

Francq questioned the sincerity of the Catholic unions' support of workers' solidarity. By refusing to celebrate Labor Day in Quebec city with members of the International unions, they were driving a wedge between workers of the same nationality and religion.³ Again what solidarity was to be gained by dividing workers into Protestant and Jewish unions?⁴ Moreover if Catholic unions were given representation on government commissions then Protestant and Jewish workers were equally entitled to such representation.⁵ Since it was likely that there would always be workers of different religions and languages in Canada, "il est inadmissible que d'après votre système de groupements divisés d'après les opinions religieuses et de race" that there could be solidarity between workers.⁶ Francq believed only the form of trade union-

1 The Labor World, 16 October 1920.

2 The Labor World, 11 June 1921.

3 The Labor World, "Chronique québécoise," 3 April 1920, p. 1.

4 The Labor World, 2 October 1920.

5 The Labor World, 7 February 1920.

6 The Labor World, 20 October 1920.

ism that he advocated could work in a pluralistic society.

The Labor World criticized the supporters of Catholic unions for being anti-semitic. Julien St. Michel, one of the paper's columnists stated that Catholic unions "a la haine des Juifs, qu'elle ostracise en certains quartiers, comme dans Saint-Louis, alors qu'un des articles de notre credo démocratique est la fraternité universelle."¹

When L'Action Catholique mistakenly insinuated that Franco was Jewish, he responded that if he were he "n'aurait pas honte de ce que je suis indépendamment de ma volonté".²

La Tribune of Saint-Hyacinthe later printed a violently anti-semitic attack on Samuel Gompers, the leaders of the AFL. Franco replied: "Eh bien, quoi, le président de la Fédération Américaine du Travail est juif, et puis après; quel mal y a-t-il à cela?"³

The Labor World also attacked the supporters of Catholic unionism for favoring employers in the struggle between capital and labor. Some correspondents such as Pierre Broquille claimed the Catholic unions were "dévoués à l'élément patronal" and deliberately wanted to disorganize the working class in the interest of employers.⁴

When the Archbishop of Montreal dissuaded teachers from

1 The Labor World, 23 October 1920.

2 The Labor World, 6 December 1919.

3 The Labor World, 21 August 1920.

4 The Labor World, "En garde les désorganiseurs de la classe ouvrière," 30 April 1921, p. 1.

forming even a Catholic union, Francq concluded that he was not just against the Internationals but that he opposed any union. The Archbishop

n'est pas opposé aux unions internationales parce qu'elles sont internationales mais parce qu'elles ont pour but unique de procurer aux faibles un moyen de défense contre le fort, quel qu'il soit, en les groupant, en les unissant. 1

The effect of Catholic unions was to divide the Labor movement and the inter-union rivalry worked "pour le plus grand bien du patronat et des capitalistes qui se réjouiront du succès de votre compagne de division."² Francq often made such accusations when a Catholic union accepted a poor settlement in a dispute. He was "convaincu[...] que les syndicats confessionnels (autrement dit les syndicats jaunes) partout où ils existent n'ont jamais réussi à améliorer d'une manière générale la situation de la classe ouvrière."³ In July 1920, he blamed a Catholic Union for accepting an agreement that favoured the 'Master Plumbers' Association. It specified an open shop and left worker classification and the conditions of apprenticeship entirely to the discretion of the employer. Although the agreement recognized a definite number of hours as the working day,

1 The Labor World, 7 December 1918.

2 The Labor World, 2 October 1920.

3 The Labor World, 1 November 1919.

employees of any shop could voluntarily work longer at a single rate of pay. He described this last clause as "a bondman's change from the tyranny of another to the despotism of himself," and called the Catholic union an "employers' union."¹ Francq wondered whether employers did not deliberately exploit the members of a Catholic union "plus que de raison" because they knew it was weak.² It was certain that employers favoured Catholic unions because "ils ne sont guère exigeants dans leurs demandes," and accepted lower rates of pay.³ Thus both Protestant and Catholic employers favoured Catholic unions, because as capitalists they were not influenced "par des questions de sentiment national ou religieux."⁴

Catholic unions rejected class struggle and advocated that capital and labor "harmoniously unite and mutually keep themselves on a perfect balance."⁵ Unlike the Internationals, they insisted that the employers had rights and that the workers had duties. The constitution of the Corporation Ouvrière Catholique of Three Rivers acknowledged the right of proprietors to employ whomever they wished and placed the responsibility for

1 The Labor World, 10 July 1920.

2 The Labor World, 9 July 1921.

3 The Labor World, 11 June 1921.

4 The Labor World, "Why a National Catholic Union," 17 September 1921, p. 1; 1 November 1919.

5 Rerum Novarum, cited in Edmond Lacroix, La question ouvrière, tract. No. 6.

strikes on the workers: "En effet, elle autorise le patron à congédier ses ouvriers, mais elle interdit aux ouvriers de se mettre en grève."¹ Commenting on one of the tracts issued by the NCUM, Francq argued that, according to Alfred Charpentier, the Catholic unions were created "pour rappeler à l'ouvrier qu'il a des devoirs à remplir et qu'il doit accepter le fardeau des responsabilités qu'en découlent directement." He reminded Charpentier that to speak to workers about their duties without mentioning their rights would be logical "dans la bouche d'un capitaliste," but:

Mais vous ne savez donc pas, pompier, qu'il n'y a pas de devoirs sans droits... et si vous le savez, pourquoi alors ne leur parlez-vous pas de leurs droits et ne laissez-vous pas aux capitalistes le soin de leur parler de leurs devoirs, ils ne l'oublieront pas, eux, soyez-en certain!

Francq contrasted the substance of Charpentier's tract with the position of the International unions who fought for the rights of labor and he advised the Catholic unions to do likewise; "battez-vous, lutez, souffrez même pour obtenir leur réalisation."²

Unlike the leaders of the Catholic unions, Francq believed that there was a class struggle:

1 The Labor World, 12 October 1918.

2 The Labor World, 23 October 1920.

tant que l'état social actuel règnera, tant qu'il y aura des exploiters et des affameurs, tant qu'un petit nombre de jouisseurs contrôleront et les gouvernements et la grande masse du peuple, la lutte de classe existera.

The struggle on the part of the worker was necessary because of capitalist exploitation, although "on peut chercher à la rendre plus ou moins pacifique, on peut réussir à atténuer ses effets désastreux."¹

By improving the condition of the working class the International unions became a stabilizing force in society because they reduced the severity of the class struggle. Once workers were "satisfait et heureux" they would become supporters of the existing social order. The International unions participated in the struggle but did not seek to challenge the social order:

elle fait sentir son action bienfaisante immédiatement sans chercher à résoudre des problèmes dont la solution - tout en étant désirable - n'est pas d'une indispensabilité immédiate et sans se complaire dans des chimères ou des utopies, ne reconnaissant ni race, ni religion, elle n'a qu'un but et qu'une ambition: améliorer le sort de la classe ouvrière tel qu'il existe sous l'ordre social actuel. 2

By dividing the Labor movement, the Catholic unions played "le jeu des capitalistes"; still they attracted

1 The Labor World, 28 August 1920.

2 Ibid.

workers who otherwise would not join a union and who were "refractaire à toute idée d'organisation."¹ Francq saw this as a positive aspect of their organizations. All unionized workers participated in the struggle against exploitation regardless of the form of organization to which they belonged: "Pour nous, unions nationales et syndicats catholiques remplissent un rôle et préparent la classe ouvrière à se solidariser pour la lutte de classe." When threatened with misery workers would unite in a common cause despite the differences of organization. Even the members of the clergy who were working with organized labor were undergoing an apprenticeship in social questions that would lead them "par l'expérience ainsi acquise, non seulement à reconnaître qu'il y a une lutte de classe mais à y prendre part." In 1920 the clergy was already denouncing industrial abuses it had hardly noticed a few years earlier. Although clerics denied the class struggle in theory, they were clearly accepting it in practice.²

Francq thought that a strike by an International union was more effective than that of a Catholic union. Since the Catholic one had too few members to build sufficient strike funds to win industrial disputes, the In-

1 Ibid., 23 October 1920.

2 The Labour World, 28 August 1920.

ternationals won higher wages.¹ The Catholic unions would lose all their strikes while "les membres des Unions internationales (seront) soutenus dans leurs grèves par l'appui financier de tous les membres, de toutes les unions de tout le continent américain."²

The Catholic unions accused the Internationals of declaring strikes without considering whether they were just or not.³ They insisted that workers ought to avoid striking through conciliation and voluntary arbitration.⁴ Still Francq thought the Internationals were more responsible in this matter. The only time Canadian International locals experienced the authority of their American headquarters was that the latter's approval was necessary before a work stoppage could be undertaken to ensure that it was done responsibly and effectively:

les quartiers généraux n'intervenant que dans la procédure à suivre pour déclarer une grève exigeant que tous les moyens de conciliation soient épuisés avant d'avoir recours à cette arme suprême des travailleurs qu'est la grève. 5

In contrast, Catholic unions were more strike prone:

1 The Labor World, 27 November 1920.

2 Ibid.

3 Gérald Tremblay, La question ouvrière, tract. No. 18.

4 J.B. Beaudoin, La question ouvrière, tract. No. 8.

5 The Labor World, 23 October 1920.

tant que les Syndicats Catholiques seront conduits par des gens inexpérimentés...ils seront...entraînés à faire plus de grèves que les Unions Internationales qui sont généralement dirigées par des gens qu'un entraînement spécial a rendus plus aptes à régler les disputes industrielles. 1

In July 1921 he remarked that the Catholic unions were engaged in a surprisingly large number of industrial disputes;² despite their smaller membership they had had more that year than the International unions.³ He claimed that the Catholic unions appeared to use this "mesure draconienne,"⁴ "à propos de tout et à propos de rien."⁵ For three and a half days in June 1921 there was a strike by 300 members of the Union nationale et catholique des policiers et des pompiers of Quebec city.⁶ Not satisfied with the recommendations of an arbitration board, the members of this union ignored the advice of their chaplain and called a strike. Evidently the existence of Catholic unions did not prevent strikes.⁷ The strike of 600 asbestos miners at Thetford Mines in October and November 1920 was another occasion where the members of a Catholic union

1 The Labor World, 9 July 1921.

2 The Labor World, 2 July 1921.

3 The Labour Gazette, September 1921, p. 1133.

4 The Labor World, 9 July 1921.

5 The Labor World, 2 July 1921.

6 Rouillard, Les Syndicats Nationaux, p. 243.

7 The Labor World, 9 July 1921.

were "mal conseillés, mal conduits et probablement trahis".¹ It had been called before all means of conciliation were exhausted, the union having refused an offer of arbitration from the provincial Department of Labour. Francq reported that the abbé, who led the strike was reputed to have negotiated with the company behind the backs of the workers. To make matters worse, it appears that there was no strike fund.² The strikers returned to work after a month for the same conditions as existed before the strike.³

Supported by the Church, Catholic unions had powerful spokesmen in several Catholic papers that championed their cause. Consequently, Francq was compelled to embark on a counter offensive. He argued that dividing workers who shared similar economic interests along religious, racial or national lines worked to the advantage of employers. Moreover Catholic unions were less successful because their leaders were inexperienced, did not understand the class struggle and placed spiritual values above material interests.

Each trade union movement belittled its rival, heralded their approaching collapse and exaggerated the size of their own membership. Abbé Fortin claimed the Internationals were disappearing, while Francq insisted that Catholic unions were "un groupe très restreint d'ouvriers,"

1 The Labour Gazette, December 1920, p. 1606; The Labor World, 27 November 1920.

2 The Labor World, 27 November 1920.

3 The Labour Gazette, December 1920, p. 1606.

who existed largely on paper, or in the imagination of a few "propagateurs enthousiastes."¹ He thought that all workers would eventually join the International unions that best protected them.² In fact neither side won out, although the International unions continued to remain the larger of the two.

Francq ended his active campaign against Catholic unionism late in 1920 after he was flooded with letters complaining that he was disrespectful towards the church and the clergy. La Patrie printed a number of open letters condemning him. It has been suggested that this was part of an organized campaign of intimidation.³ As attacks on both sides became more bitter and Francq warned the Catholic unions of an anti-clerical backlash. The Labor World may have suffered most in the mêlée as the International unions were branded by L'Action Catholique as Bolshevik and Judeo-Masonic organizations.⁴ He acknowledged that it was difficult to attack priests without appearing anti-clerical:

1 The Labor World, 7 February 1920; 4 December 1920.

2 The Labor World, 28 August 1920.

3 By Andr  e Leblanc, "Le monde ouvrier/The Labor World (1916-1926): An Analysis of Thought and A Detailed Index", Unpublished D.E.S. thesis, University of Montreal, fol. 46.

4 These three groups were considered by L'Action Catholique to be intimately tied together and appeals to prejudice against them were effective. See Richard A. Jones, "L'Action Catholique, 1920-1921", in Fernand Dumont et al., Id  ologies au Canada Fran  ais, 1900-1929, Qu  bec, Les Presses de l'Universit   Laval, 1975, pp. 313-344.

il est très difficile sinon impossible de séparer votre caractère religieux de votre caractère d'homme, et en attaquant l'un nous courons fort le risque d'attaquer l'autre auquel nous ne voulons pas toucher. 1

And soon afterwards he warned that:

Il faut être très prudent dans cette campagne, car derrière les Syndicats Catholiques, il y a un pouvoir et une force qu'il est très difficile de séparer du côté matériel de ces organisations. 2

Francq might have continued to attack Catholic unionism had he been given more support from the AFL. In May 1920 at its annual meeting in Ottawa the TLC decided to counter rival union movements with a large scale propaganda campaign.³ Without adequate resources of its own, the TLC expected the AFL to provide 50,000 dollars to finance the project. But when the AFL failed to supply the funds, Francq was so irate that he threatened to leave the International union movement.⁴ He could then only assume that it was best to ignore Catholic unions than to be taxed with anti-clericalism.⁵

1 The Labor World, 6 November 1920.

2 The Labor World, "Tarif et propagande," 20 November 1920, p. 1.

3 The Labor World, "Une commission royale", 23 October 1920, p. 1.

4 Rouillard, Les Syndicats Nationaux, p. 273.

5 Ibid.

les Syndicats catholiques ne peuvent être
un succès à moins que ceux qui les dirigent
connaissent les besoins des ouvriers pour
y avoir passer eux-mêmes, laissons-les
faire ils se détruiront eux-mêmes. 1

After 1920, he published fewer editorials on Catholic unions and made no comment on the formation of the Confederation of Catholic Trade Unions of Canada in September 1921. He now had a central organization to attack but for the most part only restated his position and avoided a tone or comments that might be interpreted as overtly anti-clerical.

After the period of extensive trade union growth that ended around 1920, the Catholic unions threatened the Internationals less. The Labor World became less hostile towards the Catholic unions. This tactic not only helped it avoid being labeled as anti-clerical but it also reflected the fact that the editor now saw some positive aspects in the development of Catholic unions. In the end Francq proved to be less inimical towards them than many other International union leaders. As of 1923 he co-operated with Catholic trade union leaders to present a united trade union front to the government for certain aspects of labor legislation.² In the 1930's, to the annoyance of

1 The Labor World, "Tarif et propagande," 20 November 1920, p. 1.

2 Rouillard, Les Syndicats Nationaux, pp. 275-279.

other International union leaders, he publicly called¹ for a union of the two movements.¹

1 Alfred Charpentier, Les Mémoires d'Alfred Charpentier, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1971, pp. 172-173.

SOCIAL REFORM

One of the principal aims of The Labor World was to advocate legislation favorable to labor. Franco believed strongly in the role of a TLC as a political lobby. Over the years he pursued many causes but the scope of this thesis does not permit us to deal with all of them. Hence it is proposed to look at only three of them: the campaign to stop prohibition demanded attention because of the numerical importance of the articles on the subject; Franco was considered a leading expert on workmen's compensation, the labor reform for which he had the greatest concern during these years and for which he had the highest hopes for imminent attainment; compulsory education was a cause on which Franco has been judged by French Canadian authors, such as Robert Rumilly, to be a socialist and to be anti-clerical¹, and while he wrote few pieces on it in the period under study he was always ready to provide space on the subject for articles by interested groups and fellow journalists.

In the 19th century the prohibition movement in English Canada succeeded in winning some government controls over the liquor trade. The main stumbling block was that prohibition lacked the support of the Catholic church that advocated moderation but not prohibition. After 1900 agitation for prohibition gained momentum outside Quebec as it became one of the

1 Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, vol. XII p. 102.

measures advocated by supporters of the social gospel. The First World War strengthened the argument for prohibition. Reformers worried about the injurious effects of alcohol on the morals of young soldiers and they complained that valuable natural resources needed for the war effort were being wasted to make alcohol. Consequently public opinion began to support the prohibitionists who were able to gain provincial legislation in English Canada banning the production and sale of alcohol. Even in Quebec towards the beginning of the war, the Catholic clergy seems to have changed its mind. Supported by L'Action Catholique, the prohibitionist clergy began their campaign late in 1915.¹ Because of a petition containing the requisite number of signatures, municipalities in Quebec were now compelled to hold a local vote on the matter. As the movement gained momentum through 1916 and 1917 about sixty municipalities chose to prohibit the sale of alcohol in public places.² Towards the latter part of the war, perhaps two thirds of the province, including such centers as Quebec city, Sorel, Three Rivers, Vallyfield and Lachine all voted dry.³ Montreal was the most notable exception to the trend. Still by 1917 Quebec was the only province that had not completely prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages.

The campaign by the clergy during the war was so intense that few anti-prohibitionists cared to oppose them

1 Robert Pumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Vol. XXIII, p. 158.

2 Ibid., Vol. XX, p. 161.

3 The Labor World, 24 February 1917; 6 October 1917; 20 January 1917.

openly. In 1917 during a referendum campaign in Quebec city, Cardinal Bégin had a letter recommending support for prohibition read in the churches of his diocese.² Anti-prohibitionists were denounced from the pulpit and were asked "Etes-vous du parti du diable ou du parti du bon Dieu?" A campaign of assemblies and retreats was organized.³

While Francq favoured moderation in the consumption of alcoholic beverages and called for government restrictions and even the banning of hard liquor, he was adamantly against the prohibition of the sale of beer and wine. In taking this stand he opposed what others regarded as a social reform. And if the number of front page articles and editorials were an indication of a topic's importance, then prohibition was one of the most commanding issues in The Labor World between 1916 and 1919. One reason was that prohibition was a class issue since it imposed restraints on the workers but not the wealthy. Under the local option, municipalities could prohibit the sale of alcohol in public outlets such as retailers and bars. But the law did not prevent the rich, who could afford the shipping costs, from importing any amount for their personal consumption;

1 Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Vol. XXII, p. 159.

2 Ibid., pp. 158-159.

3 Ibid., p. 160.

people with money could stock their cellars.¹ It was only in December 1917 that the federal government forbade the importing of liquor from overseas and the inter-provincial traffic.² In Quebec which never went completely dry, those who could afford to could still travel to wet municipalities to quench their thirst. Nor had the law prevented private clubs from serving alcohol to the wealthy while workers either went without or drank illicit and often dangerous beverages.³ Clearly the rich had access to all the liquor they wished. Another way that prohibition affected the workers adversely was in its economic consequences: "elle aura pour effet de jeter sur le pavé des milliers de travailleurs et de ruiner un grand nombre d'industriels et de commerçants."⁴

Francq also objected to prohibition because it violated individual liberty. Men had a right to drink: "c'est de la folie, pure et simple, de vouloir prohiber à un homme l'usage d'une chose qui lui est absolument personnelle et qui ne fait de tort à personne, pas même à lui-même."⁵ Prohibition meant that the government was coercing the individual worker. If the prohibitionists

1 The Labor World, "Open Ballot an Injustice", 20 May 1916, p. 3.

2 Forbes, "Prohibition," in Prophecy and Protest, p. 75.

3 The Labor World, 21 April 1917.

4 The Labor World, 24 March 1917.

5 The Labor World, 2 December 1916.

succeeded, they would go on to attempt to restrict peoples' rights in other respects.¹ This assault on freedom of choice had to be stopped. He warned that "aucun pays démocratique au monde ne doit adopter une mesure aussi arbitraire."²

Francq objected to prohibition on grounds of principle but in addition he offered pragmatic reasons. In the first place the moderate use of alcohol was beneficial: it was a "stimulant nécessaire au fonctionnement de notre organisme."³ In fact it appeared to be the only effective measure against the Spanish flu that swept over North America in 1918.⁴ Some alcoholic drinks such as beer, cider and wine were also nutritious as foods.⁵

Alcohol was not inherently bad; only its abuse was reprehensible.⁶ It was ridiculous to prohibit it because a few men abused it.⁷ The very nature of humans meant that there would always be a certain amount of drunkenness.⁸ Alcohol had to be used temperately to preserve good health and the ability to work, but Francq distinguished between the self-restraint involved in its moderate consumption and

1 The Labor World, "Tu ne boiras que de l'eau," 31 March 1917, p. 1.

2 The Labor World, 28 April 1917.

3 The Labor World, 1 February 1919.

4 The Labor World, 12 October 1918.

5 The Labor World, 15 September 1917.

6 The Labor World, 28 October 1916.

7 The Labor World, 1 February 1919.

8 The Labor World, 1 July 1916.

compulsion under prohibition. Forbidding its use did not teach men to control their appetites: "entre la prohibition et la tempérance il y a la différence qui existe entre la coercition et l'éducation."¹ Sobriety could not be legislated and would be achieved slowly as people understood its advantages:

Mais cette prohibition, que nous favorisons, est celle qui s'élaborera elle-même dans le cerveau des citoyens qui, intellectuellement élevés par une éducation plus conforme à leurs libres aspirations, trouveront en leur fort intérieur la force de caractère nécessaire qui les dispensera de s'alcooliser outre mesure. Mais nous demeurons résolument opposés à toute législation arbitraire tendant à imposer à notre population une abstinence qu'elle est moralement incapable d'apprécier par suite de la culture intellectuelle et morale notoirement insuffisante dont elle est l'objet de la part de nos éducateurs. 2

Prohibition was an impossible ideal: alcoholic liquor was going to be consumed whether permitted by the law or not. The question was whether it was going to be sold legally or illegally. Rather than stopping the liquor trade, prohibition left it uncontrolled, exposing men to harmful illicit drinking. In fact prohibition actually encouraged alcoholism: "il est parfaitement démontré aujourd'hui que la prohibition est le pire ennemi de la tempérance et de la sobriété."³ Unable to frequent respectable bars, men drank the more potent and vile alcohol served in low illegal dives.

1 The Labor World, 28 October 1916.

2 The Labor World, 29 January 1921.

3 The Labor World, 28 October 1916.

Another consequence of complete prohibition was to discourage the consumption of temperate drinks such as beer and wine.¹ These drinks were less profitable for bootleggers than the stronger alcohol that was more easily produced and being of less bulk was more easily transportable; thus men acquired a taste for hard liquor that was harmful.

Francq stated that:

Notre idéal est la suppression complète et absolue des liqueurs spiritueuses: elles ont causé et causent encore tant de ravages, tant de souffrances, tant de deuils, tant de pleurs, tant de misères. 2

Although against prohibition, The Labor World also consistently demanded that hard liquor be either banned or restricted.

Francq denied the validity of arguments for prohibition based on the war effort. Grain was scarce because profiteers were hoarding it.³ Far from alcoholic drinks being a danger for soldiers, it was one of their few consolations and pleasures. The German and French armies were fighting very efficiently in spite of their daily rations of beer and wine.

1 The Labor World, 1 July 1916.

2 The Labor World, 1 May 1920.

3 The Labor World, 2 June 1917.

In January 1918, the Labor World reported that the federal government threatened to impose prohibition on of Quebec¹ - it could have done so under the War Measures Act. The Catholic Clergy and Protestant associations were also demanding action. Consequently the provincial government was forced to accept prohibition, but Premier Gouin decided that it could come into effect only after a delay of one year.² The government at Quebec defended that delay on the grounds that it could give time for inventories to diminish but it is likely that it hoped that in the mean time the war would end.³ Indeed with the end of the war, some of the reasons for imposing prohibition disappeared and anti-prohibitionists began to urge the government to reconsider its plan.⁴ Public support for prohibition had passed its peak in Quebec. Prominent capitalists such as Lord Thomas Shaughnessey, president of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and Herbert Holt petitioned Mgr Bruchesi to support the sale of beer and wine.⁵ The Catholic clergy became visibly divided over this matter and

1 The Labor World, 19 January 1918. This threat is not mentioned by Rumilly in his Histoire de la Province de Québec.

2 Ibid.

3 Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Vol. XXIII, p. 48.

4 Ibid., Vol. XXIV, pp. 44-45.

5 Ibid., pp. 46-50.

L'Action Catholique ceased to campaign actively for complete prohibition.¹ The Gouin government decided to settle the issue by holding a referendum on whether to allow the sale of beer, wine and cider, and to Francq's great pleasure the result was overwhelmingly in favour of their sale.²

The 1919 law limited the right to sell spiritous liquor for medicinal, scientific and industrial purposes to twenty-five authorized outlets. Unfortunately this measure was ignored as taverns sold hard liquor openly and even the twenty-five authorized sellers abused their privilege and distributed alcohol to anyone. Francq wondered whether there ought not to be another referendum on the proposition that hard liquor be completely outlawed.³ Then again he hoped the government might take over the sale of hard liquor itself. A provincial monopoly would ensure the purity of the liquor, facilitate control of its traffic and provide more public revenues.⁴ In fact in 1921 the new Taschereau administration created a Liquor Board with exclusive control over all alcoholic beverages. While

1 Ibid., pp. 47-51; The Labor World, 12 April 1919.

2 Rumilly, Ibid., Vol. XXV, p. 96; The Labor World, 1 May 1920.

3 The Labor World, 1 May 1920.

4 Ibid., 1 February 1919.

considering the sale of hard liquor "un mal," Franco believed that government control was the best way to minimize any harmful effects and he applauded the creation of the new Board.¹ He had always opposed restrictions on the sale of beer and wine but hard liquor was another matter. It was true that self-restraint was the only effectual form of temperance: "il n'y a qu'à mettre ces citoyens en état de le faire et c'est l'éducation seule qui en aura le dernier mot."² It was to help persuade people to use restraint that government controls over hard liquor were necessary.

The issue of free and compulsory education in Quebec dated from the beginning of the century. As the province became more urban and industrial, many reformers began to complain that the work force was not educated enough to meet the new demands being made on it. The fact was that Catholic children did not spend much time in school. Only twenty-five percent reached the fourth year as against fifty percent in the Quebec Protestant schools, and only one percent attained the eighth year as against eight percent of the Protestant children. One reason for this dismal situation was that education was voluntary; the law did

1 The Labor World, 29 January 1921.

2 Ibid., "The New Liquor Law," p. 3.

not require Quebec parents to send their children to school. This fitted in with the church doctrine that education was a parental responsibility. Moreover the Church hierarchy believe that compulsory education would be the first step in a contest between the Church and the state over control of education.

So strong was their conviction that they had forced the Liberal premier Lormer Gouin in 1905 to retreat from some first tentative attempts at educational reform.

Free and compulsory education was part of the platform of principles adopted by the TLC as early as 1898. Subsequently it became a yearly demand.¹ It was a reform that Francq had been demanding for at least a decade through the MTLC.² His support for free and compulsory education was well expressed in his open letter of February 1919 to Premier Gouin.³

Francq believed that children required a minimum of education "dans ce monde qui tend vers le progrès." Speaking on behalf of the whole "population consciente de la province" he described opposition to free and compulsory education as "cette doctrine pitoyable et immorale [qui] choque notre mentalité moderne." There was a moral res-

1 Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959, Montreal, Canadian Social Publication, 1966, p. 82.

2 Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Vol. XII, pp. 101-103.

3 The Labor World, 8 February 1919.

possibility to free children from an ignorance that was imposed upon them by "éteignoirs" who seemed genuinely to value that quality just as they praised the virtues of poverty, and considered "que l'ignorance chez le peuple est une quasi obligation morale." Opponents of free and compulsory education wanted to restrain liberty and prevent progress:

Il fallait que ces éteignoirs paraissent devant vous poussés, nous le répétons, par la même horde de parasites sociaux qui veut nous imposer la prohibition et maintenir la femme dans l'exclavage domestique, tout comme si cette dernière était un animal inférieur uniquement destiné à la reproduction, à la cuisine et à la lessive.

Apart from those who profited from mass ignorance, opposition to compulsory education could come only from people who did not understand the value of teaching, being themselves the product of a system that discouraged learning. Many farmers opposed it because it deprived them of the labor of their children. Francq denied that they had the right to prevent their children from receiving instruction.¹ It is probable that he agreed with his colleague, Julien St. Michel, who denounced the exploitation of children by

¹ The Labor World, 8 February 1919.

their parents who sent their children to work in factories and shops at as early as age as possible so that they could contribute to the family income.¹ The International unions were accused by supporters of Catholic unionism, such as Alfred Charpentier, of being a threat to French and Catholic education because of their opposition to clerical control of the school system;² but Francq believed that their opposition to compulsory education was close to decreeing "l'ignorance obligatoire."³ Children had to be equipped for the modern world "pour leur permettre de faire bonne figure dans le monde." Education provided children with knowledge that was "indispensable pour faire bien leur chemin et s'élever au niveau de leurs voisins."⁴

In addition education was an important tool for the formation of good citizens. Gouin's inaction on the question lent credence to the charge that he preferred to keep the people ignorant as this made it easier "de berner" the population. Widespread ignorance was promoted by men who had an interest in creating "des générations de dupes et

1 The Labor World, "L'Instruction Obligatoire," 22 July 1916, p. 1.

2 Rouillard, Les Syndicats Nationaux, pp. 253-254.

3 The Labor World, 17 January 1920.

4 The Labor World, 8 February 1919.

de gogos."¹ Francq rejected the right of an elite to rule over a passive population. Education was necessary if there was to be popular participation in the political life of the country and to make democracy work.

He also argued that popular education would protect the Quebec worker from the virus of revolution:

Il est à craindre qu'avant peu nous verrons se diriger vers nos rives paisibles ce courant révolutionnaire si des mesures urgents ne sont pas prises pour armer les cerveaux de façon, que le moment venu, nos enfants soient prêts à faire face à l'orage qui sévit en Europe et qui, ainsi que la grippe, se propage avec une facilité surprenante.

The Bolshevik menace "ne pouvait prendre racine que dans l'ignorance et la superstition," and from a system that favoured the few at the expense of most of the population. To convince government and capitalists of the need for measures of social reform such as compulsory education, Francq repeatedly argued that they were essential to counter the threat of revolution.²

Parents had a duty "de faire cultiver le cerveau de ses enfants," but if they did not fulfill their responsibility, it became the government's duty to ensure that a minimum of education was provided. The state had to guarantee that parents provided for the "besoins moraux"

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

of their children just as it made sure that they saw to the physical needs of their offspring by threatening negligent parents with imprisonment.¹

Free and compulsory education was only one law that was necessary, Francq had already proposed other measures aimed at ensuring the quality of mass education: he wanted textbooks to be uniform and eventually free; all teachers ought to have a normal school education and be protected by a minimum wage.² Moreover he had long advocated the establishment of a ministry of education and wanted the state rather than the church to control public instruction.³

Free and compulsory education was essential to prepare children to meet the demands of a changing world and for their own betterment. It was necessary if the working class was going to participate in the political life of the country and to equip it to resist the temptation of Bolshevism. Clerical opposition however delayed free and compulsory education until 1941 while a ministry of education was finally established only in the 1960's.

The Quebec Workmen's Compensation Act of 1909 was the first in North America but organized labor soon found

1 Ibid.

2 The Labor World, "Une Convention Qui Fera Epoque," 28 September 1918, p. 1.

3 The Labor World, "National Schools," 21 August 1920, p. 3.

it unsatisfactory.¹ The year after it came into effect the TLC began suggesting amendments.² The Quebec Act had numerous shortcomings and was surpassed by the Ontario Workmen's Compensation Act of 1914 that became a model for compensation legislation across Canada. The Quebec law established a procedure for demanding compensation and fixed a standard scale of payment,³ but injured workers still had to sue their employers through the courts rather than receive compensation automatically.⁴ Trade unions in Quebec wanted Workmen's Compensation to be administered as in Ontario by an independent board rather than through the courts.

Organized labor made repeated attempts to get the Act altered.⁵ Twice, in 1918 and 1920 the government agreed to amend the Act slightly in consultation with representatives from the International unions. In 1920 the provincial Minister of Labor conceded on a number of points: all municipal employees were to be covered; there was to be a minimum indemnity of 1500 dollars in case of death while the maximum was raised from 2500 to 3000; and

1 Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974, p. 125.

2 The Labor World, "Minister Favors Commission," 28 July 1917, p. 3.

3 Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty, p. 125.

4 Michel J. Piva, "The Workmen's Compensation Movement in Ontario," Ontario History, LXVII, I, (March 1975), p. 52.

5 The Labor World, "Nos Délégués à Québec," 25 November 1916, p. 2; 24 February 1917; "Les Compensations Ouvrières," 29 July 1917, p. 2.

the amount of compensation for funeral expenses was to be doubled.

Francq had worked in co-operation with the government as organized labor's representative in drafting the new amendments. For this he was criticized by some readers of The Labor World.¹ A letter in La Minerve wished to know if "M. Francq a représenté les intérêts ouvriers ou s'il les a sacrifiés pour un plat de lentilles." In reply Francq conceded that the amendments were not what he had asked for "parce que nous sommes convaincus que la base même de la loi est inefficace." But when the Minister told him that a new Act was out of the question, Francq suggested amendments many of which were accepted. He applied this proverb to the situation: "Quand on ne peut pas avoir un gros pain on se contente d'un petit."¹

Although he had helped to draft some of the amendments in 1920, Francq remained far from satisfied with the Act. For one thing he disputed the whole philosophical attitude of the government towards compensation legislation. They considered that it was a matter of charity but he regarded it as a right. Consequently, the cost of industrial accidents ought not to be borne by the workers themselves. Injured workers were penalized because their disabilities reduced their purchasing power. Employers should be fully responsible for any accident "qui rédui-

¹ The Labor World, 6 March 1920.

sait ou lui [the worker] faisait perdre son pouvoir de production." The amount of compensation ought to equal the wage a victim received before the accident. It must be borne completely by the employer because of the "principe brutal" that industrial workers were becoming extensions of machines and employers should be responsible for their workers as they were for their machines.¹ Industrial accidents were "un risque inhérent à l'industrie, comme le bris d'une machine ou autre perte due à une cause fortuite."²

While he wanted employers to be completely responsible for industrial accidents, Francq did not expect them to pay compensation directly out of their own pocket. Rather than holding employers individually liable he wanted the Ontario system of state insurance where employers were held collectively responsible.³ In that province a government Compensation Board levied compulsory contributions from all industries for a central accident fund.⁴ But under the existing regulations in Quebec, if an employer went bankrupt, the disabled worker and his family were left to rely on charity. The same risk existed even when

1. Ibid.

2. The Labor World, 8 May 1920.

3. Ibid.

4. Piva, "Workmen's Compensation," Ontario History, p. 53.

an employer had insurance, if the insurance company was unable to pay. By making all of industry collectively responsible for compensation payments, state insurance would provide security to accident victims.¹

Incidentally such legislation would profit employers by saving them both time and money:

Les statistiques prouvent en effet que c'est sous le régime de l'assurance d'Etat que les primes [of insurance] sont les moins élevées, tout en débarrassant le patron de tout ennui, de toute responsabilité et de toute perte de temps inhérente à un procès.

He cited numerous experts on compensation Boards in other provinces who testified that state insurance was less expensive for employers. Private companies had a number of unnecessary expenses: they had to pay dividends, provide salesmen with a commission, and pay salaries to their board of directors. These expenses would be eliminated or greatly reduced under a state insurance scheme.²

Francq also complained that the "indemnité de famine" that were granted in Quebec were inadequate to provide for a family. Compensation paid in Quebec for every category of disability was much less than that provided in Ontario.

1 The Labor World, 8 May 1920.

2 Ibid.

In 1921 a Quebec widow received at best a lump sum that provided an income of about twenty dollars a month while in Ontario the maximum monthly payment might amount to more than sixty five dollars. In case of total permanent disability a worker in Quebec received at best \$675 a year, some \$375 less than a worker who had earned the same wage in Ontario. In addition medical expenses paid by the Workmen's Compensation Board in Ontario came out of the victim's pocket in Quebec.¹

The Quebec Act did not cover all workers. Because it applied only to men who made less than \$1,500 a year at least half the workers in the city of Montreal were not protected.² Victims of industrial diseases did not come under the provisions of the Act as they did in Ontario.

Franco argued that the Quebec law favoured employers and worked against the interests of workers: it was "une loi injuste [qui] laisse le sort de l'ouvrier entre les mains de la bonne ou mauvaise volonté du patron." Employers used two tactics to deal with the victim of an accident. The most common one was to drag the case out through the courts. Although the law did not specifically require the claimant to hire a lawyer, in practice this became in-

¹ The Labor World, 1 October 1921.

² The Labor World, 18 September 1920.

dispensable; consequently part of the compensation went on legal fees. Claims could take from weeks to several years before a decision was handed down; and if the claimant was unable to afford the legal fees during this time his lawyer often withdrew from the case leaving him without much chance of success.¹ If an employee was partially or temporarily disabled it was often not worthwhile for a lawyer to fight the case.² Moreover when a victim sued his employer, he was often fired; and he could not expect to earn as much as before in his next job.

The second tactic was to offer a compromise if the victim surrendered his legal rights. Francq ironically described a "bon patron" as one who dispatched a representative to see the victim soon after the accident to offer him a paltry sum as compensation or to promise secure employment for the rest of his life in exchange for giving up all legal claim against his employers. Such offers often appeared attractive when the alternative was a lengthy court battle. Once a worker renounced his rights the employer often found a way of forcing him to quit by making the promised position intolerable.³ Some companies were so

1 The Labor World, 18 September 1920.

2 The Labor World, 15 October 1921.

3 The Labor World, 18 September 1920.

successful at reducing the amount that they paid that they preferred to compensate directly rather than to pay for insurance.¹ Intimidation by employers often prevented workers from demanding compensation at all. From some of the first comments on this topic in The Labor World, Francq had always advised workers never to compromise and to use the law to its fullest extent.²

To avoid workers having to go through the courts, Francq wanted claims for compensation administered by an independent board. Such a commission of experts made up of men of industry and from organized labor had a better knowledge of the issues at hand than lawyers and judges and could evaluate cases much more quickly.³

Francq was unhappy with workmen's compensation legislation as it stood in 1920 for a number of reasons: its administration by the courts rather than an independent board made it difficult for accident victim to collect, was expensive and created long delays; for from compensating workers and their families completely for their lost income; payments under the Act did not even provide them with a living; and it did not cover all workers nor apply to those suffering from industrial diseases. Francq

1 The Labor World, 8 October 1921.

2 The Labor World, "Saine Décision," 17 June 1916, p. 1.

3 The Labor World, 15 October 1921.

wondered whether it was possible to get the co-operation of employers to press the government to pass a new Act. He may have been encouraged in the belief that the two groups could work together because the Canadian Manufacturers' Association (CMA) had supported the passage of the Ontario Workmen's Compensation Act.¹ It was to interest employers in this reform that he pointed out that it would save them time and expense.

He warned the employers that there were two groups who had an interest in maintaining the present system: insurance companies who would lose a profitable part of their business; and lawyers who would lose a rich source of fees. Lawyers were a particularly powerful group because they had a very large share of representation in the legislature.² Francq stated that:

Pour faire face à cette opposition de deux groupes puissants, il est nécessaire que patrons et ouvriers travaillent de concert et présentent un projet conjoint à la Législature de Québec. Sans cela, nous n'obtiendrons rien. ³

Francq appears to have believed that if these two usually antagonistic groups favoured the same measure then they would be assured of success.

1 Michael Bliss, A Living Profit: Studies in the Social History of Canadian Business, 1883-1911, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974, p. 142.

2 The Labor World, 8 May 1920.

3 The Labor World, 15 October 1921.

In January 1921 the International unions and the Montreal Branch of the CMA attempted such co-operation when they each appointed a committee of three members to examine the issue together. Francq was the representative of the MTLC on the labor committee. The Labor World reported that the Montreal Branch of the CMA was sympathetically inclined toward "the new measure." But manufacturers may have been divided over the issue because towards the end of 1921 the provincial Branch of the CMA voted against supporting a compensation law similar to the one in Ontario.¹ In 1922 the provincial government created a commission of representatives from industry and organized labor to study the matter. Francq represented the International unions.² However its report was only submitted three years later, probably because the business and labor representatives disagreed on some of the main issues. The committee was unanimous that compensation was a right rather than a charity; that levels of compensation needed to be raised and that the Act should cover more workers, including those suffering from industrial diseases. But the employers' representatives adamantly refused to accept the principle of state insurance and the main labor demand

1 Labour Gazette, February 1922, p. 3.

2 Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Vol. XXVIII, p. 155.

for administration by an independent board.¹ Francq was joined by his counterpart from the Catholic unions in demanding these measures which were however delayed several more years because the Taschereau administration would not impose legislation opposed by the employers and the insurance companies.² It was only in 1928 that the Act was amended to transfer administration of the Act from the courts to an independent board and employer resistance delayed the introduction of state insurance and collective responsibility until 1931.³

As a TLC official, advocating social reform was part of Francq's function. He not only pressed his point of view through The Labor World but was seldom absent from the TLC delegation in its annual pilgrimage to Quebec city to lay its demands before the legislature. In 1921 he was the parliamentary representative of the TLC in the provincial capital. He had long been the driving force behind the call by the International unions in Quebec for free and compulsory education and he was their expert on labor legislation such as Workmen's Compensation.

Francq thought that there was always an "élément progressif" in society fighting for unpopular ideas, prin-

1 Ibid., p. 156.

2 Ibid., pp. 157-158.

3 Ibid., Vol. XXX, pp. 21-24; Vol. XXXII, pp. 123-124.

ciples and doctrines. These advanced elements worked long and hard against the resistance of most people to change before persuading public opinion that a particular measure was desirable and beneficial. Their sacrifices were usually forgotten as credit for progressive legislation was claimed by politicians who had often been indifferent or hostile towards the demand until they were forced to act upon them.¹ Here no doubt he was emphasizing the value of his work as a TLC lobbyist. While he complained of the slowness of legislative change, it was typical of Francq that he expressed a measure of satisfaction with any government concession even when he did not get what he wanted, as he did when he called even minor amendments to the Workmen's Compensation Act an improvement.

Francq was always optimistic about the possibility of social reform especially since many of the reforms the labor movement had advocated in the past had been implemented:² "toutes les réformes que le mouvement ouvrier a préconisées depuis plus que vingt ans se réalisent les unes après les autres."³ Social reforms had always been opposed: the measures which had been implemented by the government were at one time considered "comme des utopies, comme des doctrines révolutionnaires, socialistes, destructives de

1 The Labor World, 10 July 1920.

2 The Labor World, 7 June 1919.

3 The Labor World, 10 July 1920.

la morale publique."¹ This was still how many of the labor movement's demands were considered by reactionaries who opposed all progress. Francq believed that most of the demands of organized labor were going to be accepted in the not too distant future in spite of this opposition.² Past accomplishments proved that lobbying was productive.

1 The Labor World, 7 June 1919.

2 The Labor World, 10 July 1920.



POLITICAL ACTION

Lobbying with the government was one way of winning reform; another was by helping to organize workers for political action. But this was not as simple as it sounded. There was always a danger of introducing politics into trade unions. Because workers held a diversity of political opinions, partisan political discussion might disrupt union meetings. By putting aside divisive political issues workers were able to organize successfully for common economic goals.¹ Yet if unions were primarily economic associations they still had social and legislative goals that could not be achieved through economic action. Francq wanted a clear separation between economic and political working class organizations. This was the basis of much of his argument against the endorsement of the One Big Union (O.B.U.) by the Montreal branch of the Labor Party.²

In fact Francq had long supported independent political action to promote the reforms advocated by the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC). As early as 1904 he had become the secretary of the Labor Party of Quebec. In 1906

1 The Labor World, "Nos Assemblées," 25 March, 1916, p. 1.

2 The Labor World, 7 June 1919.

at the Victoria convention of the TLC he proposed the formation of a national labor party.¹ That year, Alphonse Verville, the president of the TLC, was elected in a federal by-election in Montreal. In 1908 Francq himself ran as a Labor Party candidate in Hochelaga riding during a provincial election but lost his deposit.² After 1908 there seems to have been a downturn in the fortunes of labor political action in Quebec. The Labor Party appears to have had some influence in municipal politics but it was never a force in federal or provincial elections. In 1916 it did not even field any candidates in the provincial election of that year.³

By this time Francq was wavering in his faith in independent political action. He began to be more sympathetic to the Liberal party. He maintained that the principles of the labor movement were those of liberalism. Before it had gained power, the Liberal party had defended the workingman.⁴ Unfortunately it had abandoned its traditional position to gain the support of manufacturers.⁵ This was why "la classe ouvrière ne supporte pas le parti libéral comme on pourrait l'espérer;"⁶ this was the reason for the

1 The Labor World, 1 January 1922.

2 Jacques Rouillard, "L'action politique ouvrière, 1899-1915," in Fernand Dumont, et al., Idéologies au Canada Français, 1900-1929, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974, p. 285.

3 The Labor World, "Au Parti Ouvrier," 10 June 1916, p. 2.

4 The Labor World, 15 April 1916.

5 The Labor World, 17 June 1916.

6 The Labor World, 27 April 1916.

founding of the Labor Party whose program was simply the old Liberal party program.¹ The Labor World called on the Liberal Party to adopt a program designed to regain the support of workers.² And in the provincial election of that year it supported the Liberal premier Lomer Gouin as the leader of the party most favorable to organized labor.³

It was the determination of the TLC to enter politics in 1917 that renewed his interest in a labor party. Its convention of that year proposed the formation of a labor party along the lines of the British Labor party. It further recommended the formation of provincial sections that would include all progressive forces including socialists. The provincial TLC in Quebec acted upon these lines almost immediately.⁴ Two Labor candidates ran in the 1917 federal elections in Quebec but polled only a few hundred votes.⁵ But two years later Francq was greatly encouraged by the election of a significant number of labor men in the Ontario provincial election of 1919.⁶ That same year two labor representatives, one a candidate for the Labor Party and the other running on an independent ticket, were

1 The Labor World, 15 April 1916.

2 The Labor World, 27 April 1916; 17 June 1916.

3 The Labor World, 15 April 1916.

4 The Labor World, 10 November 1919.

5 J. Murray Beck, Pendulum of Power: Canada's Federal Elections, Scarborough, Prentice Hall, 1968, p. 148.

6 The Labor World, 25 October 1919.

elected in the Quebec provincial election.¹ And then at the municipal level, labor captured a seat in Verdun and another in Montreal.² Francq was optimistic that this trend would continue as the old parties appeared to be crumbling before class conscious political action.³

Although for the moment prospects seemed bright, Francq was troubled by the ongoing battle within the Labor Party between the members from the socialist clubs and the more moderate trade unionists. He asserted that socialism and trade unionism did not mix well together, and he believed that the split between the two movements was widening after 1919.⁴ In spite of the sympathy he declared for some socialist principles, he had consistently supported the moderate trade unionists in their struggle against the socialists.⁵ He reported that the 1918 convention of the Labor Party was dominated by a "discussion stérile." The radicals who were in the majority were more interested in recent events in Russia and Germany than in domestic problems or in preparing for the next elections. Francq actively fought these "ultra-radicaux" some of whom

1 The Labor World, 7 June 1919; 28 June 1919.

2 The Labor World, "Convention du Parti Ouvrier," 22 November 1919, p. 4; "Dans l'arène fédérale," 8 October 1921, p. 1.

3 The Labor World, 28 June 1919.

4 The Labor World, "Gus. Francq Tells Some Observations of Europe," 8 March 1919, p. 3.

5 Claude Larivière, Albert Saint-Martin, militant d'avant-garde, 1865-1947, Laval, Editions Coopératives Albert Saint-Martin, 1979, passim.

voiced support for violent methods.¹ With moderate trade unionists in the majority at the 1919 convention of the Labor Party of Canada, Quebec section, the Montreal branch was censured for its endorsement of the O.B.U., but socialists continued to dominate the party in Montreal.

The second problem with the Labor Party was that it was unable to win enough support to be effective. Francq came to this conclusion because of the outcome of the referendum to choose a new charter for the city of Montreal. He had represented the International unions on a government commission to draw up a new civic charter. Its proposals were opposed by many people including mayor Mederic Martin; consequently the provincial government submitted the choice of a charter to a popular vote. Francq campaigned actively for the proposed charter but the project he favoured lost.² It was after this defeat in May 1921 that he began to question the effectiveness of independent political action.

Francq argued that successive defeats were harmful to the labor movement and demoralizing for its officers. Organized labor lost all the prestige it amassed through economic action when workers refused to give political

1 The Labor World, "Une Convention Mouvementée," 21 December 1918, p. 5.

2 The Labor World, 26 February 1921; 5 March 1921; 14 May 1921; 21 May 1921.

support to union leaders. They could not afford to lose a vote of confidence at every election as this gave them little credibility when they had to deal with members of the government or employers.¹ Francq did not want political action to impede economic action.²

When the federal elections arrived in December 1921, he had lost all hope in independent political action and he no longer expressed support for the Labor Party. In taking this stand he was following the lead of the TLC that did not endorse the Labor Party and adopted the usual AFL policy of supporting the candidate most favorable to organized labor regardless of his political colors.³ Rather than endorse the Labor Party candidate for mayor in the Montreal civic elections in October of that year, he recommended that readers support candidates holding a union card.⁴ Francq now asserted that party affiliation did not matter, the way to ensure good government was to elect good men.⁵ After the elections he openly espoused Samuel Gompers' position:

1 The Labor World, 11 June 1921.

2 The Labor World, 1 January 1922.

3 Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930, Kingston, Industrial Relations Centre, 1968, p. 243; The Labor World, 4 December 1921.

4 The Labor World, 15 October 1921.

5 The Labor World, 4 December 1921.

Elisons des trade-unionistes tant que nous pourrons, qu'ils soient rouges ou bleus, s'ils sont sincères et dignes du nom de trade-unionistes, ils travailleront à la réalisation de notre plateforme de principes, mais, de grâce, cessons de ruiner le prestige de notre force économique à chaque défaite politique.

He now regretted the stand he had taken at Victoria in 1906.¹

Organized labor became less militant after 1921.

Direct action had failed in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 and the industrial unionism of the O.B.U. petered out as quickly as it had risen. Political action had seen some success especially in Ontario but Francq began to consider that this was the result of an exceptional circumstance rather than the beginning of a trend. This militancy had been the product of the growth of the trade union movement but this expansion ended in the face of rising unemployment in 1920 and with this recession came the ebbing of working class political action.

Francq considered the main reason for its failure was that workers did not support independent political action. They were not primarily intent on achieving the social and political aims of the labor movement. If workers were organized for purely economic reasons then trade unions had to cease pretending to represent their political aspirations. Since workers elected governments of the old parties it was difficult to complain about the legislation

¹ The Labor World, 1 January 1922.

that was passed.¹ In turning to Gompersism Francq would seem to have given up the idea that organized labor could be a great movement for reform; he was accepting that it would only be a lobby for trade unions.

1 The Labor World, 11 June 1921.

CONCLUSION

Francq may have approved of some socialist principles and aims but he also considered their achievement a utopian and impracticable objective. He never advocated any measures that would lead to the end of capitalism. He believed organized labor must play an important role in the functioning and management of industry but he always envisaged that this responsibility would be shared with employers. The working class had to participate in government through its own organizations and in proportion to its strength in the population but must not exclude other groups from the political process: "Le contrôle de l'Etat doit être le fait du concours de tous et non d'une classe ou d'un caste."¹

Francq can properly be described as a labourite. He wished to see the capitalist system reformed and until 1921 he believed that the main force to achieve this would be the trade unions taking political action through a labor party of their own. He rejected revolution as disruptive and a threat to individual liberty and well being. The interests of workers lay in encouraging harmonious relations between capital and labor since only a moderate position could help secure agreement on ameliorative reforms. He insisted.

1 Francq, Boschevisme, p. 30.

that employers also faced innumerable difficulties and problems, and that labor leaders and capitalists should mix more with one another to create a better understanding of their respective positions through a greater exchange of views.

Francq believed that the application of the program of social reforms as presented in the Charter was the key to attaining "la liberté" for the proletariat.¹ Most of these reforms that were intended to improve the living and working conditions of workers have since been accepted by governments and have become an integral part of the welfare state. But they were not of a nature to change society since they left intact the relationship between capitalists as owners of the means of production and workers who must sell their work force. Nor have these reforms ended social and economic inequalities and they have not had any significant success in alleviating the tensions between labor and capital.

Francq's program for social reform was threatened by the split in the labor movement. The One Big Union was too radical and the direct action that it advocated threatened to polarize labor and capital. Such a polarization had been evident during the Winnipeg General Strike when employers and government rallied against

¹ Francq, Bolchevisme, p. 30.

organized labor, delaying the acceptance of the rights of trade unions. Catholic unions on the other hand were too conservative. Without a program of social reform they bolstered existing institutions and helped to preserve the conditions that facilitated the exploitation of workers. Opposing the class struggle and the use of strike action that was labor's main weapon, they did not understand that both of these were essential for the emancipation of the working class. Catholic unions were weaker than the Internationals; they were too weak to eliminate the abuses that caused discontent which was the only way to avoid Bolshevism. Francq was opposed to these movements for more than ideological reasons: if they made gains at the expense of the International unions then they would threaten his own position and prestige as a TLC official.

Francq was limited in his program by the need for co-operation between capital and labor. He appealed to capitalists to work with labor in their own self-interest. Measures such as Workmen's compensation were to be profitable for employers in both time and money. Social reform offered the prospect of better relations between capital and labor. Social and economic security and improvements in the standard of living were enough to ensure contentment and to turn discontented workers into supporters of the existing social order. Reforms to assuage the effects

of capitalist exploitation were stabilizing forces that diminished the threat of revolution.

Francq was unsuccessful in his attempt to interest employers in a new Workmen's compensation Act and other reforms such as unemployment insurance were even less likely to gain ready support. Employer resistance was the main obstacle to social and labor legislation. Francq was unrealistic to expect the support of employers for his program; nor could he hope for much assistance from provincial governments under Gouin and Taschereau that were dedicated to the interests of employers. Francq naively claimed that it was the extremists in both camps, the labor radicals and reactionary employers, who were the only obstacle to agreement. He thought that labor and capital would realize that they had a greater mutual interest in social harmony and cooperation rather than in confrontation and conflict.

He wanted workers to elect representatives to government from their own ranks and, until he lost patience with the Labor Party in 1921, through their own political organizations. Bourgeois parties were much too slow to enact labor legislation and when they did, they seldom accompanied the law with measures for its enforcement. The old political parties generally did not even encourage the election of labor representatives under traditional political colours. Francq faced the dilemma of most advocates of independent political

action that labor parties were usually too weak to be effective and did not even gain the support of most trade unionists. Finally, in a notable shift of position towards the end of 1921, he began to oppose labor political action. This change was due to pragmatic considerations rather than to a change of principle or because he supported another political formation. This shows an underlying concern that always remained a constant priority for Francq. He was intent on preserving the economic power and effectiveness of trade unions as well as their legislative influence. Even his later suggestion that the International and Catholic trade union movements merge was in keeping with a desire for an effective and united labor movement.

Francq's ideas as expressed in his editorial column and the other material that he published in The Labor World helped to give the AFL in Quebec an intellectual life of its own. His paper was undoubtedly read by many people in the trade union movement. His editorials were often attacked or discussed in other newspapers, and at MTLC and Labor Party meetings. It is difficult however to estimate the impact that The Labor World had among union members and unorganized workers.

Francq's reformism was akin to that of many Ontario and western labor leaders, such as those in Winnipeg before the General Strike who advocated a program of reforms through an independent Labor Party.¹ Francq shared the

1 Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1977, ch. 5.

militant mood of organized labor in Ontario and the west following the Great War. His statement in 1919 that "la transformation des masses s'annonce" was echoed by Salem Bland who wrote in 1920 that organized labor was "destined... to effect a...transformation."¹ Much has been written about the post-war social unrest among workers in English Canada. But the writing of Francq in The Labor World showed that at least one leading French Canadian trade union leader was touched by the same spirit of reformism as well.

¹ Salem Goldworth Bland, The New Christianity, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1973, p. 51; Francq, Bolshevisme, p. 31.

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