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The Response of the Toronto Daily Press
to the Winnipeg General Strike

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WINNIPEG LABOR OUGHT TO TAKE A LOOK AROUND FIRST



—From The Chicago Tribune.

FRONT PAGE ANTI-STRIKE CARTOON

FROM THE TORONTO GLOBE, JUNE 2, 1919

God made truth with many doors, to welcome every believer who
knocks on them.

Kahlil Gibran

Introduction

On May 13, 1919 the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council¹ tallied the vote of its nearly 100 affiliated unions on whether to call city-wide action in sympathy with striking construction and metal workers. The key issues, claimed the W.T.L.C., were collective bargaining and higher wages. The result was an overwhelming 11,000 in favour to 500 opposed, and so a general strike of almost 30,000 union and non-union workers began on May 15, paralysing Winnipeg's industry, communications, transport, fire, police and postal service. For the first few days the city's food, water and power was suspended as well.² Special difficulties were encountered by newspapers and press associations who tried to obtain and transmit copy about the walkout. As one local paper commented:

When newspapers and press associations sent their "war correspondents" to Winnipeg to cover the strike, the laconic instruc-

1 The Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council henceforth the W.T.L.C..

2 For the first week of the strike at least, labour controlled the city of Winnipeg. Due to the effort of municipal authorities and an ad hoc group of citizens essential services were gradually restored. See D. C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto, 1950) pp. 51-52.

tion was, "Ship the news out quickly. Beat the other fellow." But Winnipeg proved original and peculiar.... They found a Citizens' Committee³ about as loud as an oyster in divulging news. A union card was necessary for grasping a few facts from the labor leaders. The provincial end of the government seemed as happy to receive newspapermen as Lenine would be at seeing Kerensky hang his hat on the Lenine peg in [the] Hall of the Commissariats. They found rumor factories on every corner. ...When they found news it was another matter putting it on the wire. The telegraphers⁴ went out the day they arrived....

The Winnipeg general strike is now a part of Canadian history, an event viewed as both colourful and spectacular. However in the summer of 1919 fear was the overriding reaction of a captive national audience. In gripping headlines and flaming editorials almost all Canadian newspapers depicted Winnipeg's strike as nothing short of a Bolshevik-One Big Union⁵ conspiracy to topple constituted authority. In

3 This is the name assumed by the ad hoc group of Winnipeg citizens. For greater detail on this organization see David Bercuson, "Labour in Winnipeg: The Great War And The General Strike", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1971, pp. 211-212, 313-316.

4 The Winnipeg Tribune, June 2, 1919.

5 The One Big Union, henceforth the O.B.U., was to be a giant industrial union including the entire labouring class and thereby eliminating existing craft unions. It was launched by labour radicals at the Western Labor Conference (dubbed the Calgary Convention) in March 1919.

Toronto five of the six city dailies⁶ supported this assertion. Shock followed quickly by condemnation was their collective response to labour's actions in the prairie city. Their reports and editorials on the strike were similar, presenting essentially one viewpoint. Only The Toronto Star dissented from this outlook.⁷

Modern historians see Winnipeg's famous work stoppage far differently from the majority of Toronto (and Canadian) newspapers at the time. The assessment of the anti-strike press in 1919 does not correspond with present day historical interpretation. The results of the investigation of the strike, begun by Donald Masters (1950) and carried on by Roger Graham (1960) and Kenneth McNaught (1965), show that legitimate union demands, not blueprints for revolution, caused the dispute. More recent and exhaustive studies, those of David Mellar (1970) and David Bercuson (1971), have marshalled sufficient evidence to explode the "Bolshevik plot" theory as mere fabrication.⁸

6 They were The Mail and Empire, The Evening Telegram, The World, The Times and The Globe. Henceforth the anti-strike Toronto press.

7 The Toronto Star, henceforth The Star.

8 D. C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto, 1950); Roger Graham, Arthur Meighen: A Biography. Vol. 1. The Door of Opportunity (Toronto, 1960); Kenneth McNaught, J. S. Woodsworth: A Prophet In Politics (Toronto, 1959); F. D. Millar, "The Winnipeg General Strike, 1919: a rein-

These works have more than adequately covered the strike. On the other hand there has been no explanation of how the public became exposed to the "Bolshevik takeover" myth. Using the city of Toronto and its daily press as a model, this thesis is an attempt to fill that gap. Just as intriguing is the question of The Star's different account of Winnipeg's labour troubles. The answer to this query forms the second part of the study. Thus the purpose of this thesis is twofold: to illustrate the mechanics by which the Winnipeg strike came to be reported by the Toronto daily press and to explain why and how The Star, in contrast to the five anti-strike papers, showed the strike in such a sympathetic light.

During May and June 1919 Toronto newspapers selected and emphasized certain recurring themes in their editorial and news treatment of the strike. Briefly they were the Bolshevik plot, the complicity of the O.B.U., the use of the sympathetic strike, labour's original grievances in Winnipeg, and the breakup of the strike.⁹ A comparison of how the anti-strike Toronto press, The Star and modern historians explain these common points is revealing.

terpretation in the light of oral history and pictorial evidence", M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1970; D. J. Bercuson, "Labour in Winnipeg: The Great War And The General Strike", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1971.

9 When these five themes are examined later on in this work (chapter 3 and 5) they will always be treated in the same order as listed above.

The anti-strike Toronto press interpreted the upheaval in Winnipeg as the result of a grand Bolshevick conspiracy. This sinister action, they suggested, was organized by radical and lawless elements in the leadership of the O.B.U. and probably involved the collaboration of "red" agents in the pay of Moscow. The technique of the sympathetic strike was seen, as one paper claimed, as "a species of civil war" leading "to the suffering, perhaps the death...of men, women, and children, to riot, bloodshed and the destruction of property."¹⁰ They brushed aside Winnipeg labour's insistence that the only issues behind the strike were legitimate union grievances. Instead they ridiculed these claims as a cloak for intended "soviet" mastery. Finally, there was general approval in the five papers of the firm assertion of authority by government officials in breaking the strike. The decapitation of the strike leadership by the "midnight arrests" of June 17¹¹ and the awesome show of force on the streets of Winnipeg on June 21 were measures they endorsed as necessary and prudent.

10 The Mail and Empire, June 14, 1919.

11 For a chronology of events of the Winnipeg strike see Appendix "A".

The Star adopted a different attitude. It discounted the theory of a foreign coup. Nor had the O.B.U. been involved. The paper also approved of the sympathetic strike: "would it not be well to see the significance of the fact that there are thousands of families in Winnipeg...putting up with privations...to help others who lack the security which trades unionism gives."¹² It asserted that the only genuine issues were those related to wages, hours, union recognition and collective bargaining. Finally, when the authorities in Ottawa and Winnipeg initiated a policy of direct intervention to end the tie-up The Star warned of the danger to civil liberties.

The interpretations of the central issues by The Star in 1919 and those of modern Canadian historians are very similar. Professors Masters, Graham and McNaught concur that the action by Winnipeg labour was neither engineered by Bolsheviks nor the product of O.B.U. direction. As Roger Graham states, "The historian of the strike [Masters] concludes it was the former [desire for collective bargaining] and that the fear of revolution had no basis in fact. The weight of evidence supports this conclusion...."¹³ While

12 The Star, June 4, 1919.

13 Graham, op. cit., p. 232.

McNaught avoids discussion of the strategical merit of the sympathetic strike he does praise its spontaneous creation and subsequent solidarity. Both Masters and Graham forcibly argue that a sympathetic strike is by nature "revolutionary"; however, neither shares the claims made by the anti-strike Toronto press that the walkout was inspired by Bolsheviks. All three historians agree that the right to collective bargaining and wage increases were the sole factors motivating the strikers.

On the final issue -- the breakup of the strike -- it is true that there is no unanimity. McNaught sees the government's intervention as an "oppressive measure" while Graham applauds it as "quick decisive action." Masters vacillates somewhat granting room for disagreement as to the efficacy of "specific actions"; however, he does admit that action was inevitable given the unstable situation present. But even Graham differs considerably from the anti-strike newspapers in 1919. They argued that police action was necessary to break a Bolshevik conspiracy. He maintains not that there was a communist plot but that any general strike, if allowed to continue, must by its very nature usurp legitimate authority and lead to revolution. Thus even if he agrees that intervention was necessary to avoid revolution, he rejects the anti-strike Toronto press thesis that danger arose because the general strike was led by Bolsheviks.

On the whole then these three historians see the Winnipeg general strike as a close match to the assessment first offered by The Star fifty-four years ago. They also cast considerable doubt on the combined interpretation of the five other Toronto dailies in 1919. It is reasonable to suppose that the interpretation of modern historians is much more likely to be closer to what happened than that of the Toronto press, both because they have had a chance to see all the evidence and because they are able to view the strike from afar. Be that as it may the purpose of this thesis is to show how and why the majority of the Toronto press arrived at its version of the strike and how and why The Star differed from them.

This study has been divided into five parts. The first two chapters provide a background to the whole issue of press coverage of the Winnipeg general strike. Chapter one deals with the news account of the dispute as reported by the city's anti- and pro-strike newspapers, while chapter two investigates the mechanics by which the Toronto dailies obtained information on the work stoppage. The third chapter shows the response of the anti-strike Toronto press to Winnipeg's labour troubles. The last two chapters concern The Star: chapter four explains why this paper took a pro-strike stand and played the kind of role it did in reporting the

tie-up; chapter five examines The Star's actual news reports and editorials of the walkout.

Chapter 1

The Strike and News Coverage -- in Winnipeg

The strike has been entirely misrepresented. I know the details intimately.... [the "Red Scare" in Winnipeg] was the biggest hoax that was ever put over any people! Government officials and the press were largely responsible. Of course, some of them were quite sincere but absolutely hysterical.

(J. S. Woodsworth)

"What did you miss during the strike? Streetcar service? Restaurants? Telephones? Mail? Newspapers?" On May 24 reporters from The Tribune put this question to hundreds of Winnipeggers. According to the paper "In nine cases out of ten the answer was, "Newspapers"."² The closure of Winnipeg's three dailies -- The Manitoba Free Press, The Winnipeg Tribune and The Winnipeg Telegram³ -- however was more

1 Cited in Grace MacInnis, J. S. Woodsworth A Man To Remember (Toronto, 1963) pp. 134-135.

2 The Tribune, May 24, 1919. When The Free Press came out on May 22, fifty thousand copies were "grabbed up with great eagerness." The Star, May 26, 1919.

3 The Manitoba Free Press, Winnipeg Tribune and Winnipeg Telegram henceforth The Free Press, Tribune and Telegram. The Winnipeg Citizen, temporary publication of the Citi-

than just an offshoot of the general strike⁴, "it was a deliberate attempt to control the news being fed to the public."⁵ Because of traditional ill feelings between unions and the local newspapers in Winnipeg, labour leaders attempted to silence the press.

In May 1918 Winnipeg had experienced a short civic strike. At that time the W.T.L.C. had published a daily strike bulletin, The News. During this dispute Thomas Murray, the legal advisor of the W.T.L.C., was particularly upset by the Winnipeg press, "Perhaps I am biased, but making allowance even for that, I don't think I ever saw a more dishonest campaign waged by the newspapers as...against the strikers... a campaign which was characterized by suppression of the truth as well as suggestions of falsehood."⁶ According to

zens' Committee, henceforth The Citizen. These four papers constituted Winnipeg's anti-strike press. The only pro-strike paper was the special strike edition of the Western Labor News (henceforth The News), organ of the Central Strike Committee. For detail on the Central Strike Committee see Bercuson, op. cit., pp. 309-311.

4 On May 16 the stereotypers and Webb pressmen walked off the three dailies temporarily crippling their operation.

5 Bercuson, op. cit., p. 307.

6 Public Archives of Canada (henceforth P.A.C.) R. A. Rigg Papers, T. J. Murray to Rigg, May 28, 1919. Murray was one of the defending lawyers for the general strike leaders in the sedition trials of 1919-20. Rigg, a moderate in the W.T.L.C., was a longtime labour leader in Winnipeg.

one authority, from May 1918 until the general strike a year later the three city dailies "made constant efforts to link radical labour with Bolshevism, to create the fear that behind the demands for One Big Union there were masses of aliens led by agitators."⁷ By the spring of 1919 the W.T.L.C. had expelled newspaper representatives from its regular meetings. The reason, it claimed, was that "they always misrepresented speeches and proceedings."⁸

Meanwhile The News had become the official organ of the W.T.L.C. and appointed as its editor, the Rev. William Ivens.⁹ Just five days before the outbreak of the strike on May 15, 1919 the fiery and eloquent Methodist minister asserted, "The first thing I think we need...is a democratic press...a newspaper system...based on human rights...in the interests of the people, in the interests of humanity instead of in the interests of the system of profiteering." He also declared "I realize the tremendous power of the press...."¹⁰ Ivens was speaking for the strike committee, for on May 16 the local press was shut down. Three days after this move The News justified the suspension:

7 Millar, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

8 Bercuson, op. cit., p. 307.

9 For a more complete description of Ivens and The News see pages 30-32.

10 Royal Commission on industrial relations in Canada.

A year ago we issued a strike bulletin to call their bluff and correct their misstatements. They soon forgot, and again told half-truths or suppressed the real facts... surely it is a case of simple justice at this time to muzzle for a few days the¹¹ enemies of freedom and truth.

Ivens was overheard to admit, "I think we have Dafoe and Richardson¹² now powerless to do to us this time what they did in past strikes."¹³ In effect Ivens and the other strike leaders were saying that they were suppressing the press in the name of democracy.

While The News' claim that it was "simple justice" to "muzzle...the enemies of freedom and truth" was open to interpretation, the prophecy that it was to be "for a few days" was soon proven accurate. All three city papers were closed on May 16; however, the largest daily, The Free Press was able to resume a limited publication on May 20 and The

Report of commission appointed under Order-in-council (P.C. 670) to enquire into industrial relations in Canada... Minutes of Evidence. Vol. 3, (Ottawa, 1919) p. 84. Testimony of William Ivens.

11 The News, May 19, 1919.

12 J. W. Dafoe was the power behind The Free Press and R. L. Richardson the proprietor of The Tribune.

13 Preliminary hearing The King V. William Ivens et al. testimony of W. E. Davis, The Free Press, August 2, 1919.

Tribune and Telegram reappeared on May 24. By May 29 all three were putting out four to eight page issues although without advertising. Four days later, with the return of a majority of pressmen and stereotypers, regular editions were available on the streets.

Meanwhile, both sides in the strike decided to publicize their cause and printed separate propaganda sheets. The Central Strike Committee turned the regular W.T.L.C. labour weekly, The News, into a daily special strike bulletin commencing on May 17.¹⁴ Organized resistance soon appeared as the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand retorted with its own daily paper, The Citizen, whose first issue came out on May 19. From May 19 until the dying days of the strike The News and The Citizen maintained a bitter campaign of mutual vilification and accusation. As The Free Press, Tribune and Telegram returned to regular and normal publication they joined the side of the Citizens' Committee continually spreading news and rumours which denigrated the strike.¹⁵

14 The News officially belonged to the W.T.L.C. but during the general strike was controlled by the Central Strike Committee.

15 Millar, op. cit., p. 189. According to Millar, op. cit., pp. 200-220, and 247-248, the Winnipeg papers fanned the hysteria surrounding the theory of alleged Russian Soviet intervention and (almost daily) printed anti-alien editorials. On the last day of the strike, June 25, The Telegram carried a front-page banner headline in red

Thus a vitriolic press war ensued with The News defending the strike against not only The Citizen but also a hostile Winnipeg press.

The largest of Winnipeg's three daily newspapers was the self-styled spokesman of the prairies, the influential Free Press. Edward Macklin, the "Chief", was president and general manager of the paper. He had vested interests not only in this enterprise but in the news gathering service known as Canadian Press.¹⁶ But to many John Dafoe was the real heart of The Free Press. Given a free hand in editorial policy by the owner, Clifford Sifton, Dafoe was responsible for the paper's clear and well-known convictions. He represented the "agrarian way" of life. Perhaps because of this his knowledge of the working class was severely limited. He reacted with outright hostility to radical movements, exhibited an almost phobic fear of Marxism, and considered the strike leaders "Bolsheviks" and "reds". According to his

letters which exclaimed, "The End of the Revolution". See The Telegram, June 25, 1919.

16 Canadian Press (C.P.) is the co-operative news and distributing association for Canada's daily newspapers. In 1917 the regional components of Canada's daily press -- the Central Provinces, the Western Associated Press and the Eastern Press Association -- were merged under the title, "The Canadian Press Limited". This national news service does little independent news gathering; instead, it operates on an exchange arrangement. When news is reported by a member paper to one of C.P.'s bureaux the information is sorted, rewritten and edited, C.P. then

sympathetic biographer, Murray Donnelly, Dafoe classified "moderate men with the extremists" and "put the worst possible interpretation on the strikers' activity."¹⁷

On May 16, the day after the strike began, Dafoe wrote an editorial in accordance with the advice of Sifton.¹⁸ The paper issued a four point programme to accommodate both sides.¹⁹ However the next day The Free Press, like The Tribune and Telegram, was shut down by the walkout of essential staff. Enraged by the enforced closure of his paper Dafoe was now convinced that the strike was not an ordinary labour dispute but an incipient revolution. Through the effort of

distributes this modified copy back over the wire among all its subscribers. Thus, the reliability of C.P. depends primarily on the objective and prompt production of the news by its various member newspapers. See M. E. Nichols, The Story of Canadian Press (Toronto, 1948).

17 Murray Donnelly, Dafoe of the Free Press (Toronto, 1968) p. 102.

18 Three days before the strike began Sifton advised that The Free Press avoid a partisan stance in the upcoming dispute and instead "...offer a medium for a full discussion and presentation of arrangements by both sides..." P.A.C., Clifford Sifton Papers, Vol. 207, Sifton to John Dafoe, May 12, 1919.

19 The plan was quite unacceptable to the strikers and for obvious reasons. Collective bargaining was not recognized, the right to strike reserved, strikes in the public service were not permitted, and the sympathetic strike only tolerated in "exceptional circumstances". It is difficult to imagine how Professor Cook sees these restrictions as "a reasonable set of proposals", Cook, op. cit., p. 99.

management staff The Free Press succeeded in publishing a fly-sheet edition on May 22.²⁰ In a prominent front-page editorial the paper complained that it had been "the victim of a revolutionary plot and had been suppressed by orders from the dictatorship of the proletariat".²¹ It dubbed Russell, Veitch, Ivens, Robinson and Winning²² the 'red five' and accused them of "climbing to power in the trade union movement through the influence of Germans, Austrians, 'Huns', and Russians".²³ In the next few days editorial pages bristled with a series of attacks on the Bolshevik menace to British constitutional authority. On June 4 there was featured the first of several half and full page advertisements of the Citizens' Committee, notices characterized by gross misrepresentation and an overt appeal to patriotism and

20 The Free Press had a day and night foreman of stereotyping departments, and one journeyman. The press was run by the superintendent. See The News, May 27, 1919.

21 Donnelly, op. cit., p. 103.

22 These five men -- Bob Russell, Harry Veitch, Bill Ivens, Ernie Robinson and James Winning -- were the leaders of the provisional Central Strike Committee. In a rare display of agreement with Dafoe and The Free Press Arthur Meighen also referred to Ivens and Winning as the "Red leaders". See Graham, op. cit., p. 238.

23 Cited in Bercuson, pp. 307-308. Later The Free Press was to label the Strike Committee "baby-killers".

British sentiment.²⁴ Casting aside any claim to neutrality, The Free Press, according to Professor Ramsay Cook, "became the virtual mouthpiece of the Citizens' Committee."²⁵

Chief rival to The Free Press in Winnipeg was The Tribune. Founded in 1890 by R. L. Richardson, the paper was to remain the exclusive property of the colourful Western journalist for almost thirty years. Robert Lorne Richardson, once described by J. S. Willison as a man "afire with buoyant spirit and radical conviction, contemptuous of precedent and authority, and burning with evangelical fervour"²⁶, was indeed an unusual figure. The independent newspaper owner developed a unique ability to confuse the senior officials

24 These advertisements, printed also in The Tribune and Telegram, included such banner headlines as "The O.B.U. Is Bolshevism Pure and Simple", "Who Will Get These Jobs, Alien Enemies Or War Veterans?" and "The Alien Is On His Way". In these notices the strike leaders were depicted as "reds" backed by "undesirable aliens". As well several announcements directly appealed for anti-strike soldier demonstrations.

25 Ramsay Cook, The Politics of John W. Dafoe and The Free Press (Toronto, 1963) pp. 99-100. Even after the strike was called off The Free Press insisted on the Bolshevik revolution theory. "It was a strike deliberately engineered by the Reds and planned long in advance.... The Reds who planned the strike -- probably at the Calgary Convention -- saw certain advantages in selecting Winnipeg as the point at which the Revolution was to start." The Free Press, June 26, 1919. Cited in A. Balawyder, op. cit., p. 19.

26 J. S. Willison, Reminiscences Political and Personal (Toronto, 1919) p. 119.

of the two major parties as to his true political affiliation.²⁷ Yet he was more than just a political maverick. A solidly entrenched member of the Winnipeg establishment, he was prominent in provincial and municipal business affairs and for many years was a leading figure on the Winnipeg Board of Trade.²⁸ Like many other businessmen in 1919 he was swept up in the hysteria of the "Red Scare". Just prior to the strike in Winnipeg he had asked the Borden government "...just what was being done about a charge...that a "Bolshevik" uprising was being predicted in outlying farm areas [of Manitoba]." ²⁹

In the election of 1917 Richardson had won the federal riding of Springfield in Manitoba. He was forced to stay in Ottawa for parliamentary sittings and so delegated

27 In 1896 he carried the federal seat of Lisgar for the Laurier Liberals. Four years later he swept the same riding as an Independent Conservative. In the next twelve years he unsuccessfully ran in four elections, twice as a Liberal and twice as a Conservative. In 1917, he won Springfield for Borden's Union Government but sat in the House of Commons as an Independent Liberal.

28 Richardson, Clifford Sifton and Arthur Meighen were the unfailing representatives of the Manitoba business community in Ottawa.

29 Millar, op. cit., p, 172.

full authority over The Tribune to his managing editor John Moncrieff.³⁰

Like The Free Press, The Tribune had clashed with organized labour before the events of May and June, 1919. In April 1919 several Winnipeg unions blacklisted The Tribune in reprisal for the paper's broadsides at the Calgary Convention³¹ and the O.B.U.. To end hostilities the daily agreed to accept a compromise; the unions would call off their boycott if the paper would print a verbatim report of proceedings in Calgary. The W.T.L.C. then added one more condition, the printing of an additional twenty thousand copies as supplements for The News.³² It was unlikely that The Tribune's management would easily forget this "compromise".

Yet labour troubles in March and April were dwarfed by the difficulties of the following month. The day after the general strike was proclaimed, the stereotypers and pressmen abandoned their posts at The Tribune. Paralysed, the paper disappeared from circulation for over a week. When publication was resumed on Saturday, May 24 a front-page column

30 Richardson continued to have his own name listed as managing editor on The Tribune's editorial mast head even though Moncrieff was the acknowledged holder of this position after 1911.

31 On March 16, 1919 the Western Canada Labor Conference, labelled the Calgary Convention, was held in the Western city.

32 Bercuson, op. cit., p. 266.

announced to its readers that the paper would continue "...to give unbiased news without fear or favour." In addition The Tribune remarked "...whatever opinions this newspaper has will be expressed...in the proper place, the editorial page."³³ Both statements were to prove totally false.³⁴ All claim to neutrality was shattered in the same issue as the editor indignantly asserted that behind the strike was a small coterie of Bolshevick agitators "...irresponsible, lawless, anarchistic agitators... [who have] beclouded the true vision...of honest labor."³⁵ One week later The Tribune carried a full-page display from the One Thousand headlined: "The O.B.U. Is Bolshevism Pure and Simple."³⁶

Completing the trio of daily newspapers in Winnipeg was The Telegram. Begun in 1894, it was the chief Conservative paper in Manitoba. Its financial backers included such political figures as Sir Rodmond Roblin and Robert Rogers.

33 The Tribune, May 24, 1919.

34 With grim irony The Tribune was also to state in its May 24 issue "It was unfortunate that the papers were unable to publish the true news to put a quietus on the foolish rumors". This became not so much an observation on the past as a prophecy of the future.

35 The Tribune, May 24, 1919.

36 The Tribune, May 31, 1919. It is interesting to note that The Tribune was the first of the three dailies to allow anti-strike advertisements from the Citizens' Committee.

Immediate ownership in 1919 was linked to William Sanford Evans a former Telegram editor and onetime mayor of Winnipeg.³⁷ During the general strike its editor and general manager was Knox Magee, a man who had already alienated labour by his anti-union editorials.³⁸

The Telegram suffered the same fate as The Tribune during the general strike and reacted with even greater, vengeance than its rival. Two days after The Telegram resumed publication a front-page two column editorial attacked the strike as a Bolshevik conspiracy hatched by a handful of English and Scotch agitators who were avowedly "...Red Socialists and Anarchists". Added to this accusation was its warning about the "hostile alien element" dominating Winnipeg's larger unions. The editor concluded "...everything was ready for the Bolshevistic propaganda, the Socialist invasion, for

It was not until June 4 that The Free Press and The Telegram ran similar notices.

37 I wish to thank Professor J. E. Rea of the University of Manitoba for this information. Evans was editor of The Telegram from 1901-1905 and mayor of Winnipeg from 1909-1911.

38 When Murray wrote to Rigg about the conduct of the Winnipeg press in the short strike of 1918 he referred to The Telegram as "really bad throughout". P.A.C., Rigg Papers, Murray to Rigg, May 28, 1918.

the General strike stampede."³⁹ Four days later The Telegram was openly admitting its opposition to the strike:

The Telegram's policy is to treat everyone alike in the news columns and to reserve for the editorial page any comment and any judgment that may be deemed proper, desirable, or necessary. But when treason lifts its hideous head, when revolution is abroad, when anarchy is openly advocated, when our constitution is assailed, then this policy is suspended, and The Telegram sees only one side, knows only one side, and prints only one side. That is the side of law, order, justice, democracy, honor, loyalty, religion, respect for property, respect for human life, security for our women and children, and maintenance of our British ideals.⁴⁰

To the Conservative-owned daily the general strike was no ordinary labour dispute but a step towards revolution and anarchy.

While the strikers deplored the conduct of The Free Press and The Tribune they were disgusted with The Telegram. The paper's editor came in for particularly harsh criticism. On June 2, The News lashed out at Magee in person: "Such filth as this comes only from a depraved mind. Fare thee

39 The Telegram, May 26, 1919.

40 The Telegram, May 30, 1919.

well, Knox Magee, we shall not honor you again with references to your disgustingly depraved news rag."⁴¹ Like the other two dailies The Telegram accepted advertisements from the Citizens' Committee and in general went out of its way to support the anti-union organization.⁴² When it praised the actions of the One Thousand the Committee graciously reprinted the editorial in The Citizen. In part the salutation read: "No more useful, no more patriotic association of citizens was ever brought into existence in Canada than the so-called Citizens' Committee of 1000 -- which might properly be called the Committee of all Good Citizens."⁴³

During the strike by civic employees in May 1918, an ad hoc group of private individuals had come together to provide volunteers to man the city's essential services. This organization, labelled the Citizens' Committee of 100, had helped to negotiate settlement of the dispute with union representatives.⁴⁴ The Board of Trade, the Citizens' Alli-

41 The News, June 2, 1919.

42 When the strikers once again withdrew bread and milk delivery on June 3 The Telegram attacked the move as "Herodism". See The Telegram, June 3, 1919.

43 The Citizen, June 20, 1919.

44 P.A.C., Rigg Papers, Murray to Rigg, May 28, 1918.

ance⁴⁵, and G. W. Allan, Conservative M.P. for Winnipeg South had been responsible for its formation.⁴⁶ When the general strike broke out the following year a similar, but larger, organization was created and called the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand.⁴⁷ While it was also prepared to staff essential services it preferred suppression rather than negotiation to end the strike. Whereas the motive for formation in 1918 was the spirit of conciliation, the incentive a year later was fear.⁴⁸ It was in this spirit that they founded their newspaper, christened The Citizen.

While the direction and makeup of The Citizen, like the Citizens' Committee itself, was deliberately shrouded in secrecy⁴⁹ some clues to the paper's operation are available.

45 The Citizens' Alliance was an organization begun in 1916 and headed by baker Edward Parnell. It was an informal discussion group formed to deal with industrial relations problems.

46 Bercuson, op. cit., p. 211.

47 According to Bercuson, op. cit., p. 313, the 1919 "citizens" version was an amalgamation of the 1918 Committee and individual members of such organizations as the Board of Trade, Manufacturers' Association, Winnipeg Bar, etc.

48 According to Bercuson, op. cit., p. 315, there were many motives for joining the One Thousand but fear amongst businessmen of economic ruin was a common denominator. Millar, op. cit., p. 132, emphasized that as early as October 31, 1918 right-wing Winnipeg business and professional men had identified "the recognition of the union" with "anarchy and Bolshevism", in connection with

The Citizen was directly under the authority of a specially appointed "Publicity Committee" which "...engaged the services of a competent editor..." and arranged for the issue of a "...neat four-page publication."⁵⁰ All articles which appeared in The Citizen were first submitted to this committee for approval.⁵¹ The paper was set in the city, printed in the nearby town of Selkirk⁵², and transported back into Winnipeg.⁵³ According to Captain Frederick G. Thompson, a returned soldier who openly and actively supported the Citizens' Com-

the request of Winnipeg police to form a local affiliated with the Trades and Labor Congress.

49 The Citizens' Committee purposely kept its operation and membership a secret. Repeated attempts by defence lawyers in the strike trials of 1919 and 1920 to unearth evidence of the personnel and operation of the Citizens' Committee and The Citizen were unsuccessful. See The Tribune, August 6, 1919 and February 26, 1920 and The Free Press, December 12, 1919 and February 4, 1920. According to John Wilton, a returned soldier and supporter of the Norris government, membership in the One Thousand was somewhat exclusive. "I sized up the personnel [of the One Thousand]. There was not a returned soldier there. Newspaper editors, bankers, manufacturers and capitalists abounded." Cited in McNaught, op. cit., p. 102.

50 Citizens' Committee of 1000, "The Activities and Organization of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand": In Connection with the Winnipeg Strike May-June, 1919 (Winnipeg, 1919) pp. 26-27.

51 Ibid.

52 Selkirk is about 25 miles north of Winnipeg.

53 The author is indebted to A.P. Crossin, the son of A. L. Crossin, (president of the Citizens' Committee in 1919)

mittee, W. A. T. Sweatman⁵⁴ and J. F. K. Sparling⁵⁵ were at one time editors on The Citizen's press committee.⁵⁶ Edward Parnell, another member of the One Thousand, testified that anti-strike advertisements printed in the daily press were forwarded without the approval of the Citizens' Committee as a whole.⁵⁷ The Citizen was distributed without charge and circulated both in and out of Winnipeg.⁵⁸ In all there were twenty-nine issues of the paper between May 19 and June 20.⁵⁹

for the following information. P.A.C., Michael Dupuis Collection, A. P. Crossin to Dupuis, February 6, 1972. See also The Star, May 21, 1919.

- 54 Travis Sweatman, a member of the Winnipeg Bar and spokesman for the Citizens' Committee, acted as one of several prosecutors during the 1919-20 strike trials. According to Millar, op. cit., p. 218 (N), on May 21 Sweatman boarded the train which Gideon Robertson and Arthur Meighen had taken to Winnipeg and briefed them with the Citizens' Committee's side of the story. Meighen's own recollection of the meeting is revealing. "I knew practically all of them personally.... They were quite certain what was about to take place in the Capital was nothing less than a revolution, and their job was to make us [Meighen and Robertson] understand that fact." Cited in Graham, pp. 236-237.
- 55 Fletcher Sparling was an anti-labour Winnipeg alderman and chairman of the police commission.
- 56 Preliminary hearing, The King V. William Ivens et al. Testimony of Frederick Thompson, The News, August 8, 1919.
- 57 Ibid. Testimony of Edward Parnell, The News, August 15, 1919.
- 58 The News, June 10, 1919.
- 59 According to the strikers The Citizen was distributed as early as Sunday, May 18, at the morning services of several Winnipeg churches. See Winnipeg Defence Commit-

The Citizen's editors began with a grand pronouncement of neutrality: "It must be stated...that this publication is not issued on behalf of workers, nor...employers, nor in opposition to either of them...but...in the interests of the hundred and fifty thousand⁶⁰ non-participants...the great mass of the public...."⁶¹ "Published in the interests of the citizens", claimed its authors. However on the same front-page was the declaration: "Let us repeat -- this is not a strike, it is plain ugly revolution."⁶²

On May 22 The Citizen bluntly offered its readers a choice: "Revolution and anarchy, bloodshed, famine, death or the Constitution, Peace, Law and Order."⁶³ By the end of May full page advertisements proclaimed: "Don't Be Misled -- The Only Issue Is Bolshevism."⁶⁴ One of its misleading reports was the extravagant statement of June 5: "Lawlessness and disorder are rampant throughout the city all day and every day.

tee, "Saving The World From Democarcy": History of the Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike May-June, 1919 (Winnipeg, 1920) p. 211.

60 The figure is misleading, with their families the strikers represented well over 100,000 people in Winnipeg.

61 The Citizen, May 19, 1919.

62 Ibid.

63 The Citizen, May 22, 1919.

64 The Citizen, May 31, 1919.

Men and women are wantonly assaulted upon the streets. Men, women and children are attacked and threatened while going about their lawful avocations."⁶⁵ Yet despite such a false utterance The Citizen still maintained that it was the only medium for presentation of "...unbiased news and of the real issues..."⁶⁶ In reality its editors employed every technique possible to colour the strike "Red".

Editors like John Dafoe and Knox Magee were traditionally insensible to union demands, a feeling shared by the anonymous architects of The Citizen. The spectre and then realization of a general strike not only reinforced but appeared to justify their hostility. They appeared to have believed that the union demands merely concealed the fact that the walkout was an attempted Bolshevik coup. They also wished to protect the city's established business and professional class from revolutionary attack.⁶⁷ Finally the editors of the three Winnipeg papers wished to end the strike so they could go on with normal business.

65 The Citizen, June 5, 1919.

66 The Citizen, June 9, 1919.

67 As Professor J. E. Rea indicates in his recent article on the strike, during the municipal elections in January 1920 both The Free Press and The Tribune carried anti-labour advertisements from the Citizens' League (the successor to the 1919 Citizens' Committee) similar in tone and content to those which appeared in the Winnipeg daily

While the daily press and The Citizen were hostile to the strike, a pro-labour interpretation was provided by The News, the official spokesman of the W.T.L.C..⁶⁸ Edited by the Rev. William Ivens⁶⁹ it represented the radical wing of the labour movement and, according to Judge H. A. Robson, "resembled a socialistic publication."⁷⁰ Although the Central

press and The Citizen during the general strike. Rea's comment on this implies a complicity between the owners of the city's newspapers and the financial establishment. Following this suggestion it is logical to assume that the same collusion took place the previous summer. J. E. Rea, "The Politics of Conscience: Winnipeg After The Strike," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1971, p. 280.

- 68 The News began as a special strike publication during the labour troubles of May 1918 but by August replaced the regular labour weekly, the moderate Voice. Within seven months the new paper more than doubled its circulation. Preliminary hearing The King V. William Ivens et al. Testimony of George Pringle, The Free Press, July 23, 1919.
- 69 Born in England Ivens came to Canada at eighteen. He entered the University of Manitoba as a candidate for the Methodist ministry and was ordained in 1908. He was formally stationed at McDougall Methodist Church (Winnipeg) in July, 1916. According to Richard Allen, Ivens was a radical social gospeler who became "a vigorous humanitarian, an excellent organizer, and an eloquent apologist of labour both in the press and on the platform." Richard Allen, The Social Passion (Toronto, 1971) pp. 50-51.
- 70 Royal Commission to enquire into and report upon the causes and effects of the General Strike which recently existed in the City of Winnipeg for a period of six weeks, report of H. A. Robson, K. C. Commissioner, 1920, p. 11.

Strike Committee controlled the editorial policy, size, finances and circulation of The News during the strike, it was William Ivens who spearheaded the propaganda which bolstered worker morale and convinced the men that God was on their side. As well, he was head of the strikers' "Press Committee"⁷¹ and directed a special censorship board to screen all communications leaving the city.⁷²

When the general strike erupted The News was transformed, as in 1918, into a special strike bulletin. It appeared daily until the walkout was ended on June 26.⁷³ In

71 The Star, May 19, 1919.

72 According to the strikers the special censorship committee was appointed only after receiving complaints about certain newspaper articles from the Great War Veterans' Association (henceforth G.W.V.A.). See Bercuson, op. cit., p. 307.

73 In the early hours of June 17 William Ivens (along with seven other strike leaders and four less prominent strikers) was arrested for seditious conspiracy. Although freed four days later a condition of Ivens' release was that he would not participate in the strike or in any public meetings. The morning (June 17) after Ivens' incarceration Fred Dixon, a Manitoba M.L.A. who supported the strikers, and J. S. Woodsworth decided to assume direction of The News. Dixon acted as reporter and Woodsworth as editor. Six days later warrants were issued for the arrest of Dixon and Woodsworth for seditious libel and The News was formally banned. Woodsworth was arrested on June 23 but Dixon maintained temporary publication of the paper in hiding. The name of The News was changed by Dixon at first to The Western Star (June 24) and then to The Enlightener (June 25). When Ivens was free to resume his editorship Dixon gave himself up to the authorities.

all there were thirty-four issues of this bulletin with an average circulation of between 10,000 to 20,000 daily.⁷⁴

Unlike The Citizen, The News readily listed the names of its editors and reporters.⁷⁵

On May 30 a front page notice appeared in The News. It declared pointedly: "What We Want" and "What We Do Not Want". Under the former was listed "the right of collective bargaining, the right to a living wage and the reinstatement of all strikers." Under the latter was "Revolution, Dictatorship and Disorder."⁷⁶ In these two statements were summarized the dominant themes of the special strike editions of The News. Supposedly the mouthpiece of wild-eyed revolutionaries, anarchists and would-be Bolshevist dictators, it was remarkably mild in its assertions. "Just eat, sleep, play, love, laugh and look at the sun", advised Ivens euphorically, "For the present in a lawful, orderly and perfectly constitu-

From History of the Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike May-June, 1919 (Winnipeg, 1920).

74 The King V. William Ivens et al. Testimony of Augustus Pringle. The Free Press, August 10, 1919. According to The Star, The News was printed on rough cheap, paper, ran two wide columns to the page, and used type considerably larger than ordinary newspaper type. See The Star, May 22, 1919.

75 The News, May 21, 1919.

76 The News, May 30, 1919.

tional way -- do nothing."⁷⁷ When the strikers were accused of being terrorists, intent on violence, the paper reminded its readers that in the first six days of the strike "...there has not been one single case of disorder."⁷⁸ As parades by pro-strike sympathizers and counter-parades by anti-strike elements threatened to erupt into disorder, The News warned strikers: "Steady, Boys, Steady...Keep Out Of Trouble, Don't Carry Weapons."⁷⁹ Even after the "midnight arrests" of the strike leaders of the exhortation in banner headlines was: "Keep Cool -- Do Nothing We've Got Them Beat Now."⁸⁰

Labour's spokesman during the strike was neither guiltless of hurling its own choice selection of epithets at its antagonists,⁸¹ nor exempt from exaggeration and excess.⁸² But it did articulate the grievances which moved thousands of workers to strike. Moreover The News influenced not only the

77 The News, May 20, 1919.

78 The News, May 23, 1919.

79 The News, June 6, 1919.

80 The News, June 17, 1919.

81 The News labelled the press campaign against it as "vile and pernicious propoganda" and attacked the daily press as "the purchased prostitute press", "the plutocrat owned press", and "the mendacious purchased press".

82 Allen, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

strikers but The Star as well. The Toronto daily regularly used the labour paper as a source of information on the strike.⁸³ More important, reporters sent by The Star to Winnipeg to cover the dispute developed friendly relations with the editors of The News.⁸⁴ Because such a rapport was established The Star acquired a close insight into the labour side of the struggle, a feat accomplished by no other newspaper.

83 At one point The Star even reproduced the whole front page of The News (special strike edition of May 19). See The Star, May 22, 1919.

84 For greater detail on this important point see pages 117 118.

Chapter 2The Strike and News Coverage -- outside Winnipeg

The strikers have gone pretty far and they have made some mistakes, but they have not perpetrated Bolshevism. The writer came to the city [Winnipeg] understanding that the Strike Committee of Five had inaugurated a reign of terror.... The whole thing is a delusion and a figment of the imagination. There is no Soviet. There¹ was little or no terrorism.

(William Plewman)

Both Canadian and American reporters sent to Winnipeg encountered difficulties in conveying their material to parent newspapers. In conjunction with the closure of all commercial and brokerage telegraph service in the city on May 17 the threat of striker censorship on outgoing news forced correspondents to seek alternative wire outlets for their copy. Some press representatives journeyed to other Canadian centres (Regina, Brandon, Fort William) while others crossed the international boundary into the United States and filed reports from American border points.

1 Excerpt from (Star reporter) William Plewman's first despatch from Winnipeg. The Star, May 23, 1919.

The Toronto press obtained its information about the Winnipeg strike from four sources: its own reporters, American press sources, local "stringers"² in Winnipeg and the Canadian Press news agency.³ Of the six dailies in Toronto only The Star and The Evening Telegram actually sent their own reporters to Winnipeg for "on-the-spot" coverage of the strike. Mary Dawson Snider represented The Evening Telegram. She arrived in Winnipeg in the first week of the dispute and sent back information until June 10. Her reports, datelined from Thief River Falls, Minnesota, suggested the Bolshevik nature of the strike and also demonstrated a sympathy for the

2 Stringers were special correspondents or contacts in various Canadian cities who provided news for individual client newspapers. With C.P. still in its infancy it was a regular practice in journalism for large daily papers and magazines to employ stringers throughout Canada at small expense, not only to answer occasional queries but to provide first hand reports and interpretation of particularly newsworthy happenings. Stringers were often freelance newspapermen who did this extra work while holding a full time position with an established paper. It was not uncommon for one stringer to work for several separate papers on the same news story. Since salaries were very low for reporters stringer work was used to supplement incomes. Payment was based on space rates (the amount written) and as a result quantity frequently replaced quality and exaggeration and invention passed for fact. P.A.C., Dupuis Collection, George Ferguson to Dupuis, January 24, 1972.

3 Canadian Press henceforth C.P..

Citizens' Committee.⁴ The two men from The Star were Main Johnson and William Plewman.⁵ Johnson arrived in Winnipeg on May 18 and sent back eye-witness reports until May 26. Plewman joined his colleague on May 22 and filed stories up to June 27. Material from The Star's two reporters was dated Noyes and Thief River Falls, Minnesota, and Grafton and Grand Forks, North Dakota. Johnson, Plewman and Snider represented the total press corps sent to Winnipeg not only from Toronto but from the whole country.⁶

Within a week of the strike's outbreak the American press corps established a definite advantage over its Canadian counterpart in the dissemination of news out of Winnipeg. By May 20 both Associated Press (A.P.) and United Press (U.P.) had their own staff of operators in Winnipeg ready to carry the news over a leased wire.⁷ With all Winnipeg telegraphers

4 See her reports in The Evening Telegram, May 23, 29 and 31 and June 4, 7 and 10, 1919.

5 Johnson and Plewman accurately interpreted the strike as a serious but legitimate labour dispute and not a Bolshevik plot. Complete information on their reports is contained in Chapter 5.

6 Of the more than 125 Canadian daily newspapers operating in 1919 (The Canadian Newspaper Directory for 1919 lists at least 130) only The Star and The Evening Telegram saw fit to send reporters to provide first hand coverage of the strike.

7 The Star, May 20, 1919. The reason A.P. and U.P. could

on strike Canadian reporters were still forced to journey to American border points to file stories.⁸ This unusual situation lasted until June 12 when C.P. and other operators returned to their jobs.

The sudden arrival of the two large press services of A.P. and U.P. in Winnipeg typified the American interest in the strike. While Canadian newspapers seemed reluctant to release reporters to Winnipeg to obtain news on the strike American papers were assiduously investigating the actions of organized labour in the Western centre. Especially in the first two weeks of the strike, scores of American "news hawks" descended upon Winnipeg and filed back lurid and usually inaccurate stories to their papers.⁹ Reaction in the American

operate a leased wire was that they had brought their own staff and hence were not strikebreakers.

8 From May 17 until June 12 reporters could not even rely on wiring material from alternative Canadian cities because C.P. operators in other western cities "insisted that they should have the right to revise Winnipeg copy bearing on strike conditions." See Nichols, op. cit., p. 205.

9 The Evening Telegram's Winnipeg correspondent reported that staffmen from Duluth, Fargo, Minneapolis and St. Paul had appeared as early as May 17. (The Evening Telegram, May 17, 1919). The Star revealed that by May 20 both A.P. and U.P. had a staff of operators in Winnipeg ready to carry the news on a leased wire. (The Star, May 20, 1919). On May 24, The Free Press announced that a party of ten reporters, including four from Chicago and two from New York, had arrived. (The Free Press, May 24, 1919).

press was in most cases blind and swift. Only four days after the strike began The New York Times headlined an editorial "Leninism in Winnipeg" and denounced events in the city as a "red plan".¹⁰ American reporters declared that the Western city was on the brink of anarchy and that a "soviet" government had been instituted. City officials in Winnipeg denied these unfounded allegations and union spokesmen informed A.P. of their embarrassment of "fake stories of Soviet Government" filed by "irresponsible correspondents."¹¹

As the strike lengthened, Winnipeg attracted a growing host of American press representatives. On May 31 Willis Williams, sent to the strike-torn Canadian city by the conservative Minneapolis Tribune, wrote:

American cities immediately south have their keenest staff representatives in Winnipeg.... Most of the big magazines¹² have their

10 The New York Times, May 19, 1919. Anti-strike editorials appeared later in other New York dailies, see The New York Evening Post and The New York Evening Mail, May 28, 1919.

11 The Star, May 20, 1919.

12 Leslie's Weekly, an American journal, sent its internationally famous photographer, James Hare, to take pictures of the strike. According to Millar, op. cit., p. 244, Hare's photostory, which appeared in Leslie's Weekly June 21, under the caption "Bolshevism in Canada", was slanted against the strikers. This fact may explain why many of his photographs were taken from the Citizens' Committee headquarters, the barnlike Board of Trade building to which admittance was severely limited.

staffmen here [too] ...carefully sizing up conditions here as they may possibly affect the entire North American continent.¹³

Williams' report went on to include reference to "sensational events here" and "the possibility of upheaval spreading."¹⁴

Another instance of the general bias of the American press against the strike was the behaviour of The Chicago Tribune. Not only did the powerful Chicago daily offer stinging editorials¹⁵ and cartoons against the strike but it printed the alarmist reports filed by Arthur M. Evans¹⁶, its own correspondent sent to Winnipeg. Evans arrived in Winnipeg on June 1 and for nearly two weeks sent back reports complaining of enemy aliens, Bolshevik agitators and the impending threat of a Russian soviet system of government. One of his stories centered on "industrial revolution":

The strike in Canada is worthy of serious thought and more -- of serious action in the United States. The ostensible issues

13 The Halifax Morning Chronicle, May 31, 1919.

14 Ibid.

15 The Chicago Tribune also presented misleading headlines on the strike. When a deputation of returned soldiers and strikers paraded to see Premier Norris of Manitoba on May 31 the paper labelled their actions as, "Unions Invade Winnipeg Home of Parliament", The Chicago Tribune, June 1, 1919.

16 Arthur Maybury Evans was a twenty year veteran of Chicago dailies. He joined The Chicago Tribune in May 1918 as a

are a forty-four hour week and the recognition of collective bargaining. But the real issue...is recognition...of soviet control of industry.¹⁷

The exaggerated and reactionary accounts of the general strike by American sources fanned the hysteria of the rapidly climaxing "Red Scare" in the United States.¹⁸ More important, while press reports and editorials such as those from the The Chicago Tribune and The New York Times were intended for domestic consumption, Canadian newspapers, and in turn Canadian readers (including those in Toronto), were susceptible to the influence of the unpleasant American headlines. In Winnipeg (as elsewhere in Canada) editorials and cartoons from American papers and magazines appeared in the local press. Both The Free Press and The Citizen reprinted material from such anti-strike sources as The Chicago Tribune and Leslie's Weekly.¹⁹ According to one source, The

political writer, analyst and forecaster. In May 1919 he had just returned from France, where he had covered President Wilson's European sojourn.

17 The Montreal Star, June 6, 1919.

18 A good analysis of the "Red Scare", the Seattle general strike and their "connection" to the strike in Winnipeg is contained in Robert Murray, Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria 1919-20 (Minneapolis, 1955) pp. 112-114 and Robert Friedheim, The Seattle General Strike (Seattle, 1964) pp. 170-171.

19 See The Free Press, June 2, 10 and 23 and The Citizen,

Citizen even reproduced some of Arthur Evans' reports.²⁰ In Toronto the daily press was also affected by the sensational American press coverage of the strike. The Globe, for example, gave ready exposure to the critical editorial response of important American dailies to Western labour tactics.²¹ The Mail and Empire reprinted A.P. stories, one of which suggested imminent and Dominion-wide revolution beginning in Winnipeg.²² Thus the bad press started by American newspapers and their reporters snowballed across North America and quickly influenced editors in Toronto.

During the strike several of Canada's largest eastern newspapers employed one or both of two well-known Winnipeg based stringers to provide news as well as interpretation of events in the prairie city. These two special correspondents were Garnet C. Porter and John J. Conklin.²³ Porter,

June 4 and 17, 1919. Ironically, The Free Press had itself doubted the validity of the American press despatches. When Dafoe and Macklin co-operated in rigging a wireless station on top of The Free Press building the first message flashed out on May 22 assured: "All reports of violence unfounded...holiday appearance with orderly throng on streets. Military not in evidence." The World, May 23, 1919.

20 The Montreal Star, June 6, 1919.

21 See The Globe, May 19, 29, and 31, 1919.

22 See The Mail and Empire, June 6, 1919.

23 During the strike Porter wrote for The Evening Telegram

at fifty-two and Conklin, at fifty, were both veteran "news anchormen" with connections to Winnipeg's daily press.²⁴ Yet they shared more than just age and profession, for in their reporting of the Winnipeg strike, Porter, and to a lesser extent Conklin, exhibited a definite anti-strike bias. Along with other reasons, this bias, suggests George Ferguson (former Free Press editor-in-chief and colleague of Porter and Conklin), caused their reports to be highly unreliable:

...I would not put too much importance on what Porter and Conklin wrote about the strike ; they were, as I remember them, both men of middle-class point of view and most of them in that category were anti-labour. This might colour what they wrote about the strike. They would also do their best to build up a story so they would be sure of being paid for it. It [stringer work] was not a very scrupulous trade in those days. ...Garnet Porter and John Conklin, very unlike in most ways, were both good, hard drinkers...a fact which may explain some of the copy they wrote.²⁵

and Montreal Star while Conklin wrote for The Star, Ottawa Journal, Montreal Star and Halifax Morning Chronicle.

24 Porter worked for The Telegram from 1906-1917 and Conklin remained with The Free Press from 1886-1937.

25 P.A.C., Dupuis Collection, George Ferguson to Dupuis, January 24, 1972.

However most readers outside of Winnipeg knew nothing of the personal background of Porter and Conklin, and it is likely that the public considered stringer reports (impressively bylined "special correspondent") a dependable if not desirable source of information.

Garnet Clay Porter²⁶ was a confirmed Tory who once thundered that no Grit was ever to be cheered in The Telegram.²⁷ A staunch supporter of the Conservative party, he was always eager to be of service to the "cause", as he put it.²⁸ When Arthur Meighen and James A. Calder embarked on a Dominion wide speaking tour in 1920 Porter wrote advance articles for the government leaders and helped to arrange the Western leg of their trip. According to C. H. Ireland, Porter's

26 Garnet Porter, known popularly in Canadian newspaper circles as "The Colonel", was one of the West's most colourful press figures. Born May 27, 1866 at Russellville, Kentucky, Porter came to Canada at thirty-four, leaving behind an adventure-filled past which included episodes as a legal counsel, Kentucky outlaw and feudist, soldier of fortune and Yukon prospector. Settling in Toronto in 1900 he entered newspaper work and developed into an ace reporter for The World. In 1904 he was persuaded by the owner of The Calgary Herald, Robert Edwards, to become his editor-in-chief. Two years later the newly appointed editor of The Telegram, M. E. Nichols, convinced Porter that Winnipeg was the place to end his wanderlust. Porter was appointed successively managing editor and editor-in-chief of The Telegram, leaving it sometime in 1917. The Calgary Herald, March 6, 1945.

27 A. R. Ford, As The World Wags On (Toronto, 1950) p. 6.

28 P.A.C., Arthur Meighen Papers, Vol. 56, G. C. Porter to C. H. Ireland, December 6, 1920. Ireland was private

thorough and useful work was one of the principal factors in the success of the trip.²⁹

Apart from his regular duties while on The Telegram, Porter acted as a special correspondent for a number of Canadian and American newspapers. In 1917 he established Porter's International Press News Bureau as a one-man version of C.P.. From this small operation he provided certain papers not only with occasional information on the trend of events in Western Canada but news coverage of special incidents. In the summer of 1919 such a unique assignment materialized. For Garnet Porter, a man who revelled in covering a sensational news story³⁰, the Winnipeg general strike was made to order.

"Secret service men of Canada and the United States are planning to spring a trap on a known number of I.W.W. and other red agitators who have crossed the boundary into Canada to help put over the program of Soviet-Labor rule."³¹ So read one of Porter's more colourful reports of events swirling around the strike in Winnipeg. From May 26 until June 9

secretary to Hon. J. A. Calder, the Minister of Immigration and Colonization 1918-1921.

29 P.A.C., Meighen Papers, Vol. 56, Ireland to Porter, December 20, 1920.

30 Ford, op. cit., p. 12.

31 The Montreal Star, June 9, 1919. As previously indicated Porter also wrote for The Montreal Star during the strike.

he sent lengthy reports of events in the Western city to The Evening Telegram. While he complimented the Citizens' Committee as a "marvelous organization"³² he denounced the actions of the strike as a "labour siege."³³ When marches by pro-strike returned servicemen took place he labelled the demonstrations as the "radicals' parades", whereas counter-demonstrations by "Loyalist"³⁴ veterans were the work of the "sane returned men of Winnipeg."³⁵ It was clear that The Evening Telegram's special correspondent opposed the strike, but what was not popularly known (at least outside of Winnipeg) was that Porter, according to his close friend and colleague Julius Woodward, "...had no [personal] use for J. S. Woodsworth, John Queen, [George] Armstrong and the rest of the Winnipeg strike leaders."³⁶

When the general strike seemed imminent in Winnipeg John Bone, the managing editor of The Star, contacted John

32 The Montreal Star, May 28, 1919.

33 The Montreal Star, May 29, 1919.

34 "Loyalist" became the term many Winnipeggers used to describe an anti-strike returned soldier.

35 The Evening Telegram, May 26, 1919.

36 P.A.C., Dupuis Collection, J. S. Woodward to Dupuis, February 5, 1972.

James Conklin to cover news emanating from the city.³⁷ Bone informed him that The Star was sending Main Johnson to report the dispute and an agreement was reached that Johnson would be met on arrival, filled in with news and given general co-operation in gathering and sending information back to Toronto.³⁸ As a result, for two days, May 21 and May 22, Conklin helped Johnson cover the strike, even collaborating with him in articles for The Star. After May 23 Conklin ceased his stringer work with The Star and became special correspondent for a number of other client newspapers.

Unlike Garnet Porter, John Conklin had leanings to the Liberal party, was a liberal in philosophy and sympathized with labour unions.³⁹ In his brief stint as stringer for The Star Conklin favoured the strikers. In contrast to the

37 J. J. Conklin was another of Western Canada's veteran newsmen. Born in Forest, Ontario in 1869 he came to Winnipeg as a boy of thirteen. An editor of the University of Manitoba newspaper, he joined The Free Press in 1886. Conklin was to remain with Sifton's mighty enterprise for the next fifty-one years, holding more positions on the paper than any other employee. In 1919 his department on The Free Press was drama and music, however, as testimony to his versatile and enterprising brand of journalism he was also Winnipeg correspondent for a number of Canadian, American and British newspapers including The Chicago Tribune and The London Times. The Winnipeg Free Press, February 8, 1952.

38 Most of the information on Conklin's activities during the strike is based on co-correspondence to the author from Aidan Conklin, son of John Conklin. P.A.C., Dupuis Collection, A. A. Conklin to Dupuis, February 17, 1972.

39 Ibid. According to his son, John Conklin voted for one

rumours that foreign elements controlled Winnipeg labour, he observed:

A peculiar thing is that the Strike Committee in charge in Winnipeg are all without exception English or Canadians. There are no foreigners on the executive committee, and one and all claim they are saving the West from the Bolshevik system...."⁴⁰

However as the strike entered the early days of June his opinions began to match those of Porter. On June 3, Conklin described the strike leaders as "...the men who bitterly opposed conscription and all active effort to aid progress of the war."⁴¹ A week later he wrote that the strikers represented "...union labour of the worst type."⁴² Why his views underwent such a change is not clear. Perhaps he became captive of the myth of a revolutionary conspiracy. Possibly he felt the fabric of Winnipeg's city life was being ripped apart. Maybe his early sympathy for the strike had been tempered by the fact that he knew The Star would more readily pay for a pro-strike interpretation. In any case, what is clear is that while in the employ of The Star he wrote despatches

of the Winnipeg strike leaders, A. A. Heaps, when the labour alderman entered federal politics in the 1920's.

40 The Star, May 21, 1919.

41 The Montreal Star, June 3, 1919.

42 The Halifax Morning Chronicle, June 10, 1919.

sympathetic to the walkout and after this turned against the strikers.

On Saturday May 17, 1919 over 200 commercial and brokerage telegraphers in Winnipeg joined the city-wide shut-down by fellow-workers and walked off their jobs. Among the wire service men who abandoned their keys were the six unionized operators at C.P. headquarters in Winnipeg. The Central Strike Committee soon notified C.P. management that news reports could leave the city if first subjected to striker censorship; however, this proposal was immediately rejected.⁴³ Temporarily at least the city was in a virtual communications blackout.⁴⁴ This dilemma facing C.P. management was resolved by May 21. With the co-operation of A.P. a private wire was cut into St. Paul, Minnesota where American operators picked up the transmissions sent by C.P.'s Frank Turner⁴⁵ from Winnipeg. By simply relaying the messages back into Canadian

43 P.A.C., Canadian Press Censor Files, Vol. 156, File 170, Minutes of Western Division Canadian Press Limited, June 6, 1919.

44 The Central Strike Committee allowed the Great North West Telegraph Company to remain open but only to handle the transmission of death messages, returned soldiers notifications and official communications dealing with the strike. See The King V. William Ivens et al. Testimony of William Percy, The Tribune, February 2, 1920.

45 Frank J. Turner was chief operator of C.P.'s Western Division in Winnipeg. An expert Morse operator he worked day and night during the strike both sending and receiving messages. According to J. S. Woodward, this heroic action for C.P. earned Turner the nickname "Never break Turner".

centres C.P. maintained emergency operation until June 12 when telegraphers returned to their jobs and normal service was restored.⁴⁶

When the general strike became front-page billing in Canada, despatches from C.P.'s Winnipeg bureau became a major news source for Toronto papers and their readers. As communications to and from the city were reduced to a trickle, the demand for fresh information became more acute. With its emergency "drop service" established with A.P. in the United States C.P. once again began to supply material out of Winnipeg. Unknown to most Canadian readers however, several factors worked against the transmission of objective reports via this source.

The first obstacle to an unbiased news account of the strike by C.P. can be traced to the source of material that the press service used. Since its local staff (no larger than six or seven men) did little independent news gathering during the strike, the bureau relied heavily on the press reports from Winnipeg's three daily newspapers. Reporters from these three papers fed stories to C.P. in the following manner: after a story was written a duplicate was forwarded to the Winnipeg bureau where it was then edited and

46 Nichols, op. cit., p. 205.

sent over the wire to all other Canadian newspapers. What is significant then is that the almost exclusive news source for C.P. on the strike was The Free Press, Tribune and Telegram. As already observed these papers were unified in their opposition to the strike. Thus, it was highly unlikely that information collected by C.P. from these sources would be fair to the strikers' cause.

Then too Edward Macklin, the general manager of The Free Press, was also the first vice-president of C.P.. When leased wire operators from C.P. in other Western cities insisted upon revising copy concerning the Winnipeg strike Macklin called an emergency meeting of Western directors in Regina on June 9 to deal with the situation.⁴⁷ If Macklin could dictate policy to C.P.'s Western board of directors he could certainly influence C.P. management in Winnipeg. Considering the stance of The Free Press towards the strikers it was painfully evident how Macklin would have viewed pro-strike despatches transmitted right from under his own nose.⁴⁸

In addition, the manager of C.P. in Winnipeg, J. F. B. Livesay, had assisted Canada's chief press censor in an

47 Nichols, op. cit., p. 205. Macklin considered the action by other C.P. telegraphers as "flaming arrogance."

48 In 1919 C.P. rented office space for their Winnipeg bureau on the fourth floor of The Free Press building on Carlton Street.

anti-Bolshevist campaign undertaken in the spring of 1919.⁴⁹ According to Millar, Chambers' efforts to smother socialist activity and ferret out foreign agitators was carried out between January and April.⁵⁰ What Chambers expected of Livesay was made clear in a letter in late February: "You will, however, realize the importance of keeping as firm a hand as possible upon publicity, particularly in view of the Bolshevist propaganda which unfortunately, is quite pronounced in some districts."⁵¹

The Winnipeg bureau of C.P. was a vital communications link between the east and west. As a result Livesay's responsibility for its operation was great and his authority absolute. During the strike he had full and final say over the content of all transmissions wired out of the city by C.P. service. Although most of these C.P. despatches were factual, non-committal and impersonal, a reading of some of the wire stories which appeared in the Toronto press strongly suggests

49 Canada's chief press censor was Lieut.-Col., Ernest J. Chambers.

50 Among those active in the crusade were Chambers, C. H. Cahan (Borden's former Director of Public Safety), Commissioner A. B. Perry and Comptroller A. A. Maclean of the Royal North West Mounted Police.

51 P.A.C., Canadian Press Censor Files, Vol. 157, Folder 195-2, Chambers to Livesay, February 27, 1919.

the presence of a direct Bolshevist threat in Winnipeg. Most striking was the early account offered by The Times. On May 16, the day the walkout took place, the paper's Ottawa Bureau sent an analysis of the dispute, based so it claimed, on a C.P. despatch from Winnipeg:

There is no doubt that there are many red agitators, chiefly aliens, who are only too anxious to foment trouble and will be ready to seize upon these difficulties to start a revolution. The mounted police are watching closely any foreign districts where it is thought agitators might be at work.⁵²

Several days later The Globe reported on its front-page a C.P. story which it captioned "To Oust Reds From Unions". By-lined by J. F. B. Livesay the despatch in part read:

The question of permanent industrial peace in Winnipeg, evolving from the present general strike of local Labor unions which developed phases nation-wide in scope, rested to-night on the future status of the radical enemy alien. Leading citizens of Winnipeg including Mayor Charles F. Gray and Members of the Common Council [City Hall] to-day joined with

52 The Times, May 16, 1919. It is interesting to note that this story was filed by Arthur R. Ford of the Ottawa Bureau. Ford, before he became Ottawa correspondent of The Times, had been the press representative of The (Winnipeg) Telegram for five years (1911-1916).

Provincial and Federal authorities in informing union Labor workers of this city that either the alien extremists in the union ranks must be ousted or every force of law and order will be concentrated to rid the Dominion of this element.⁵³

Later in June, as a story in The Mail and Empire indicates, the strike still continued to make headlines. Under the title "Rally Against Winnipeg 'Reds'" the paper presented a C.P. story claiming:

This was a bad day for the Bolsheviks in Winnipeg. Three thousand returned soldiers marched through the streets today to the Parliament Buildings and to the City Hall to announce their intention to uphold law and order and constitute authority.... Banners confronted Premier Norris reading "We Stand For Constituted Authority"... "To Hell With The Aliens" and ... "Down With Bolshevism". Vice-President [Capt. C. F. G.] Wheeler of the Imperial Veterans Association, who spoke, said he wanted to see all the alien enemies sent to Quebec and forced to swim the river.⁵⁴

The effect of such C.P. despatches upon the Toronto daily press and its readers cannot be underestimated, especially when one considers that The Mail and Empire, World, Times and Globe

53 The Globe, May 23, 1919.

54 The Mail and Empire, June 5, 1919.

relied almost exclusively on such a source for daily information of the strike.

Like the three city dailies and The Citizen, the various other press sources (excluding, as will be shown later, The Star) reporting the Winnipeg strike closed ranks against the walkout. In effect the only version of the dispute likely to reach newspapers in Toronto was that advanced and endorsed by the Citizens' Committee. What is apparent is that even if the Toronto daily press had been sympathetic to the strike there were virtually no sources (save The News) furnishing such a viewpoint. But as it happened the interpretation of the One Thousand only reinforced the prejudices of the anti-strike Toronto press.

Chapter 3

The Anti-Strike Toronto Press

Where the proprietor is also publisher, as in the case of single, non-chain newspapers, it is, of course, possible for the owner to determine editorial policy in pretty direct fashion, even with regard to specific news stories and editorial comment.¹

(W. H. Kesterton)

The political, social and economic outlook of most of the Toronto press made it sympathetic to the Citizens' Committee version of the walkout in Winnipeg. With the exception of The Globe the anti-strike press in Toronto supported the Conservative party.² In fact even the historically Liberal Globe was committed at the time of the tie-up to backing the Union Government. Thus Sir Robert Borden's administration had few enemies in Toronto newspaper circles. The social and economic dispositions of these same papers were determined by men like John R. Robinson of The Evening Tele-

1 W. H. Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto, 1967) p. 84.

2 For example, W. F. Maclean, The World's proprietor, was a successful federal Conservative politician in Toronto ridings from 1892 to 1926.

gram, William Douglas of The Mail and Empire and William Jaffray of The Globe. All were wealthy and hardened businessmen, entrepreneurs of marked conservative character who catered to a clientele that was not for the most part recruited from the working class.³

Finally, a recent study has indicated that, in 1919, the genuine fear of an international communist conspiracy overtook such newspaper proprietors.⁴ Wartime hatred of dissenters, pacifists and "aliens" was compounded after the Russian Revolution by apprehension about anarchists, foreign agitators and revolutionaries. Representatives of such militant labour unions as the Industrial Workers of the World -- known popularly as the I.W.W., or "Wobblies" -- were suspected of being agents in the pay of Moscow.⁵ It was in this

3 On John R. Robinson see Ron Poulton, The Paper Tyrant (Toronto, 1971) p. 182, on William Douglas see J. E. Middleton, A History of the Municipality of Toronto, Vol. 1. (New York, 1923) p. 426, and on William Jaffray see Kesterton, op. cit., p. 85. For a short description of all five of Toronto's anti-strike dailies see Frederick Griffin, Variety Show (Toronto, 1936) pp. 16-21.

4 Elliot M. Samuels, "The Red Scare in Ontario: The Reaction of the Ontario Press to the Internal and External Threat of Bolshevism, 1917-1918," M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1972, p. 184. Aside from labour and socialist publications only a few Ontario newspapers sympathized with the new Russian regime. Most notable were The Star and The Ottawa Citizen, what Samuels terms, the "progressive Liberal dailies."

5 The I.W.W. was a revolutionary syndicalist trade union

atmosphere that the anti-strike Toronto press accepted the red intrigue as a real threat.

Therefore the Toronto daily press had several reasons for opposing the strike. Because they supported the government of Sir Robert Borden they sanctioned Ottawa's interpretation of the strike, namely, that the work stoppage was a cloak to overturn constituted authority. Toronto newspaper owners viewed the walkout from the same viewpoint as the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand. That is together they saw that the essential need in Winnipeg was to first maintain law and order and only then deal with the demands of organized labour. Also, editors in Toronto realized the necessity of providing regular readers with copy suited to their tastes. Since the clientele of the anti-strike Toronto press was not drawn largely from the working classes, these papers could easily present an interpretation unsympathetic to labour. Finally there was the effect of the hostility of these same newspapers to leftist activity in general. Owners of these five dailies connected the dispute in Winnipeg with the "Red

founded in Chicago in 1905 and lasting as an organization until 1924. The Wobblies planned to combine the American working class, and eventually wage earners all over the world, into one big trade union with an industrial basis, a syndicalist philosophy and a revolutionary aim. See Patrick Renshaw, The Wobblies (New York, 1967) pp. 21-26.

Scare" and evaluation (by their editors) of subsequent events was coloured by an anti-Bolshevik bias.

The news reports of the anti-strike Toronto press on the dispute in Winnipeg emphasized that Bolshevism and the O.B.U. were behind the labour troubles. However a careful analysis of two of these stories demonstrates that fact was often replaced by half-truths and false accusation. For example on May 19 The Times, via Arthur Ford of its Ottawa Bureau, reported:

There is not the slightest doubt that there is a large "Red" element in Winnipeg, who have been planning for months for a revolution in the west and are prepared to seize upon the present disturbance, if at all possible, to establish a soviet in Winnipeg and put into force the Bolsheviki principles.⁶

What was suggested was the presence in Winnipeg of a clandestine communist cell (or cells) using the strike as a cover to execute a well planned Bolshevik uprising throughout Western Canada. In fact, as D. C. Masters points out, none of the strike leaders was a Russian revolutionary, nor was the strike used as a shield by radicals for a conspiracy.⁷ "They

6 The Times, May 19, 1919.

7 Masters, op. cit., p. 31.

might talk loosely about soviets" adds Masters "but there was nothing in their conduct of the strike to suggest the Russian tradition of terrorism and conspiracy."⁸

The newspapers also reported that many people, including the Minister of Labour, Gideon Robertson, thought that the O.B.U. was the underlying cause of the disturbance in Winnipeg:

Hon. Gideon Robertson, Dominion Minister of Labor, in a statement made to the press before leaving for Ottawa...said that the promoters of the general strike in Winnipeg "now sit in the ashes of their own folly," that "sympathetic strikes must always fail," and that the Winnipeg strike is "the first rehearsal of the play written at Calgary."⁹

In fact by May 1919 the O.B.U. was in no position to organize and direct such an ambitious venture.¹⁰ The strike was not planned at the Calgary Convention but was the result of a spontaneous and overwhelming action by Winnipeg workers. Either Robertson was misinformed or he intended to use the O.B.U. as a scapegoat.

8 Ibid.

9 The Mail and Empire, June 2, 1919.

10 See pages 69-70.

One final point should be made about news reports chosen by the anti-strike Toronto press. At least one pro-labour source was available -- The News¹¹ -- but the Toronto press seldom referred to it. Even if The News was quoted such statements taken from it were anti-labour in slant. For instance on May 21 The World reported that The News "has frankly confessed that it is out for soviet government as they have it in Russia."¹² In fact The News had merely repeated what some strikers had suggested as a possible outcome of the dispute. The strikers' paper did not have an editorial policy which included a design for communist dictatorship.

As the strike continued into late May and June the Toronto press printed the comments of individuals directly and indirectly concerned with the conflict in Winnipeg. However one viewpoint, that of the Citizens' Committee, dominated the news columns:

...Harold Riley, president of the Returned Soldiers' Loyalist Association announced [today] that literature endorsing Russian bolsheviki principles and approving a soviet government

11 Quotations from The News were available not only through regular news channels via Winnipeg but also from first hand copies of the paper which arrived in Toronto as early as May 22. See The Star, May 22, 1919.

12 The World, May 21, 1919.

plan for Winnipeg has been
obtained by members of the
association....¹³

What was not reported by The World was the fact that the Returned Soldiers' Loyalist Association, with the help of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand, was formed to oppose the walkout.¹⁴ Also, there was no mention that Colonel Harold Riley (the son of a prominent Winnipeg banker and insurance man) was committed to the "O.B.U.-Bolsheviki" interpretation of the strike.¹⁵

Again sometimes the reporters did not reveal the biased source of their information. For example the following extract in The Globe gives no indication that it came directly from The Citizen:

The Strike Committee originally consisted of five men, every one of whom had opposed conscription.... F. J. Dixon from his seat in the Manitoba Legislature...made a bitter attack on Great Britain's

13 The World, June 10, 1919.

14 Masters, op. cit., p. 95.

15 Millar, op. cit., pp. 230-232. As the following passage from The World (June 12) demonstrates the editorial page was used in the same fashion:

Mr. Bulman, of the Manufacturers' Association, knows a revolution when he sees one. He calls the Winnipeg strike an industrial revolution. It is a little more than industrial. It is a social

record as an Imperialist power.
 Ald. John Queen and Ald. A. A.
 Heaps...are Radical Socialists....
 And so on down the list. The
 strike leaders have openly
 sympathized with the Soviets in
 Russia and have preached the
 doctrines of Lenin and Trotsky.¹⁶

Headlines that appeared over news stories of Winnipeg's labour difficulties provided another avenue through which Toronto newspapers could present the strike to its readers. It is important to note that news editors on the various dailies decided the caption or headline for a story. Also, they had the power to subject all incoming press despatches to a final editing. Thus by selective omission the news editor could substantially alter the meaning of an original despatch. A reading of some of the headlines which appeared in the Toronto press and a tracing of the story back to its source reveals that news editors often headlined those events and incidents which showed the strike in a bad light.

and political revolution as well.
 We never had any doubt about the
 real source of the inspiration
 behind the strike. Canadians do
 not act in that way....

William J. Bulman was president of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in 1919. His statement was not surprising since he was a former vice-president of the Winnipeg Board of Trade and a director of the Trustee (Trust) Company of Winnipeg, institutions which were both threatened financially by the strike.

16 The Globe, June 10, 1919.

On May 21 The World captioned a front-page story "Citizen's Army Preparing To Take Vigorous Action." In part the report stated:

The strike situation is rapidly approaching a crisis.... Gen. [H. D. B.] Ketchen...has called for volunteers to a citizens' army, and between five and six thousand have volunteered to don the uniform whenever it is necessary to combat the Bolshevik element, which¹⁷ appears intent on revolution.

The term "Citizen's Army" was misleading. In fact Ketchen had called out a small portion of the militia for active duty. Also, the reason for this move was not "to combat the Bolshevik element" but to assure the maintenance of law and order and the protection of private property. While this step was unusual it was necessary given the power vacuum created by labour's successful city-wide shutdown. Furthermore Ketchen only took such a measure after it was requested by Mayor Gray.¹⁸

Another example concerned demonstrations and marches in Winnipeg by ex-servicemen for and against the strike. On June 5 The Evening Telegram headlined a report

17 The World, May 21, 1919.

18 Masters, op. cit., p. 77.

"Down With Bolshevism!" Thunder 10,000 Soldiers." The story began:

"We all know that away behind this labor trouble is the Red element sent here by other countries," said Mayor Gray addressing a crowd of eight or ten thousand packed back of the city hall.... He hoped "those fellows who are being misled would get some sense" and said if they did not "we will have to teach them." The soldiers addressed were ready to act as instructors instantaneously. Very wisely the strikers had been urged by their leaders to¹⁹ keep inside their homes today.

This report was misleading on several counts. First there were errors in the number of anti-strike ex-servicemen claimed to be present. While the headline asserted that ten thousand had voiced "Down With Bolshevism", the accompanying story referred only to "a crowd" (not necessarily all soldiers) of eight or ten thousand. There were approximately ten thousand returned men in Winnipeg, but, as Masters points out, they were split on their attitude to the strike.²⁰ Therefore it would have been impossible for either eight or ten thousand returned soldiers to be present at any given anti-strike

19 The Evening Telegram, June 5, 1919.

20 Masters, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

gathering. The second misleading aspect of the story was the claim that the strikers, in fear of the wrath of the anti-strike veterans, were "inside their homes today". In fact, according to The Star's own correspondent, on the same day, June 4, "multitudes" of strikers and pro-strike ex-servicemen were attending their own mass meeting.²¹

Editors also believed that the trouble in Winnipeg was a terrifying manifestation of Bolshevism.²² For example, The Times remarked, under the caption "Need For Sobre Thought":

Winnipeg is in the hands of the I.W.W.'s and Bolshevists who are bent upon prostituting organized labor to their own aggrandisement, upon overthrowing the established order of civilization and upon creating a proletariat dictatorship which would be as tyrannical as any autocracy the world has ever seen.²³

21 See The Star, June 4, 1919. Masters corroborates The Star's claim remarking that the pro and anti-strike groups almost clashed in front of the Manitoba legislature.

22 For the purposes of this chapter editorial analysis will consist of straight editorials and editorial notes. Editorial notes were short comments, often of humorous or satirical nature, used to emphasize a new item of current interest. Limited reference will be made to cartoons. In the case of straight editorials the heading is provided. Editorial snippets had no such captions.

23 The Times, May 16, 1919. Three days later The Times even suggested that Lenin and Trotsky were in direct communication with the "Reds" in Winnipeg. See The Times, May 19, 1919.

And The Globe read "The Lesson of Winnipeg":

The great majority of the strikers [in Winnipeg] had no notion when they walked out that they would play into the hands of revolutionary firebrands.... The Winnipeg situation ought to resolve the real trade unionists to shake off the Bolshevist element and reassume control of the labor movement. They have allowed themselves ...to be elbowed aside by noisy, pushing fellows who have nothing to offer...except...destruction, anarchy and lawlessness.²⁴

Shorter editorial comment was equally xenophobic:

Winnipeg now seems to be in process of being put on the map as the "Petrograd of Canada".²⁵

Bolsheviks²⁶ still keep Winnipegging away.

Some slight progress has been made in the direction of²⁷ changing its name to Winnipegsky.

The Russian conspiracy theme was stressed in cartoons as well. A typical example appeared on the front-page of The Globe's issue of June 2. Captioned "Winnipeg Labour

24 The Globe, May 23, 1919.

25 The Evening Telegram, May 17, 1919.

26 The Evening Telegram, May 21, 1919.

27 The Mail and Empire, May 23, 1919.

Ought To Take A Look Around First", the illustration depicted a foreign demagogue (Dr. Agitator) offering an unsuspecting workingman (Winnipeg labour) the cure to all his ills. In the background a poisoned Russian worker groaned, "That's what he gave to me."²⁸

As the strike lengthened and reached its climax the attack on Bolshevism continued unabated. The Evening Telegram demanded that Canada "Banish the Bolshie":

The Bolshevist seeks to ally with himself workers whose grievance is the inaction of the present Government. The Bolshevist himself is against the action of any government. His poor pate being full of that anarchic idea, he thinks he is the only fit person to run the country. Instead of that,²⁹ he should run out of it.

And The Mail and Empire insisted on "Rounding Up The Gang":

The ringleaders and inciters of anarchy are being rounded up, and their headquarters and places of residences are being ransacked for evidence of the unlawful nature of their acti-

28 The Globe, June 2, 1919. This particular cartoon, the work of The Chicago Tribune's John McCutcheon, had been front-page material for the American daily on May 29, 1919. This is the illustration reproduced on the front-piece.

29 The Evening Telegram, June 3, 1919.

vities. There must be no stopping until the I.W.W. agitators, Bolsheviks and other friends of the enemy in the West are cleaned out. Our cities in Western Canada must not be little Warsaws or Pragues, but orderly centres occupied by loyal citizens of the British dominion. The Government must not stop halfway....³⁰

Editorial snippets sustained these longer assaults:

Winnipeg's pegging holes in the gas-bag of revolution.³¹

What's in a name? A Bolshevik rejoiced in the name of Bray.³²

Everyone is agreed that the country ought to be purged of alien agitators. Then, when is the purging to begin?³³

The anti-strike Toronto press also believed the O.B.U. was directing the Winnipeg general strike. This belief rested on two false premises. First was the assumption that, by May 1919, the O.B.U. was capable of effectively planning and managing such an undertaking. In fact, as Martin Robin notes, it was not until mid-June 1919, a month after the strike

30 The Mail and Empire, June 18, 1919.

31 The Globe, June 11, 1919.

32 The Evening Telegram, June 12, 1919. R. E. Bray was a returned soldier in Winnipeg who supported the strike.

33 The Mail and Empire, June 14, 1919.

began, that the O.B.U. came into existence as an organization.³⁴ Secondly Toronto newspapers believed that the O.B.U. was identical in aims and philosophy to the militant and revolutionary I.W.W.. As The Globe claimed, the O.B.U. was "nothing more than the I.W.W. camouflaged."³⁵ However the O.B.U. was much less in favour of direct and violent action than its American counterpart. As Robin indicates, "The One Big Union was not to be a revolutionary industrial union."³⁶ Despite this the Toronto daily press identified the O.B.U. with Russian revolutionary action and charged the embryonic organization with complicity in Winnipeg's labour troubles. The World found the situation "Still More Threatening":

Government representatives in Winnipeg have accepted the view which The World has all along taken that the strike has been fomented by the Bolshevistic or "One Big Union" element in the west.

And The Globe added: "O.B.U. seems determined that Western Canada shall not be a manufacturing country."³⁸ The Times

34 Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930 (Kingston, 1968) p. 187.

35 The Globe, May 19, 1919.

36 Robin, op. cit., p. 188.

37 The World, May 27, 1919.

38 The Globe, May 29, 1919.

cheered as "The Ringleaders [were] Seized":

In apprehending them [the arrested strike leaders] the Government is fighting the battle of the sane Labor leaders who from the first have denounced the sympathetic general strike as revolutionary in its methods and purposes. The simple fact is that the One Big Union is to-day the chief foe alike of regular Labor Unions and of constituted authority throughout the Dominion....

By 1919 the notion of a "general strike" was fairly widespread. In at least one city prior to the Winnipeg experience such a strike had been put to the test.⁴⁰ As well, at the Calgary Convention there was open talk by many delegates of recourse to this tactic to obtain demands. The Toronto press considered this technique used by Winnipeg labour as yet another indication of disregard for law and order. The Mail and Empire announced: "Those sympathetic strikes in the West have none of ours".⁴¹ The Globe suggested: "Winnipeg appears to need an Ole Hanson."⁴² Attacking the "Bolshevists and

39 The Times, June 18, 1919.

40 In February 1919 Seattle, Washington experienced a short but acrimonious general strike.

41 The Mail and Empire, May 17, 1919.

42 The Globe, May 22, 1919. Ole Hanson was the mayor of Seattle who had quickly crushed the general strike in that American city.

Profiteers" The Mail and Empire claimed:

...the general strike is something that should be put as completely outside the pole of right.... The general strike spreading like wild-fire through the vicious agency of the sympathetic strike ought to be forbidden as a thing inconsistent with the authority of the State and as a menace to the peace and order of the Commonwealth.... If the sympathetic strike is made unlawful and subject to stern penalties, the general strike will be easily disposed of.⁴³

According to The Evening Telegram the "Defeat Of [the] General Strike Is [a] Victory For Labor And Liberty":

Winnipeg has defeated the general strike. The general strike has failed to destroy Winnipeg. Canada's general strikers selected an almost ideal battle ground for a trial of their raw theories. Winnipeg is a European city in the nationality of a large element of Winnipeg's population. If a general strike cannot succeed in Winnipeg, a general strike cannot succeed anywhere in Canada.... If a general strike be not smashed to pieces the country must fall to pieces.⁴⁴

43 The Mail and Empire, May 30, 1919.

44 The Evening Telegram, June 25, 1919.

The technique of the sympathetic strike was also attacked via cartoons. A typical illustration appeared in the June 5 edition of The World. Carried on the editorial page, the scene depicted a "long suffering citizen" forced to adopt the doorstep babe of the sympathetic strike. The caption read: "It's Not Mine -- Why Should They Wish It On Me?"⁴⁵

According to such authorities as Masters, Graham and McNaught, organized labour in Winnipeg embarked upon the general strike to secure the right of collective bargaining and wage increases. However anti-strike Toronto newspapers, like those in Winnipeg, brushed aside these original grievances as a pretense for more sinister motives and relegated them to a position of secondary importance. As one daily explained: "trade unionists of that city [Winnipeg]...were used as a cat's-paw by Russell and other One Big Union sympathizers to pull Bolshevist nuts out of the fire."⁴⁶ They were, claimed The Globe, making of the general public "Victims Of Industrial War":

45 The World, June 5, 1919. In their kindest interpretation cartoons depicted labour's use of the general strike as a chase after the rainbow. See The Mail and Empire, June 19, 1919.

46 The Globe, June 23, 1919. Radical labourite Bob Russell, a machinist by trade, was a member of the Socialist party of Canada, secretary of the Winnipeg Metal Trades Council, spokesman for Machinists' Local 122 in Winnipeg and active in the O.B.U. movement. During the strike he was one of the leading members of the Strike Committee.

Behind the metal workers and their call for a general strike...to obtain the recognition of the principle of collective bargaining in its widest application are many avowed social revolutionists. They are using the present dispute to couple Canadian trades unionism with Bolshevism of the most reckless sort.... Their avowed object is not shorter hours, or better working conditions, or the recognition of trade unions, but the destruction of the present social system and the introduction of the Marxian form of political and industrial organization.... 47

The Globe even felt "The Sympathetic Strike" obscured all original issues of the strike:

Winnipeg entered the fourth week of the great industrial struggle that has seriously crippled the city's business with the determination to make an end of the sympathetic strike...[this] issue is clearly recognized as of supreme importance. The original cause of the upheaval -- a strike for the eight-hour day... and for the recognition...of the right of collective bargaining... 48 -- has receded into the background.

On the night of June 16-17 representatives of the federal government in Winnipeg directly intervened to break

47 The Globe, May 19, 1919.

48 The Globe, June 10, 1919.

the walkout. Twelve strikers, including eight prominent strike leaders, were arrested by the Dominion government on charges of seditious conspiracy.⁴⁹ This move was an attempt to rob the strike of its leadership and precipitate a general collapse in the labour ranks. Four days later the authorities demonstrated a further show of force. On June 21 Royal North West Mounted Police, special police and armed soldiers were used to prevent a giant silent parade of indignation by strikers and sympathetic returned soldiers. A riot ensued in which two people died and scores were wounded. Faced with the imposition of martial law and the threat of military intervention the strike collapsed a few days later. In Toronto the Conservative press endorsed the government's policy of direct intervention.⁵⁰ In fact papers like The Times, as the following editorial demonstrates, had called for strong action as early as May 20:

49 The arrested men were R. B. Russell, William Ivens, R. E. Bray, Alderman John Queen (advertising manager of The News and a member of the City Council for Ward 5), Alderman A. A. Heaps (also a member for Ward 5), George Armstrong (a streetcar motorman who was active in the O.B.U. movement), William Pritchard (a prominent British Columbia labourite and O.B.U. supporter), and R. J. Johns (active with Russell in Winnipeg's Machinists' Local 122 and the W.T.L.C.). Four Russians were also taken into custody including Matthew Charitonoff, editor of the Ruthenian labour paper The Working People.

50 The Globe, a Liberal paper, was more restrained in its

Plunder, murder and rape must not become ruling principles under the British flag. Organized Labor must not be overturned and submerged by the enemies of civilization. The Government must act with a strong hand to save the day.⁵¹

However it was The Mail and Empire which best expressed the support of the Tory press for Ottawa's measures. "Down With The Reds" the paper shouted:

In its dealing with the revolutionary movement in Winnipeg the Ottawa Government avoided hasty action. It was patient to a fault.... The Government has [now] started on the right course, and we hope it will not waiver a hair-breadth therefrom until it has put down and disposed of the whole gang of revolutionaries now busy in this country.... The Government has begun [to act] and it must not stop until it has crushed the viper of Bolshevism, no matter to what lengths it has to go to do that.⁵²

Seldom did opinions sympathetic to labour's actions in Winnipeg find their way into print and if they did they

comment. Yet even this daily had suggested earlier in the strike "The Minister of Labor has gone to Winnipeg, how about the Minister of Defense." See The Globe, May 20, 1919.

51 The Times, May 20, 1919.

52 The Mail and Empire, June 19, 1919.

were either underrated or ridiculed by editorial commentary. When the Reverend Ernest Thomas of the Methodist Army and Navy Board told the Montreal Methodist Conference that there was no Bolshevism or pro-Germanism in the Winnipeg labour movement, and further stated that the papers of eastern Canada had misrepresented the situation, the response in The Times was: "All the evidence tends to confound and deny the statement of Rev. Ernest Thomas, whose Socialistic sympathies seem to have clouded his judgment."⁵³

From the period May 15 to June 25 The Mail and Empire, World, Times, Evening Telegram and Globe printed over seventy editorials, a dozen cartoons and numerous editorial barbs which condemned the strike. As well, selected from a variety of sources, they presented daily news reports slanted against the strike. Through this editorial and "news" barrage, Winnipeg's labour troubles were fashioned into a Bolshevik-O.B.U. conspiracy. While editorial writers, news editors and reporters were immediately to blame for this analysis, ultimate responsibility rested with the newspaper owners and publishers. It was these men who set down the policy of the paper and decided a certain framework in which

53 The Times, May 30, 1919. In contrast, an attack on the sympathetic strike by the Rev. S. D. Chown on June 12 in Toronto was given full exposure. See The Mail and Empire, June 13, 1919.

their staff were obliged to interpret events. The net effect of the reaction of the Toronto press therefore was to provide the reader with only one version of the strike, that of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand.

Chapter 4

The Toronto Star

Before the war materialism was the keynote of all the nations, Canada included. In Canada we have had for the past 25 years a government which in its outlook was conservative no matter what its name. Material prosperity has long occupied the attention of the people and the government of Canada. After the war things will not be the same as they were before. Many pet prejudices will have to go by the board, and more attention and sympathy will have to be devoted to the everyday life of the people.¹

(Joseph Atkinson)

Atkinson was the key to The Star's interest in Winnipeg's labour problems. Under his direction the daily had become a journal for social reform, a defender of the "little guy". He saw the general strike in Winnipeg as a classic example of the struggle of the working man, a cause which elicited not only his personal sympathy but also the support

1 Part of a speech given by Joseph Atkinson to the Canadian Club of Toronto on November 30, 1915. Cited in Harkness, op. cit., p. 113. Atkinson was the power behind The Star from 1899 until his death in 1948.

of his paper. Because of these views he sent William Plewman and Main Johnson, both well qualified observers of labour matters and both men of advanced social convictions, to Winnipeg to provide first hand coverage of events.²

However there were other considerations for The Star's special involvement in the strike. Although not a member of the labour press, the paper was a longtime champion of the trade union movement. The outbreak of a general strike, anywhere in Canada, was almost certain to attract its attention. Also, because the daily's clientele was largely recruited from Toronto's labouring classes³, events in Manitoba furnished regular readers with copy eminently suited to their tastes. Finally, there was the opportunity to make political capital from the strike. The Star, traditionally a Liberal paper, had even greater reason to scrutinize affairs in Winnipeg when ultimate responsibility for settlement of the dispute was delegated to Arthur Meighen, a staunch Tory. A debacle in the prairie city could damage not only Meighen's reputation but the prestige of the Union government of which the most prominent members were Conservatives.

2 See chapter five for a comprehensive analysis of The Star's coverage of the strike.

3 Harkness, op. cit., p. 77. With the paper's growth in circulation, especially after 1918, The Star attracted a wider audience; however, the working class still accounted for the bulk of its readers.

The Star was a mirror image of Joseph Atkinson, it "showed the indelible imprint of his personality."⁴ Combining promotional and organizational genius with clear editorial policies Atkinson transformed The Star not only into one of the country's most influential English language newspapers but the paper with the highest paid circulation in Canada as well. Like William Randolph Hearst in the United States and the Harmsworth brothers in Great Britain, Atkinson sensed the power and profits of mass journalism.⁵ The turn of the century marked the era of "yellow journalism", a phenomenon which saw publishers resort to sensationalism and crusades for popular causes to promote large circulation. Atkinson capitalized on this new trend in the newspaper industry and fashioned his paper to appeal not only to workers but to a new general public, the rapidly growing "middle class".

4 G. L. Spalding, "The Toronto Daily Star As A Liberal Advocate, 1899-1911", M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1954, p. 1.

5 In 1900 Alfred (later Viscount Northcliffe) and Harold Harmsworth combined talents to found The London Daily Mail which, almost overnight, became one of Great Britain's most popular dailies. Some of Hearst's better known dailies were The New York Journal, Boston American and Chicago American. Encyclopedia Britannica, 1972 edition, 16, pp. 384-417.

Between 1899⁶ and 1919 Atkinson made The Star an eloquent spokesman for a programme of social reform legislation including "...public ownership of public utilities... equal rights and full civil liberties for minorities...the right of labour to organize and strike...town planning...."⁷ Behind these various aims lay Atkinson's belief in the social gospel. He felt a religious duty to apply Christian principles to correct injustice, remove the inequalities of wealth and privilege and make Canada a better place to live in.

Atkinson was a very religious man. He had once contemplated entering the Methodist ministry, but eventually changed his mind. He never forgot this experience though, for The Star was to have many radical clergymen including the outspoken Methodist preacher, Salem Bland. In addition,

6 Atkinson became editor of The Evening Star in 1899. He changed the name to The Toronto Daily Star on January 24, 1900. According to Harkness The Evening Star was purchased in October 1899 by a group of prominent financial figures and Liberal politicians including: Senator George Cox, William Mullock, Timothy Eaton, William Christie (Christie-Brown biscuit company) Peter Larkin (Salada Tea), Walter Massey and Lyman Jones (Massey-Harris), Plunkett Magann (Railway contractor) and E. T. Malone (well-known Toronto lawyer). These men acquired The Star for two reasons. First, to make money, and second, to ensure the support in Toronto of a second paper (in addition to The Globe) to back Laurier and the Liberal party. For his part Atkinson accepted their offer on two conditions. First that he be given control of editorial policy, and second, that he be paid partly in stock and thereby eventually own the paper, which he did by December 1913.

7 Harkness, op. cit., p. 78.

Atkinson remained very much in step with the reform minded statements of the Methodist Church on social questions.⁸ In fact, there was little difference in attitudes to social and industrial reform between Atkinson and a "progressive"⁹ social gospeler like the Rev. W. B. Creighton, editor of The Christian Guardian.

The evangelical zeal that was the hallmark of the Methodist social gospel movement instilled in Atkinson a crusading spirit, and he did not hesitate to use his newspaper as a sword in fighting for a more just society. Such "historic concern for social redemption"¹⁰ helped motivate Atkinson to champion a social welfare programme far in advance of what most politicians were prepared to offer.

In December 1915 Atkinson was chosen by the National Liberal Advisory Committee to undertake a study of social legislation. In his report to Laurier, Atkinson recommended adoption of national schemes of old age pensions, mothers' allowances, federal workmen's compensation and

8 See Stewart Crysdale, The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada (Toronto, 1961) pp. 19-20, 29, 31 and 76.

9 See Allen, op. cit., pp. 76, 112-113. Under Creighton's editorship (1906-1919) The Guardian became The Star of the religious press.

10 Michael Bliss, "The Methodist Church and World War 1," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XLIX, 1968, p. 213.

minimum wage laws, and national health and unemployment plans. He summarized his report by stating: "These matters are all parts of one programme. They are like the fingers of a hand. If we are going to acknowledge our obligation to introduce Social Reform legislation let us extend to the wage-earner not one finger or two fingers but our whole hand in full fellowship with him."¹¹

Yet Atkinson was not a socialist; for as he wrote in 1918: "I am less of what I understand by a Socialist than I ever was. I suppose I am more nearly a believer in what you would call State Capitalism."¹² However, The Star's owner advocated state intervention to impose restraints on capitalism and provide for the poor and less fortunate. Because of this belief he was attracted to one of Great Britain's greatest social reformers, David Lloyd George. George injected the British Liberal party with a more "radical" liberalism and between 1905 and 1913 helped to secure reform legislation in the areas of social security, employment and trade unionism.¹³

11 P.A.C., Wilfrid Laurier Papers, Vol. 697, J. E. Atkinson to Laurier, March 8, 1916. See also P.A.C., Rowell Papers, Vol. 5, J. E. Atkinson to Rowell, March 12, 1918.

12 Toronto Public Library (henceforth T.P.L.), James Simpson Papers, Box 2, J. E. Atkinson to Simpson, September 27, 1918.

13 For example The Unemployed Workmen Act (1905), The Trades

The First World War delayed enunciation of much of Atkinson's reform programme; however, by 1919 The Star, according to Atkinson's biographer, began to move left "with an editorial policy so radical that many considered it Bolshevistic."¹⁴ While most Canadian papers attacked the new communist regime in Russia, The Star, as early as November 1918, cautioned: "the danger we have to face is not Bolshevism, but reaction, and the stampeding of timid people away from reform by raising false alarms of Bolshevism."¹⁵ Viewing the rising scale of working class militancy Atkinson felt it was a time for the Canadian government to make concessions to the working man. As the "Red Scare" gripped North America and the fear of communism escalated to paranoia, Atkinson advocated moderation and reform instead of the repeated cry for "law and order."

The Winnipeg general strike climaxed a period of social and industrial unrest in Canada. As strikes reached

Disputes Act (1906), The Old Age Pension Act (1908), The Labour Exchanges Act (1909), The National Insurance Act (1911), and The Trade Union Act (1913). See David Butler and Jennie Freeman, British Political Facts 1900-1967 (London, 1968).

14 Harkness, op. cit., p. 135.

15 The Star, November 25, 1918.

epidemic proportion in the first half of 1919 The Star indicted the owners of industry "who refused to bargain with "moderate labour unions"."¹⁶ Atkinson was unwilling to be blinded by the Bolshevist bogey.

Because of its social reform outlook The Star was sympathetic to trade unionism. When Atkinson assumed control of the paper in 1899 the daily had already established a reputation as a paladin of the rights of the working man.¹⁷ Thus, when he decided to fashion his paper "to appeal to the little man in the semi-detached house", Atkinson realized the need to maintain "a sympathetic labour policy."¹⁸ With the help of three prominent trade unionists, Tom Banton, James Simpson and Fred Bancroft, The Star acquired an expertise on labour matters.¹⁹ It could explain with clarity and precision the motives behind the actions of organized labour, actions which so often led less knowledgeable and sympathetic papers to react with confusion, misinterpretation, alarm and

16 Harkness, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

17 In fact The Star, begun in 1892, was itself the offspring of a printer's strike. For a detailed early history of The Star and its labour consciousness see Harkness, op. cit., pp. 25-39.

18 Ibid., p. 48.

19 According to Harkness these three men were responsible

outright hostility. In its labour columns, editorial comment and treatment of labour news The Star had no equal in Canada. The coverage of the Winnipeg general strike was a perfect example.

There was also a financial consideration behind The Star's support of the workers in Winnipeg. The Star was a business investment and Atkinson was a shrewd entrepreneur who kept one eye on the ledger at all times. In fact, as J. H. Cranston, once private secretary and long time employee of Atkinson correctly surmised:

I believe that there were in reality two J. E. Atkinsons. The first was a young, ambitious, hard-working, thrifty and shrewd idealist. He believed what he preached on his editorial pages and endeavoured to practice it, while building up the Star.... The second J. E. Atkinson was a product of the Star skyscraper. He created it and it possessed him. It became his master, a Frankenstein monster which demanded of him that he make the Star and his bank-balance even bigger.²⁰

not only for crystallizing The Star's labour policy, but were also largely responsible for Atkinson's personal attitude towards labour unions.

20 J. H. Cranston, Ink On My Fingers (Toronto, 1953) p. 163.

To keep circulation figures higher than his rivals Atkinson knew he had to serve not only his hardcore clientele, made up primarily of "industrial workers and the "little people",²¹ but appeal to other segments of the reading public as well. The general strike in Winnipeg was Canadian history in the making, an exciting, even a sensational news story, and people were eager to have fresh information on daily events. By making provision for continuing blanket coverage of the walkout The Star could satisfy regular news hungry readers and at the same time boost circulation by attracting the clientele of the other less informed, Toronto dailies.²²

Finally there was a political reason why The Star became so involved in coverage of Winnipeg's labour troubles. The Star was traditionally a Liberal paper; however, during the war it had split publicly from Laurier over conscription, nationalization of railways and union government. After Laurier's death in February 1919 Atkinson wanted a quick

21 Harkness, op. cit., p. 41.

22 It is interesting to note that The Star's increase in circulation (93,094 to 94,118) for May and June, 1919 surpassed the figures of the other Toronto papers -- The Evening Telegram, Globe and Mail and Empire -- who published monthly circulation notices. In 1919 The Star and The Evening Telegram were battling for supremacy as the evening daily with the highest paid circulation. Given this rivalry it is easy to understand why both Atkinson and J. R. "Black Jack" Robinson, the power behind The Evening Telegram, developed such an interest in the

return to a strictly Liberal government. His hopes rested in two close friends and political allies, Mackenzie King and Newton Rowell.²³ However, in May 1919 Rowell was still in the Union government as president of the Privy Council, and King, a Laurier Liberal, was out of Parliament, preparing for the leadership convention of the party to be held in August. Furthermore, as Harkness aptly illustrates, Atkinson was faced with a further difficulty:

The Star was in an awkward position politically for circumstances compelled it to straddle the fence. It had advocated formation of a national or union government not only for the duration of the war, but for the period of reconstruction after. Therefore, it had to stay with the Borden government for the time being. Officially it supported the Liberal-Unionists, and was thus looked upon with suspicion by the stalwarts who stayed with Laurier.²⁴

Atkinson wanted to convince Laurier Liberals, like Ernest Lapointe, that it was time to realign the party's forces. Yet if The Star wished to advocate publicly such a change it

strike. Neither paper wished to be "scooped" in coverage of such a nationally important event.

23 Harkness, op. cit., p. 119.

24 Ibid., p. 18.

needed an ironclad reason to abandon editorial support of the Union government. The Winnipeg general strike conveniently provided a perfect opportunity to resolve this dilemma.

Several days after the outbreak of the general strike the Borden government sent two representatives to Winnipeg to look into the labour dispute. The two men were Arthur Meighen (Minister of the Interior and Acting Minister of Justice) and Senator Gideon Robertson (Minister of Labour). Both of these ministers were Conservative-Unionists and both were unpopular with Laurier Liberals; Atkinson and Lapointe now had a common foe.²⁵ The strike lasted six weeks and collapsed only after the federal government directly intervened to crush it. By attacking the Borden government's handling of affairs in Winnipeg, particularly the conduct of Meighen and Robertson, Atkinson accomplished a brilliant coup. First, by embarrassing the Conservative-Unionists The Star helped to repair the schism with the Laurier Liberals. Second, by

25 This argument has more force when one examines Lapointe's comments during the one and only full scale Commons' debate (June 2) on the strike. His criticism of the government's handling of affairs and in particular the role played by Meighen (whom he denounced as the "apostle of arbitrary enactments and despotic legislation") mirrored The Star's already well defined editorial position. It is very likely that Lapointe based his speech on The Star's coverage of events in Winnipeg.

avoiding legitimate criticism of Rowell's part in the tragedy of "Bloody Saturday" (as president of the Privy Council Rowell was ultimately responsible for the actions of the R.N.W.M.P.) The Star did not damage the latter's opportunity to lead a reunified Liberal party. Finally, by his criticism of Meighen Atkinson reduced the Conservative minister's credibility as a conciliator of labour and capital. Thus The Star helped to prepare the way for a sympathetic reception to the candidacy of Mackenzie King (a man who had made his reputation as an expert in industrial relations and conciliation) as leader of the Liberal party.

Thus there were several motives for The Star's extensive interest in the Winnipeg strike. Since the reasons were both interconnected and interdependent, it is difficult to single out any one factor as dominant. Of course the answer to this puzzle was known only to Joseph Atkinson. No doubt he recognized the financial and political implications of prominent coverage of the strike. As well he saw the need and advantage to be faithful to the paper's well established pro-labour policy. Finally he felt a genuine personal sympathy for the working man on strike in Winnipeg.

Because of his sympathy with the strikers' cause Atkinson was determined to obtain complete and first hand coverage of events in Winnipeg. He found two men who were

best qualified to handle a labour-oriented assignment and released them to the strike torn Manitoba capital. The two reporters were Main Johnson²⁶ and William Plewman.

As a result of a six year association with Newton Rowell Main Johnson had acquired an expertise in labour relations and industrial matters.²⁷ Through his benefactor's prominent position in the Privy Council, Johnson had the opportunity to meet and discuss not only with Senator Gideon Robertson but also with the representatives and top officials of organized labour. A man of definitely liberal sentiments, Johnson endorsed social and industrial reform that was no doubt fostered, if not formed, by Rowell's own progressive stance within the Liberal party.

26 William Main Johnson was born in Hamilton, Ontario November 27, 1887. He obtained a regular summer job with The Star while attending the University of Toronto. Upon graduation in 1910 (with honours in English and history) he joined the paper as a full time cub reporter. However in February 1912 he left The Star to become secretary-treasurer of the Ontario Motor League. Six months later he became N. W. Rowell's principal private secretary when Rowell was successively leader of the Liberal opposition in the Ontario legislature, president of the wartime Privy Council in the Union government and member of the Imperial War Cabinet in London. In late 1918 Johnson returned to newspaper work and The Star. He remained with the paper until 1946. The Toronto Daily Star, "Main Johnson" Special file, n.d..

27 Rowell had an exceptional interest in legislation for the working man. See Margaret Prang, "The Political Career of N. W. Rowell," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto,

In late 1918 Johnson returned to newspaper work for The Star. At first parliamentary correspondent in Ottawa he soon developed into a special writer, travelling from coast to coast, covering outstanding events. In April 1919, only six months after rejoining The Star, he was selected by Atkinson to accompany and send back reports of the daily sittings of the Mathers Commission²⁸ as it crossed Canada. The commission's hearings in Winnipeg, held between May 10 and 12, narrowly missed the outbreak of the general strike. On orders from The Star, Johnson abandoned his travelling mission in Sudbury on May 17 and returned by train to Winnipeg. The next day, Sunday May 18, Johnson was in the midst of a unique and unexpected assignment.²⁹

1959, pp. 188-189, 203-204, 425-427 and 508. It is also worth noting that, at least privately, Rowell opposed the actions of the Winnipeg employers during the strike. See his correspondence with Sir Thomas White (Minister of Finance and then Acting Prime Minister) P.A.C., Rowell Papers, Vol. 5. Rowell to White, May 24, 1919,

- 28 In April, 1919 the Union government commissioned Chief Justice Thomas Mathers to investigate the state of industrial relations in Canada. An eight man delegation, dubbed the Mathers Commission, conducted dominion-wide hearings beginning in Victoria on April 26 and finishing in Ottawa on June 13.
- 29 In 1919 Johnson was chosen by Atkinson to cover three outstanding events related to organized labour -- the Mathers Commission (April 26 - May 17), the Winnipeg general strike (May 18 - May 26), and the A.F. of L. Annual Con-

William Plewman³⁰, the older of the two reporters, was, by 1919, a sixteen year veteran of The Star. If Methodism had a profound effect on Joseph Atkinson, it was for Plewman the major influence of his life. It permeated his upbringing and fashioned his social viewpoint.³¹ A staunch Methodist who neither smoked nor drank³², he was actively involved in the temperance movement. His sense of mission to see the social gospel translated into everyday life accounted

vention in Atlantic City, New Jersey (June 11 June 23).

- 30 William Rothwell Plewman was born in Bristol, England August 3, 1880. When he was eight his family (eight brothers and four sisters) came to Canada and settled in Toronto. At thirteen he left Dufferin public school and went to work as a messenger boy and proofreader at the Methodist Bookroom. For a time he thought of becoming a lawyer and spent four years in a law office. He then worked for the Maclean Publishing Company. At nineteen he made journalism his final calling and became a reporter on The News. Four years later he joined The Star. For nine years (1903-1912) Plewman acted as the paper's telegraph editor. He left The Star in 1912 but returned just before the outbreak of World War 1 in August, 1914 and remained until retirement in 1955. The Toronto Daily Star, "William Plewman" Special file, n.d..
- 31 The Plewman family was deeply involved in the Methodist Church. William's brother Edgar was a Methodist missionary in China for over thirty years, and another of William's brothers, Alfred, was treasurer of the Methodist General Board of Sunday Schools for several years. William himself became earnestly involved with the Church at an early age. At sixteen he began to teach Sunday school and for forty years conducted Bible classes at Bathurst Street United Church (Toronto).
- 32 In a private interview with Richard Plewman, (the son of

for his venture into city politics in 1916.³³ For several years he combined the occupations of newspaperman and alderman together in what must have been a grueling schedule. While a city official he developed a reputation as a friend of the working man³⁴ and an advocate of public ownership of streetcars, waterworks and other local utilities.³⁵ He came to believe, as did Atkinson, that the turbulent post-war period necessitated a progressive response from the Canadian government. As his brother testified:

My brother himself was a humanitarian...a great believer in the supreme worth of human personality. He was a man of pretty strong principles. I would say somewhat of a rugged individualist in his think-

William Plewman) held in Trenton, February 26, 1972, the author was told that the rival Evening Telegram "got so darned mad because they could never catch dad sleeping with a woman, drinking or smoking." Henceforth Richard Plewman.

- 33 He was an aldermanic member of Toronto city council in 1916, 1918-20 and 1922.
- 34 On September 28, 1916 Plewman joined Rowell on the same platform at a T.L.C. banquet to praise labour's part in the prosecution of the war. Later, in December, in an article in The Star titled "Too Much Flunkeyism at City Hall" Plewman wrote: "It [City Hall] is sawder for the millionaire or the big corporation, but the boot for the working man. This is supposed to be a democratic country, but there is a tremendous lot of flunkeyism at City Hall." The Star, December 2, 1916.
- 35 Plewman's campaign for public ownership spread to provincial affairs as his writings on Adam Beck indicate.

ing. He was a very deeply religious man. He came to Winnipeg a great³⁶ believer in trade unionism.

When the strike erupted on May 15, the multitalented Plewman was in Toronto fulfilling his dual obligations for the press and the municipality. As events in the Western metropolis began to unfold dramatically Atkinson decided to send Plewman to join Johnson in Winnipeg for "on the spot" coverage for The Star. At 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 20, Plewman hurriedly boarded a train for Winnipeg and within two days arrived at his destination.³⁷ Charles Plewman remembered the surprise of meeting his older brother in Winnipeg.³⁸ "I was

See W. R. Plewman, Adam Beck and Ontario Hydro (Toronto, 1947).

36 Charles F. Plewman, private interview held in Toronto, April 18, 1972. Henceforth Charles Plewman. According to Charles Plewman, his brother William was a particularly close friend of another Star employee, James Simpson. Simpson not only buttressed William Plewman's convictions about temperance and public ownership of utilities but also introduced him to the struggle of organized labour.

37 Richard Plewman described his father's sudden departure to Winnipeg: "I remember my mother, all that she put together was a pair of shoes and a shirt, one pair of underwear; that was it because he was only going to go out there and be back tomorrow...he was shoved out of Toronto very quickly." Richard Plewman.

38 Charles Plewman, now 83, was general secretary of the Win-

in the Y.M.C.A. [the downtown building on Vaughn Street] in Winnipeg when all of a sudden a tap came on the door and the first thing I knew here was my brother, unannounced."³⁹ For the next five weeks William Plewman was to become the key figure for The Star in news coverage of the general strike.

Winnipeg Central Y.M.C.A. from 1917 to 1921 and was in the city during the six week strike.

39 Charles Plewman.

Chapter 5

The Toronto Star and the Winnipeg General Strike

The Toronto Star was in 1919 desperately fighting the predominant position of the Tely [Evening Telegram] which had long been top-dog in Toronto (a fight the Star ultimately won, as you know). Special coverage of the strike was obviously one stage in that fight --¹ and a damn sound one, at that.

(George Ferguson)

Main Johnson's and William Plewman's news reports both supported and influenced Atkinson's editorial position and gave the paper a consistent interpretation throughout the course of the dispute. Moreover The Star differed from the version of the strike advanced by the Citizen's Committee of One Thousand. Instead it presented an explanation more in accordance with the view of modern historians.

On the afternoon of Sunday, May 18, The Star's travelling reporter, Main Johnson, arrived in Winnipeg to cover the three day old general strike. No stranger to Win-

1 Excerpt from a letter to the author by George Ferguson. P.A.C., Dupuis Collection, George Ferguson to Dupuis, March 6, 1972.

nipeg or the prairies² he had been specially released from his roving assignment with the Mathers Commission and was well aware of the state of industrial unrest in Western Canada and in Winnipeg.³ According to instructions from The Star Johnson was to appraise the strike and provide on-the-spot news coverage. For the next eight days, until May 26, Johnson's work vindicated Atkinson's judgment.

Main Johnson soon discovered that the dispute in Winnipeg was no ordinary strike. In attempting to file his first despatches from the city he was informed that all press releases were subject to the approval of a strikers' censorship board. But William Ivens, head of this board, was prepared to offer a concession to The Star's reporter⁴. "I think I can arrange for you to wire six hundred words daily to your paper, under your own signature," he said, "but with

2 Johnson had visited Western Canada on at least three occasions prior to the general strike: June to August 1915 on a Western tour with N. W. Rowell, August 1917 as Rowell's observer to the Western Liberal convention in Winnipeg, and April and May 1919 as Star correspondent on the Mathers Commission.

3 In fact he had warned Star readers of the impending general strike in Winnipeg as early as May 12, see The Star, May 12, 1919.

4 Johnson had previously chatted with Ivens when they had met in the Council Chamber of Winnipeg's City Hall during the hearings of the Mathers Commission on May 12.

my O.K. provided that the copy is read and passed by the strike committee and provided that you wire it also to the New York Call, a labor paper in Butte, Montana, and probably a labor paper in Toronto, too."⁵ Johnson asked for time to consider the matter but eventually declined Ivens' offer because he did not wish to submit his copy to censorship. Instead, later that day, he boarded the C.P.R.'s "Soo Line" express and journeyed to Minnesota. By crossing the American border he was able to file his despatches and have them relayed by wire back to The Star.⁶ In this manner Atkinson's paper was supplied with first hand "uncensored" material direct from Winnipeg by a reliable source.⁷

5 The Star, May 19, 1919. Johnson was to repeat the full text of this interview with Ivens over striker "censorship" at the latter's preliminary hearing in July and August, 1919, see The Free Press, July 31, 1919. However, serious illness prevented Johnson's similar testimony in the subsequent sedition trials of late 1919 and early 1920.

6 The first despatch from Johnson originated from Thief River Falls, Minnesota, 145 miles by train from Winnipeg. Accompanying his report in The Star of May 19 was a small map indicating just how he was filing news on the Winnipeg situation. Subsequent despatches under his signature were datelined Thief River Falls and two other border points: Noyes, Minnesota (57 miles by train from Winnipeg) and Grand Forks, North Dakota (180 miles by train from Winnipeg). It is likely that Johnson himself, in the same manner as J. J. Conklin, continued to make regular trips down to U.S. border points to file stories. See The Star, May 20 for mention of Johnson's departure once again from Winnipeg.

7 Because of Johnson's resourcefulness The Star could boast that in just two days (May 19 and May 20), despite the

The initiative which Johnson demonstrated in getting news back to Toronto was matched by his enterprise in obtaining information and opinions from various parties in the dispute. He interviewed Mayor Gray and Senator Gideon Robertson. For reaction from the strikers' organized opposition, the Citizens' Committee, he talked to a volunteer member in the fire brigade.⁸ Finally, he sounded out the attitude of several returned soldiers. Even under difficult working conditions⁹ The Star's reporter was able to obtain information from both sides in the disturbance.

Johnson criticised the Citizens' Committee on two counts. The first was because, through its own paper and the local press, it presented a distorted version of the strike. The actions and policy of the One Thousand he reported:

news blanket over Winnipeg, it had been able to provide over 10,000 words in despatches concerning the strike. See The Star, May 20, 1919. Credit must also be given to J. J. Conklin for this accomplishment. He worked as a special correspondent for The Star for at least three days, May 20-22. In this time he not only collaborated with Johnson on stories but filed several of his own despatches to The Star. As already indicated in Chapter 2 Conklin was the stringer who while in the employ of The Star wrote reports sympathetic to Winnipeg labour; later with other papers he reversed his viewpoint.

8 The volunteer fireman, a young Winnipeg lawyer, was a former friend of Johnson's from University of Toronto. See The Star, May 23, 1919.

9 See pages 1 and 114.

"have not been marked by complete wisdom or discretion" and "...in practice...[it] is lined up against the unions...."¹⁰

He voiced the complaint of many Winnipeg workers when he stated:

It is also unfortunate that the Citizens' Committee has its headquarters in the Industrial Bureau under the same roof and in the same offices as the Board of Trade. The workmen and their families feel that this committee, in spite of everything it says, is a capitalistic organization.¹¹

The publication of the Citizen he suggested was chiefly to express feelings against the so-called "dictatorship" of the strikers and expose the "intolerable situation" in Winnipeg.¹² Certain utterances of this paper, he wrote, were considered "...not only injudicious, but positively blameworthy."¹³

Johnson's second criticism of the One Thousand was that it passed on its own version of the strike to government

10 The Star, May 23, 1919.

11 Ibid.

12 The Star, May 21, 1919.

13 The Star, May 26, 1919.

representatives who in turn accepted such an interpretation as fact. As he asserted:

...it is open knowledge that the Ministers (Meighen and Robertson) were met somewhere between Winnipeg and Fort William by a plain talking deputation of the leading business and professional men from the Citizens' Committee, who accompanied them to Winnipeg on the train. It is also common report on the streets and in the committee rooms that this deputation told the Ministers not to try to break into this situation, but to clean up the difficulties between Government employes¹⁴ [sic] and the Government itself.

Yet the blame for accepting a false version of the strike rested not only with Ottawa's representatives. "It is well known however" he added, "that members of the Provincial Government, like the federal men, are convinced in their own minds that an unlawful and unconstitutional effort was made here to usurp power."¹⁵ His final comment on this subject was particularly trenchant and revealing:

...the mere fact that the "plot" idea is held...by responsible Ministers of the Crown both Federally and Provincially is a most important factor in the

14 The Star, May 21, 1919. See Chapter 1 page 27(n).

15 The Star, May 26, 1919.

situation. Whether their view actually is well-founded or not, they believe it is, and their belief has colored their action. It has led them to come out definitely against the strike. They are not preserving neutrality, they are openly opposed to it.¹⁶

In effect Johnson discredited the Citizens' Committee and various government officials as impartial observers of the strike and claimed that their evaluation prejudiced the Dominion government against the workers.

Johnson also asserted that the alarm over Bolshevism in Winnipeg was rooted in misunderstanding, fear and unchecked rumour.¹⁷ He showed how the desire of the strikers to preserve order and maintain essential municipal services was misconstrued as an attempt to usurp civil authority and establish a dictatorship.¹⁸ This action by the workers resulted in a public controversy over what Johnson observed as "the

16 Ibid.

17 The reports that will be examined are those from Johnson which appeared in The Star on May 19, 21, 22, 23 and 26. It is difficult to determine his own reports for the May 20 issue since the despatches for that day were by-lined with J. J. Conklin's signature as well. The Star did not run an issue on Victoria Day, May 24 nor on Sunday, May 25.

18 The Star, May 26, 1919. In the same report Johnson emphasized that the "general public was not unfavorable

dictatorial governing power by the Strike Committee "¹⁹ The issue of "striker dictatorship" quickly became equated in the minds of many Winnipeggers with revolution, Soviet government and ultimately Bolshevism. In this atmosphere Johnson himself wavered in providing a definite answer to the problem. While acknowledging that many citizens honestly believed in the danger to lives and property he also pointed out: "it is...too close and immediate to say dogmatically whether or nor...a genuinely revolutionary menace [exists]." ²⁰

In the midst of such rumours as "...Mayor Gray was to be deported and a full-fledged Soviet Government instituted" ²¹ The Star's reporter commented: "there has been no disorder...the streets are as quiet and orderly as on holidays." ²² The strikers, maintained Johnson, insisted:

...that the "plot" talk is a deliberate herring drawn across the trail. They think it is not

to the strike when it began nor is it hostile to the strike as such now."

19 The Star, May 26, 1919.

20 Ibid. Yet by this time both Meighen and Robertson were convinced that the general strike was "a cloak for an effort to overturn proper authority." See The Star, May 27, 1919.

21 The Star, May 19, 1919.

22 The Star, May 21, 1919. In the same report Johnson added that "the Strike Committee is using all its power to

a legitimate line of attack. They believe it is the trump card played and used by capitalist forces to turn public opinion against the strikers and to compel surrender on their part.²³

Furthermore William Bathie²⁴ of the G.W.V.A. was reported as claiming "the strike leaders were giving clean, strong, white management of the strike" and "were anxious for order."²⁵

Finally Johnson discounted one other aspect of the Bolshevik plot theory. In many people's minds Bolshevism was not only a Marxist threat but a Russian, and thereby "foreign", menace as well. The presence in Winnipeg of large numbers of immigrants led to the general belief that the "foreign element" of Bolshevism was threateningly close, lurking if not active in the north end of the city. On this belief Johnson commented:

The Winnipeg situation is undoubtedly complicated by the large number of foreigners here. They have not provided

maintain order and up to the present has succeeded in admirable fashion."

23 The Star, May 26, 1919.

24 Bathie was one of three neutral observers sent by the G.W.V.A. to report on the activities of the Strike Committee.

25 The Star, May 22, 1919. In the same report Johnson included James Winning's denial of "any thought of Soviet

the leadership, nor do they form the great mass of trades unionists but a good many people think they constitute the active force in the ranks ...there is apparent in the city resentment against what is looked upon as exotic and incompatible ideals being furthered by men who have not become acclimated here.²⁶

Johnson recognized too that certain Winnipeg employers imagined the strike as an attempt by the O.B.U. "...to establish their supremacy in a drastic and dramatic fashion."²⁷ While admitting that the "One Big Union is powerful in Winnipeg... [and] its program and aims are ultraradical," The Star's reporter did not believe the new organization was responsible for the walkout by Winnipeg workers. By emphasizing that the main issues of the dispute -- union recognition and collective bargaining -- would be endorsed by even the most conservative trade unionists he implied that the notion of total control by the militant O.B.U. was untrue. Furthermore he declared that the Winnipeg employers' argument that the Metal Trades Council was in effect an O.B.U. in itself was without founda-

rule in Winnipeg and of any ulterior motive in the tie-up." Winning was president of the W.T.L.C. and a leading member of the Strike Committee.

26 The Star, May 22, 1919.

27 The Star, May 19, 1919.

tion since the former was "...a federation of trade unions engaged in...a federal combination" while the latter "...is not built on [a] federal plan, but is a closely knit centralization."²⁸ He warned that "...the Metal Trades Council...is not looked upon as part of One Big Union, although under the present crisis it may develop into some such thing."²⁹

Nor did Johnson see the workers' use of the general strike as a callous disregard for the general public. Instead he argued that the wide extent of the shutdown was indicative of how legitimate were the grievances of the men. Because of the issue of union recognition he wrote that "the original strikers were sure to get the support of moderate labor opinion and the extent of the general strike shows that they have secured such backing."³⁰ It is clear that Johnson was sympathetic to the Winnipeg strike. As he remarked:

There is a widespread feeling among thoughtful men that a crisis has been reached not only in the stormy industrial life of Winnipeg, but also in the whole question of industrial relations in Canada. These people although experiencing

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

as much inconvenience as anyone and being just as anxious for a cessation of the tie-up feel that any settlement reached must recognize fundamentals. They do not want any patched-up peace and moderates among them are of the opinion that in some way or other unions must be regarded not as revolutionary, reprehensible bodies, but as stabilizing institutions which give employers a cohesive responsible force with which to deal.³¹

Johnson's report of labour's grievances consisted of two themes. The first, and the minor one, was that the dispute was being used by a minority of the strikers to obtain "an industrial republic within the political state."³² This motive was based on the "rising gospel among workingmen... [for the] doctrine of production for use."³³ Essentially this "gospel" was a call to establish a system of industrial democracy in which the worker had a greater say in the operation and profits of industry. The Star's reporter had become familiar with this sentiment while on tour with the Mathers Commission in its Western swing and he recognized its presence in the Winnipeg strike. As he commented:

31 The Star, May 22, 1919.

32 Rea, op. cit., p. 277.

33 The Star, May 26, 1919.

...as for those people who genuinely think a political revolution was contemplated in Winnipeg -- and there are many who undoubtedly do believe so -- it may be that they are thinking in the wrong atmosphere -- they are dealing in the medium of politics, whereas this crisis was in the newer field of industrialism. It may be that the two fields overlap to an inextricable extent, but on the other hand they may each have their individual identity.³⁴

The strike was a challenge to the favoured economic position of the "bosses":

...if the issue were as to the future of industrialism and its method of government, then the chief and immediate opposition would come from that class in the community which up to the present has owned and controlled industry privately and has made profits from it. In any fight on this issue such men would naturally strain every nerve to defeat the new ideas for these would directly affect their power and their pockets.³⁵

Johnson's major theme was his argument that the labour demands were the real causes of the strike. In his first report he discussed the issue of union recognition:³⁶

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 By the term "union recognition" Johnson not only meant recognition of one union as the legitimate bargaining

It is felt by a lot of people who are not necessarily in sympathy with the strikers, and who feel keenly the inconvenience of the tie-up, that the employers have chosen a bad ground on which to fight. To these people, and they are many, it is incredible that a general strike at this time of day should be fought on the issue of recognition of the union. It reveals, they say, in the minds of the employers a backward or at least a stationary look that is difficult to understand.³⁷

When the Strike Committee offered to open negotiations via Mayor Gray, The Star's correspondent reminded readers that the strikers' terms were "...that all employers should recognize collective bargaining... [and] the Metal Trades Council...and that all strikers be taken back to work...".³⁸ On May 21 he declared that the issues had become sharply defined and that for the workers "...recognition of the union is still paramount and as irreducible in demand as it was when the walk-

agent for workers in a particular trade but also recognition of a federation of unions in related trades i.e., the Winnipeg Metal Trades Council.

37 The Star, May 19, 1919.

38 The Star, May 21, 1919. For a short but comprehensive analysis of the whole issue of collective bargaining and the strike see David Bercuson, "The Winnipeg General Strike, Collective Bargaining and The One Big Union Issue." Canadian Historical Review L1 (June, 1970) pp. 163-178. Bercuson clearly demonstrates that Meighen and, in particular, Robertson stubbornly refused to recognize the legitimacy of striker demands such as collective bargain-

out began."³⁹ Johnson admitted that while there might have been a small proportion of workers who had some notions of taking control of industry" for use rather than for profit," he insisted that, "A very large number of trade unionists, probably the vast majority struck on the simple and specific issue of collective bargaining, which they thought was being assailed in such a challenging way that there was no recourse but to clear the issue once and for all."⁴⁰

On May 22 William Plewman arrived in Winnipeg aboard the C.P.R. express from the east. Just before his departure from Toronto on Tuesday he had received orders to acquaint himself with the strike situation, get the news and replace a tired Main Johnson. Now, as the train crossed over the Louise Bridge and entered Point Douglas, Plewman peered out his window for signs of the disturbance which had gripped the Western metropolis for over a week. Instead of scenes of disorder he spied the "good old Union Jack" flying high over the concrete flour mills of the Ogilvie Milling Company.⁴¹ A few minutes later he disembarked at the downtown station and walked the

ing and union recognition, and deliberately inserted the O.B.U. as the cause of the dispute.

39 The Star, May 21, 1919.

40 The Star, May 26, 1919.

41 The Star, May 23, 1919.

short distance to the luxurious "Royal Alex".⁴² As the thirty-nine year old reporter registered at the C.P.R. hotel he was unaware that his sixth floor room⁴³ was to become home for over five weeks.

William Plewman remained in Winnipeg from May 23 to June 27,⁴⁴ and after May 27 (the date of Main Johnson's return to Toronto⁴⁵), was The Star's lone representative in the city. In this time he encountered and overcame several

42 The million dollar, seven-story Royal Alexandra was the most opulent and centrally located hotel in Winnipeg.

43 Plewman's room on the sixth floor provided an excellent and unobstructed view of downtown Winnipeg. From this vantage point he was easily able to observe activities in such locations as Victoria Park, City Hall and along Main Street. See his reports in The Star, May 31 and June 12, 1919. Ironically, only a few floors below Plewman's room was Porter's International Press News Bureau, a source which provided a very different interpretation of the strike.

44 Although June 27 was the date of Plewman's last report from Winnipeg he may have remained in the city a few days longer. According to Toronto City Council Minutes for 1919 Alderman Plewman was present at the meeting of July 4. Therefore he returned sometime between June 28 and July 4.

45 It is not known why Main Johnson was recalled to Toronto. Perhaps Atkinson wanted Johnson to return to his original assignment with the Mathers Commission. Perhaps he wished to give his reporter a rest before sending him to the upcoming June convention of the A.F. of L. in the United States (which Johnson subsequently covered). There might have been a financial reason: the cost of maintaining two men in Winnipeg. Finally there is the possibility that Atkinson had such confidence in Plewman that he felt he could handle the Winnipeg assignment with no assistance.

obstacles in reporting the strike. One problem was to ensure that unexpurgated and complete material reached Toronto. With telegraph service still operating on a severely restricted basis Plewman was forced to follow his colleague's example and have despatches wired to The Star via the United States.⁴⁶ However the inconvenience experienced in getting the news out of Winnipeg was minor compared to the difficulties, and even hazards, of obtaining information in the first place. Conditions for outside newspapermen were unusually burdensome. Here is a description of William Plewman at work from his son Richard:

Here's A. He arrived in Winnipeg all "het" up by the strike. Wrote his 2,000 words and called at the telegraph office. Nothing doing. Trains to United States? All gone. Alternative. Spent \$32 for a Ford and jolted to Noyes, Minnesota. He's been doing it ever since and says now that his chance for a hike in salary is put off another year.⁴⁷

46 From May 23 until June 7 Plewman's despatches were datelined from Thief River Falls and Noyes, Minnesota. After June 7 he was able to obtain unrestricted wire service in Winnipeg and so until June 27 his reports were datelined from the city itself. In all he sent back over 75 reports totalling approximately 150,000 words.

47 The Tribune, June 2, 1919. According to Richard Plewman "A" was his father: "In the family discussions, I can recall dad mentioning spending a terrific \$32.00 to hire a taxi, to get his copy out of Winnipeg. At that time, father could not afford a car, and I recall his princi-

Although all of downtown Winnipeg was his "beat", he was seldom scooped on a story, whether it occurred at Market Square, Victoria Park, the Industrial Bureau or the Labor Temple.⁴⁸ When not hunting for news on foot he was often perched on his hotel balcony, noting the cars of the Citizens' Committee "scurrying in endless procession down Main and Portage"⁴⁹ or observing "the cavalry exercising on Broadway... near the Fort Garry Hotel."⁵⁰ Whether attending the overflow Sunday service at the Labor Church⁵¹, or merely strolling down Main Street, he maintained a sharp eye for possible

pals complaining of "this" expense." P.A.C., Dupuis Collection, R. H. Plewman to Dupuis, March 16, 1972. Another minor inconvenience, the lack of reliable transportation, added a touch of humour to the situation. Richard Plewman recalled that at one point his father was forced to travel by horse"...then he got "Old Dobbin" which is a horse...so he got this old ploughhorse and dad had never been on a horse in his life...he was not a farm boy in any shape, so he took the horse back to wherever he was staying and they tied it up and he put on the outside "Union" to protect the horse." Richard Plewman.

48 For instance Plewman's on the spot report (complete with an interview with J. S. Woodsworth) of the June 17 "mid-night arrests" and subsequent raid on the Labor Temple was unmatched even by the local press.

49 The Star, May 31, 1919.

50 The Star, June 12, 1919.

51 The Star, June 16, 1919. The Labor Church, which Plewman attended faithfully every Sunday while in Winnipeg, was located in the Columbia Theatre on Main Street.

news.⁵² Determined to provide eye-witness accounts of events William Plewman not only joined strikers' and returned soldiers' meetings and demonstrations but, at the risk of his personal safety, ventured into the crowded streets during the fracas of June 10 and the riot of June 21.⁵³

While Plewman realized that accurate⁵⁴ and on-the-spot news coverage was essential to understanding the strike, he also knew that equal priority must be given to the people and personalities behind the scenes. As a result he made a special attempt to secure personal interviews with key figures in the strike. Sparing little effort he successfully obtained the first hand comments of Mayor Gray, Premier Norris and

52 Plewman even visited two public schools, Gray and Aberdeen, in the North end of Winnipeg to test for reaction to the strike. See The Star, June 9, 1919.

53 For Plewman's eye-witness accounts of these various events see The Star, May 31, June 2, 4, 5, 11, 18 and 23.

54 The importance of the number of people for and against the strike led to exaggeration in the local press. For example Plewman corrected The Telegram's inflated figures for the returned soldiers' demonstration of June 5. "The Telegram newspaper "he wrote" refers to twenty-five hundred and ten thousand non-striking veterans parading yesterday. The actual figures were about seven hundred and twenty-five hundred respectively." See The Star, June 6, 1919.

Senator Robertson.⁵⁵ To give the employers' side⁵⁶ he presented the viewpoints of several Winnipeg businessmen including James Carruthers and Alfred Ryley.⁵⁷ For organized labour he brought forward the sentiments of Lawrence Pickup, Ash Kennedy, Doris Meakin, George Wark, A. J. McAndrew and Herbert Lewis.⁵⁸ Because of The Star's sympathetic coverage of the strike he also had cordial interviews with William Ivens,⁵⁹

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- 55 For example just 45 minutes before the riot of "Bloody Saturday" (June 21) Plewman obtained personal interviews at the Royal Alexandra hotel with Gideon Robertson and spokesmen for the committee of striking veterans. See The Star, June 23, 1919.
- 56 Although Plewman recorded no interviews with the officials of the Citizens' Committee (they preferred to remain anonymous), it is possible to argue that in talking to Meighen and Robertson, virtual spokesmen for this committee, The Star in effect received its viewpoint.
- 57 The Star, June 10, 1919. J. M. Carruthers was the manager of Crescent Creamery and A. A. Ryley the manager of the Canada Bread Co.. As well Winnipeg's Postmaster, Peter McIntyre, was interviewed earlier in May. See The Star, May 28, 1919.
- 58 Lawrence Pickup, head of Winnipeg's Postal Clerks' Union, A. S. Kennedy of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Doris Meakin, business agent of Winnipeg's Telephone Operators' Union, George Wark, Toronto vice-president of the Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, A. J. McAndrew, general chairman of the C.P.R. Maintenance of Railway employees and Herbert Lewis, editor of The Ontario Labor News.
- 59 William Ivens took great pride in complimenting the Toronto daily for its analysis of the strike. See his editorial in The News captioned "Toronto Star Backs Strikers," The News, May 30, 1919. Also in a history of

Bob Russell, James Winning, Alderman Abraham Heaps⁶⁰ and James Woodsworth.

Although Plewman had written that "To converse or go near one camp is to be regarded as an enemy by the other camp,"⁶¹ he discovered that his discussions with such men as Gideon Robertson did not hamper his rapport with the members of the Strike Committee; in fact, not only was he welcomed into the Labor Temple⁶² but also into the homes of some of the strike leaders.⁶³ For The Star the outcome of this hos-

the strike, later prepared by the defence committee for the arrested strike leaders, two Star editorials "Do Not Use Black Paint" and "The Returned Soldier in Winnipeg" (both from the May 23 issue of The Star) were extensively quoted to prove that the strike was not a Bolshevist conspiracy. See Winnipeg Defence Committee, op. cit., pp. 78-79. Plewman was able to develop a special rapport with Ivens and Woodsworth because of their common bond with the Methodist Church. According to Charles Plewman: "Will had a lot of confabs with those two [Ivens and Woodsworth].... One of the things that Will would be discussing with Woodsworth is [sic] their right to do certain things, he [Woodsworth] was a minister and Will was a religious man.... He [Plewman] and Ivens would clash over this issue [too]...." Charles Plewman.

60 By coincidence Heaps and Plewman were both aldermen for Ward 5 in their respective cities.

61 The Star, May 30, 1919.

62 Plewman interviewed J. S. Woodsworth in the Labor Temple on the same day that the ex-minister took over the editorship of The News. See The Star, June 17, 1919.

63 Plewman visited the homes of Bob Russell and Bill Ivens. See The Star, June 20, 1919. Charles Plewman told the author that his brother was in close contact with the

pitality was a steady supply of information and opinion from the most articulate of the labour side; for Plewman, the man on the inside, it meant acquisition of an unmatched perspective from which to report the strike.

Like Main Johnson, Plewman discounted the Citizens' Committee as a fairminded observer of the strike. Although he admitted that this organization had rendered invaluable service to the whole community by providing necessities of life when the workers initially withdrew⁶⁴, he also pointed out that because of its subsequent anti-labour stand, the One Thousand had prevented an early settlement of the walkout.⁶⁵ As well he asserted that its intention to crush the strike merely "...antagonized the whole mass of strikers" and resulted in "an alarming degree of animosity."⁶⁶ His feelings about The Citizen were evident when he declared:

This paper was distributed freely
and was sent in bundles to some
of the churches. I have been told

strike leaders "pretty well all the time." Charles Plewman. Richard Plewman recalled that his father enjoyed several personal conversations with Ivens and Woodsworth. As well his father, he suggested, acted as an "intermediary" between the strike leaders and government officials. Richard Plewman.

64 See page 1.

65 The Star, May 27, 1919.

66 The Star, June 12, 1919.

that it was handed out to Sunday school children of the strikers at Sturgeon Creek. No doubt that particular issue told the kiddies, as other numbers have done, that their fathers were dupes of the Bolsheviks and revolutionists.⁶⁷

Within twenty-four hours of his arrival in Winnipeg Plewman was satisfied that the strike was not a Bolshevik conspiracy. In squelching this suggestion he asserted:

The strikers have gone pretty far and they have made some mistakes, but they have not perpetrated Bolshevism. The writer came to the city understanding that the Strike Committee of Five had inaugurated a reign of terror, preventing willing workers from serving their employers and the public.... But the whole thing is a delusion and a figment of the imagination. There is no Soviet. There was little or no terrorism.⁶⁸

Like Johnson he recognized that the strikers' temporary withdrawal of essential public services and subsequent use of permit cards partly accounted for this theory. As a result

67 The Star, June 16, 1919. At one point Plewman grouped together the four-sheet anti-strike paper and "the local press" as the One Thousand's spokesman. See The Star, June 12, 1919. Sturgeon Creek was a small community about 5 miles outside of Winnipeg. The presence of The Citizen at churches indicates the length to which the One Thousand went to circulate their paper.

68 The Star, May 23, 1919. The fact that Plewman arrived in

"the non-striking elements of the community" claimed Plewman, "at once visioned Russian Bolshevism...."⁶⁹

After Premier Norris of Manitoba insisted that an attempt to overthrow constituted authority had been made by "Sovietists in favour of a Soviet government,"⁷⁰ Plewman noted:

Any suggestion that a revolution was being attempted...is puerile. The talk about Soviet Government, a policy of terrorism and defiance of constitutional government, with the necessity for hundreds of regulars, thousands of militia kept on duty night and day, and thousands of special police, has been much overdone.⁷¹

Finally, like his colleague, Plewman recognized that it was incorrect to assign to Winnipeg's "foreign" element a prominent role in organizing the walkout. "The foreigners may number one-third [of those on strike]," he estimated "but are not providing much of the leadership in the strike."⁷²

Winnipeg with a misconceived notion of the state of affairs surrounding the strike testifies to the prejudicial effect of erroneous newspaper stories circulated in Toronto.

69 The Star, May 27, 1919.

70 The Star, June 6, 1919.

71 The Star, June 12, 1919.

72 The Star, May 23, 1919. To clarify how the "average citizen" regarded the strike Plewman wrote. "It must be

Instead of accusing the O.B.U. of masterminding the strike in Winnipeg Plewman preferred to explain and analyse the widespread western movement. In a story on June 12 he commented on the reason for its appeal:

Some are convinced that the One Big Union is the device hit upon to bring about Soviet rule. But in these parts there are multitudes who were ready to fight the Hun in Europe who believe the One Big Union or something like it is needed to cope with what they regard as the Hun in Canada. While they repudiated Socialist leadership as to war they have submitted to it as to industrial struggle. ⁷³

The workers who supported the O.B.U., reported Plewman, saw "nothing inconsistent between patriotism and industrial radicalism."⁷⁴ In another story, titled "Three Classes With One Big Union Plan", he provided a resumé of the programs of the various exponents of the O.B.U.:

remembered that this is a city of only two hundred thousand, and that 35,000 persons are on strike. Thus it will be seen that the strikers and their relatives must represent at least fifty per cent of the population. In the numerical sense, therefore, it cannot be said that the average citizen is against the strike." The Star, May 23, 1919. Although his figures were slightly in error, (there were only 180,000 people in Winnipeg in 1919) the point was obvious.

73 The Star, June 12, 1919.

74 Ibid.

Supporters of the One Big Union do not all feel themselves committed to the same program. They seem to be made up of three classes as follows: Those who would use the One Big Union to secure a larger share of profits of industry and solidifying the vote of the workers obtain a larger influence in democratic Parliaments.... Those who would use the One Big Union to secure control of Parliamentary bodies and by a combination of strike and political action socialize all productive industry. Some think this would end the capitalistic system, and others have their doubts. This second class balk at use of force, but speak of their program as "direct action".... Those who would organize along I.W.W. lines and hasten Soviet rule by resort to violence.⁷⁵

Plewman suggested that the first group was represented by the majority of workers -- "the rank and file", the second by men like Ivens and Woodsworth, and the third by men who were "few in number and mostly foreigners." As a final comment The Star's report stated: "My observations lead me to believe that all three classes I have mentioned here are rapidly increasing in numbers, particularly one and two."⁷⁶ This lengthy description of the supporters of the O.B.U. by

75 The Star, June 23, 1919.

76 Ibid.

Plewman reveals several errors. As Masters indicates, the advocates of O.B.U. "were extremely sceptical of the ultimate value of labour's efforts to improve its position by electing members to parliament."⁷⁷ As well the suggestion that Woods-worth and Ivens were in any way involved with the O.B.U. is wrong.⁷⁸ What is important here is not that Plewman was confused about the nature of the O.B.U. (for he probably knew more than the average reporter and certainly more than the man on the street), but that in May and June 1919 many misconceptions were "in the air" about syndicalism and industrial unionism.

Plewman also commented on labour's recourse to the ultimate weapon, the general strike. In an early despatch he suggested that behind such drastic action must be serious grievances (which he elaborated upon in subsequent reports), for, as he observed "a large proportion of the strikers are a little uneasy about the extreme features of the great experiment."⁷⁹ However to balance this statement, he immediately added that a large percentage of the volunteers of the Citi-

77 Masters, op. cit., p. 22.

78 McNaught, op. cit., p. 96.

79 The Star, May 23, 1919.

zens' Committee supported some of the strikers' demands.⁸⁰

Plewman also asserted that the purpose behind the general strike was not revolution. In describing the ultimate ends of the strike leaders he reported:

They look forward to the day when by means of the withdrawal of labor from industry the community will be forced to appeal to labor to carry on and they also count on seizing by democratic agencies all the powers of constitutional authority and using them to the limit⁸¹ for the benefit of the workers.

Like Johnson, Plewman used two themes in reporting the reasons for labour's action in Winnipeg. First was the desire by a small proportion of the strikers to use the walk-out as a springboard to a new industrial order. He quoted the radical social gospeler, the Rev. A. E. Smith, as describing this new system as one based "for use and not for profit, co-operative instead of competition [sic]."⁸² Men like Smith, Ivens and Woodsworth, Plewman observed, argued "that it is wrong that workers should have to go cap in hand to employers asking for the right to live and then getting at best only a

80 Ibid.

81 The Star, June 12, 1919.

82 The Star, June 16, 1919.

bare subsistence when the country has stupendous natural resources."⁸³ To these spokesmen the strike was a demonstration of class consciousness by the workers.

However the majority of those who joined the walk-out, claimed Plewman, did so because Winnipeg employers refused to recognize legitimate labour grievances. It did not take him very long to isolate collective bargaining as one of these central issues. After only four days in Winnipeg Plewman reported:

Just what did happen in Winnipeg? As nearly as the writer can determine, this in brief is what happened. Three weeks ago the Metal Trades workers in contract shops went on strike to enforce collective bargaining, as they have it on the railways. The building trades also struck to enforce the same principle. Twelve days ago, the Trades and Labor Council, which within a year has unionized all the clerks, waiters, food makers and distributors, and movie employees, called a general sympathetic strike to assist the fight for collective bargaining.⁸⁴

In an earlier report Plewman had taken special care to repeat at length the remarks of James Winning made before the hastily

83 The Star, June 12, 1919.

84 The Star, May 27, 1919.

called conference of Friday May 24⁸⁵ between representatives of the Strike Committee, City Council and the Citizens' Committee. In part he quoted Winning as stating:

It is false that we tried to overthrow the State and were not after collective bargaining.... We [the Strike Committee] have the solution -- collective bargaining. That is what we need in order to normal and the workers satisfied. If it is granted the workers will return within forty-eight hours.⁸⁶

When two thousand returned soldiers marched to the provincial Parliament buildings on May 31 and occupied the legislative chamber Plewman pointed out that the ex-service-men's leader, Jack Moore, had emphasized that if collective

85 This conference, an abortive attempt at early settlement of the strike, was held at City Hall and chaired by Mayor Gray. Alfred Andrews K. C. and three city officials, aldermen George Scott, George Fisher and Travis Sweatman, represented the Board of Trade, City Council and Citizens' Committee. For the strikers there was James Winning of the W.T.L.C., Alderman William Simpson and Tom Carroll and Edgar English from the running trades. Bob Russell, although not an official member of the conference, was allowed to participate in the meeting.

86 The Star, May 26, 1919. In the same conference even the prominent member of the Winnipeg Bar and agent for Meighen's Justice Department, A. J. Andrews, admitted "The indirect cause of much of the trouble in Winnipeg was the failure of the Government to regulate the cost of living as raised by profiteering." This was a far cry from blaming Bolshevism for the strike.

bargaining were granted the strike could be settled at once.⁸⁷

Quoting the eloquent former sergeant, Plewman reported:

The Citizens' Committee has been talking about English and Scotch anarchists, and they've got to be stopped, and you can do it, Mr. Premier [Norris]. All we want is living conditions. Some of our comrades are working 74 hours a week for \$50 and \$55 a month.... We want collective bargaining as⁸⁸ they have it on the railways.

The Star's reporter insisted: "The workmen of Winnipeg are nearly all strikers..." and "...they are convinced that the strike is for a principle [collective bargaining] vital to the workers and unionism, and don't want to back down nor submit tamely."⁸⁹ Plewman quickly discerned that the strike had as a basis legitimate union demands and grievances which were worth fighting for.⁹⁰ It was clear to him "that the

87 The Star, May 31, 1919. A. E. "Jack" Moore was a former sergeant in the C.E.F., president of the Manitoba Command of the G.W.V.A., and a member of Premier Norris' Alien Investigation Board. Although a "neutral" in the strike he criticised the press for being "unfair in their statements during the strike" and added that they "could have brought about a settlement...by temperate reports." See The Halifax Morning Chronicle, June 2, 1919.

88 The Star, May 31, 1919.

89 Ibid.

90 According to his brother, William Plewman was "sympathetic to what the unions were asking" and felt "it was their right to make an issue of it." Charles Plewman.

strike could have been disposed of within seventy-two hours and possibly within twenty-four hours...if collective bargaining had been granted.⁹¹

Plewman consistently criticised the actions of the various levels of government against the strikers. As early as May 31 he explained that the attitude of the federal and provincial governments towards the workers was identical to that of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand; namely, they insisted that the strike must be called off first before any hope of a settlement was possible. He reported:

Senator Robertson, Minister of Labor, insists that the men are asking something far more [than collective bargaining], although strike leaders and the strike paper positively say not. Premier Norris also is known to regard collective bargaining as proposed by the men as preposterous.⁹²

In the same issue of the paper he commented: "The authorities are not much concerned by the fact that their uncompromising attitude is increasing their difficulties."⁹³

Plewman's reporting of the direct breakup of the strike (from June 17-23) indicated a sympathy for the workers

91 The Star, June 12, 1919.

92 The Star, May 31, 1919.

93 Ibid.

and a disapproval of the actions by the authorities. For example on June 17, the day after the "midnight arrests", The Star's reporter interviewed J. S. Woodsworth at the strikers' ransacked headquarters, the Labor Temple. Plewman first asked the former Methodist minister what his opinion of the authorities' action was. Woodsworth replied: "It is a stupid, high-handed move. Already the workers feel that the Government is not truly representative, that it represents only a section and not all the community." Then Plewman posed another question: "Will the strike collapse now that the leaders are removed?" To this Woodsworth answered: "Not at all. The Government can't arrest thirty-five thousand strikers, and if the strike were broken the people still would insist upon handling their affairs and securing the ancient rights of Britons."⁹⁴ As well, Plewman was explicit in identifying those responsible for the sensational turn of events:

The Dominion Government is credited with orders to make all arrests. Senator Robertson...was out most of the night and returned to his hotel room about four this morning.... The wholesale arrests here followed long conferences between Premier Norris, Mayor Gray and Lieut.-Col. Stearns, head of the Mounted Police, held

94 The Star, June 17, 1919.

on Friday night [June 13] until after midnight...and again yesterday morning [June 16]. A. J. Andrews, K.C., was much in evidence last night. Senator Robertson was in company with a lawyer named Anderson⁹⁵ who does much Government work.

In the days following the arrests of June 16-17, Plewman was primarily interested in showing the reaction of the strikers to the authorities' new move. On June 18 he reported that a visit to an open air meeting of striking veterans "did not suggest that the bottom was dropping out of [the] strike...."⁹⁶ Two days later he quoted James Winning as stating: "The outlook is hopeful, extremely hopeful [for gaining the strike's original objectives]."⁹⁷ Plewman's account of "Bloody Saturday" was essentially a factual analysis of the tragic riot. However, aside from the "blow by blow" description of events, he did report the apparent confusion concerning the authorities' decision to call out the troops.⁹⁸ Finally, in this same issue of The Star, that of June 23, Plewman commented on a report by Winnipeg author-

95 The Star, June 17, 1919.

96 The Star, June 18, 1919.

97 The Star, June 20, 1919.

98 The Star, June 23, 1919.

ities hinting at evidence "to support the theory that a widespread movement is a foot to overthrow our democratic institutions and substitute for them a Soviet form of government." His sardonic reaction was "Needless to say, if evidence of this sort can be brought out Canada is in for a genuine sensation."⁹⁹

The Star's editorials on the strike followed the same line as the reports by Johnson and Plewman.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the rest of the daily press in Toronto The Star discounted the widely circulated theory that the strike was part of a foreign conspiracy. During the first few days of the disturbance the paper was content to print the "assigned causes" for the strike. "Among the causes that are assigned", it speculated, "are agitation of the kind that is described as Bolshevist on the one side, and on the other the refusal of certain employers to recognize and negotiate with the labor unions in their trades."¹⁰¹ However by May 22 The Star, no

99 The Star, June 23, 1919.

100 In The Star's editorial treatment of the strike the hand of Joseph Atkinson was unmistakably present. According to one source, all important editorials for the period 1917-1926, if not written by Atkinson, had to have his endorsement. See David B. Rhodes, "The Star and the New Radicalism 1917-1926," M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1955, p. VI. Further, Harkness, op. cit., p. 256, claims that although Star editorialists were free to write on any subject, Atkinson's approval was needed on all material before it went to press.

101 The Star, May 19, 1919.

doubt influenced by the early despatches of Johnson and Plewman, was able to provide more concrete editorial comment.

Consequently the paper advised "Do Not Be Misled By Names":

The word Bolshevist is occasionally used by persons opposed to the Winnipeg strikers, and some of the strikers have used the word Soviet to describe their organization. This is a case where the careless use of a word may lead to mischief and render conciliation more difficult. The demands of the men do not include the recognition of a Soviet or any other form of government challenging the constituted authorities of Canada.... The use of the words Soviet and Bolshevist tends to widen the cleavage between employers and employed.... The wise plan is to get away from names to things, and discuss the question on its merits.¹⁰²

The next day the paper added: "Nothing is to be gained by exaggerating the evil, painting the situation black, and making Winnipeg look like Petrograd.... Bolshevism is not wanted in Canada, but the name should not be fastened upon labour men who repudiate it."¹⁰³ In support of this declaration The Star pointed to the continued sympathy to the stri-

102 The Star, May 22, 1919.

103 The Star, May 23, 1919.

kers given by "The Returned Soldier In Winnipeg":

...we have difficulty in reconciling this fact with the statement that Winnipeg is in the hands of Bolshevists and the foreign element. The returned soldiers have declared flatly against that sort of thing.... If they are still, as is said, supporting the strike, they must be satisfied that it is not Bolshevist in its nature nor controlled by the foreign element.¹⁰⁴

When Meighen and Robertson proclaimed the strike as a "cloak" to topple authority The Star asked for evidence to substantiate such an allegation. At the same time it advised that the majority of the workers in Winnipeg "entertained no idea of subverting authority or forcibly changing the form of government, but were on strike simply for better conditions of labor and the recognition of unions."¹⁰⁵ To those who ascribed the trouble in Winnipeg to agitators and foreigners the paper queried: "...why should people close their eyes to the truth that the industrial unrest of the country is a very real thing, and needs to be more than met and suppressed -- needs to have some of its worst causes

104 Ibid.

105 The Star, May 27, 1919.

removed?"¹⁰⁶ The Star remained consistent in its disavowal of the presence of a Bolshevik plot in Winnipeg. In its last comment on this point the paper stated on June 20 "Let Us Trust Our Courts":

...there are statements of a semi-official character that the Federal Government has discovered evidence of a Bolshevik conspiracy in Winnipeg and throughout Western Canada.... If there is a Bolshevik or revolutionary conspiracy in Canada it ought to be proved, and proved in such a way as to leave no room for doubt or controversy.... If a seditious conspiracy exists it can be proved....¹⁰⁷

Because Atkinson favoured the moderate craft unionism of the T.L.C. he was not a supporter of the One Big Union. During the strike The Star did not endorse the O.B.U.; in fact, any advocate of this movement was described as one "who would work his will by using force and compulsion on the whole body of the people regardless of right, [he] should be regarded as a foolish and dangerous leader."¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless Atkinson did not hesitate to explain the reasons for the O.B.U.'s appeal among workingmen. If this organization made

106 The Star, June 4, 1919.

107 The Star, June 20, 1919.

108 The Star, June 12, 1919.

headway in Canada The Star asserted, it was "because certain large employers of labor refused to have anything to do with that sound and legitimate union movement which...had been on the whole, soundly directed and controlled by its leaders, its congresses and conventions."¹⁰⁹ On June 10 in a lengthy pronouncement titled "Trades Unionism and the Big Union" Atkinson furnished a comprehensive analysis of the difference between craft unionism, industrial unionism and the O.B.U.. In part the editorial stated:

His [the advocate of the O.B.U.] plan is to include all Canadian labor in one group, declare a general strike, produce a paralysis of all industry and business, dictate terms, and force their acceptance within a week.... At times he speaks of it as a dictatorship of the proletariat. It is very different from industrial unionism, and it aims at mastery quite outside the field of labor.¹¹⁰

At the same time the paper did not accuse the Western labour body of directing the disturbance in Winnipeg. Instead it claimed "...the general strike in Winnipeg is a practical development of the One Big Union idea."¹¹¹

109 The Star, May 27, 1919.

110 The Star, June 10, 1919.

111 The Star, May 19, 1919. For the reader's convenience the paragraph from which the above quote was taken has been reproduced in full:

Although he did not personally approve of the tactic of the general sympathetic strike, Atkinson understood that such drastic action was a sign of the "growing cohesion of the working classes" and came only "when recognition of unions is refused, because such refusal is felt as a blow aimed at all labor interests."¹¹² Instead of interpreting this weapon as a portent of revolution the paper pointed out the tremendous sacrifice involved for the worker and remarked:

Those who most clearly perceive the danger of Bolshevism must also perceive the wisdom of doing everything possible to prevent the spread of that doctrine in the ranks of labor, and to encourage and strengthen moderate labor men. Labor has been divided on the question between old line trades-unionists and advocates of extreme measures, between craft unionism and the One Big Union. The latter idea seems hitherto to have been strongest in the west of Canada. Elsewhere the moderates were in the majority. The Dominion Trades Congress at its meeting a few months ago in Quebec voted down a motion presented by Western labor men and declared against the One Big Union. But the present general strike in Winnipeg is a practical development of the One Big Union idea. Craft unionists, moderates, extremists, are all on one side, and the employers on the other.

112 The Star, May 28, 1919.

"would it not be well to see the significance of the fact that there are thousands of families in Winnipeg...putting up with the privations which are imposed when the breadwinner is idle...to help others who lack the security which trades unionism gives."¹¹³

From the outset The Star saw the strike in Winnipeg as a non-violent protest by the workers over refusal of legitimate labour demands. On May 22 Atkinson allowed his paper to print part of The Western Labor News on the editorial page. In this excerpt Ivens claimed:

This makes it clear that the two issues involved are: The right of labor to organize, and the right of the worker to a living wage. It also indicates the terms of settlement. These are: First, the unequivocal recognition of labor to effective organization. Second, the acceptance of schedules that guarantee a living wage. Third, the reinstatement of all strikers without prejudice.¹¹⁴

The Star commented: "There is no indication here of an intention to effect a change in the mode of governing this country. The demands are such as might be made by any body

113 The Star, June 4, 1919.

114 The Star, May 22, 1919.

of workmen in an ordinary strike."¹¹⁵ The next day Atkinson was more specific: "The issue is not Bolshevism or any attempt to usurp the government of Canada," he insisted "but a dispute between employers and employed on the question of wages, hours, recognition of unions and collective bargaining."¹¹⁶

Once The Star had established, in its opinion, the real causes for the strike it proceeded to explain them in greater detail. In three consecutive issues -- May 28, 29 and 30 -- there appeared daily editorials elucidating the principle of collective bargaining. In addition, The Star offered its own formula for "The Government And The Strike":

The eight-hour day should be proclaimed as law; the right of workers to organize unions and the obligation of employers to recognize and negotiate with them should be proclaimed as law; and the obligation of unions in every case to negotiate with employers and report to the State before going on strike should be proclaimed as law.¹¹⁷

115 Ibid.

116 The Star, May 23, 1919.

117 The Star, May 27, 1919.

As the strike entered June The Star focused its pronouncements more and more on the responsibility of the federal government to act decisively to settle the dispute. As a result discussion over the real causes of the discontent became a secondary concern. In one of its last editorials related to this earlier theme the paper commented: "The conviction is growing stronger that the real cause of industrial unrest is not Bolshevism or any other theory, but the high cost of living. The workingman's dollar will buy only about half what it bought twenty years ago. He is forced to strike, or make a protest of some kind, not to establish Soviets or even to improve his condition, but just to keep up with the continual increase in the cost of food, clothing and rent."¹¹⁸

Throughout the strike The Star emphasized the need for responsible government intervention to facilitate a fair settlement of the dispute. As early as May 16 the paper argued: "The influence of the Government cannot be regarded as negligible, and it ought at least to exhaust all its resources of advice and persuasion."¹¹⁹ A few days later the call to action was more urgent: "Schemes of reconstruction requiring a long period for development can wait. The

118 The Star, June 3, 1919.

119 The Star, May 16, 1919.

labor situation cannot wait. The Government should take the initiative in mediation at Winnipeg."¹²⁰ As the strike lengthened the paper began to equate Ottawa's inaction "The Winnipeg Situation" with indifference:

We wonder if the Cabinet and Parliament at Ottawa realize the full weight of responsibility for the continuance of the situation which rests upon them? If they did would events develop, bringing the country nearer and nearer to all the horrible consequences of class war....¹²¹

During the period between May 15 and June 2¹²² the ministers of the Union government in Parliament carefully fielded the Opposition's periodic queries about the Winnipeg situation. When Ernest Lapointe questioned Borden about the government's definition of collective bargaining, the Prime minister responded that a precise answer would have to await the report of the Mathers Commission investigation.¹²³ Evidently the government was unprepared to discuss what was rapidly becoming a national crisis. After the Commons repeatedly

120 The Star, May 19, 1919.

121 The Star, May 21, 1919.

122 As indicated earlier on June 2 Parliament finally conducted an open debate on the Western labour unrest.

123 Canada, House of Commons, Debates, May 30, 1919, 2954-55.

declined a full scale debate on the Winnipeg strike The Star observed: "So far the idea of Parliament seems to have been ...that the Winnipeg fight should naturally be allowed to proceed to a finish and whichever side won would be deemed to have been right."¹²⁴

When the federal government, through Arthur Meighen and Gideon Robertson, finally made its presence felt in Winnipeg, The Star hoped: "that the Minister of Labor and Mr. Meighen will use their influence for the purpose of obtaining a just settlement of all the questions involved in the Winnipeg strike."¹²⁵ After the "midnight arrests" of June 16-17 however The Star changed its warning from the need for direct action to the need for justice and attention to civil rights. In an editorial titled "A Great State Trial" Atkinson declared on June 18:

The arrest of the strike leaders in Winnipeg...is a very serious step, which can be explained only upon the supposition that evidence not known to the public has come into the possession of the authorities. The first result of the arrest will be to antagonize organized labor throughout the Dominion, even its

124 The Star, June 2, 1919.

125 The Star, May 27, 1919.

most moderate elements, and add new bitterness to the dispute. Adverse public opinion can be overcome only by a fair trial and by the clearest evidence.... There must be scrupulous regard for the liberty of the subject, and for his right to all the safeguards erected by British law.¹²⁶

The Star insisted that a trial in the regular courts was the best way to deal with the arrested strike leaders; otherwise, "Labormen will not believe the charges."¹²⁷ While Atkinson's editorial of June 18 in response to the government's action in Winnipeg was carefully worded and relatively mild his comment on June 21 was unmistakably clear and critical. The Star indicted the Borden government for mishandling the whole affair in Winnipeg and singled out Arthur Meighen as the prime offender:

There is no injustice in naming Mr. Meighen as the chief of the advocates of strong-arm measures. He is a man of great ability, his mind is rigid and his temper dictatorial. It was unfortunate that he was selected as the Government's representative in Winnipeg. He appears to have completely dominated his easy-going and well-meaning associate,

126 The Star, June 18, 1919.

127 The Star, June 19, 1919.

the Minister of Labour. Through his influence the mission to Winnipeg ceased to be one of conciliation. The industrial aspects of the situation were ignored. No attempt seems to have been made to influence the employers to accept the principle of collective bargaining.

Mr. Meighen regarded himself as a crown prosecutor, while the function of the Minister of Labour as a conciliator was forgotten. The arrests and the original choice of a departmental investigation were the culminating results of the working of his masterful mind.¹²⁸

This editorial, captioned "Back to the Right Way" was to be The Star's final commentary on the strike.

Conclusion

This study has shown how anti-strike news -- essentially the interpretation of the Citizens' Committee -- originated in Winnipeg and ended up in Toronto. The efforts of The Citizen, Free Press, Tribune and Telegram were directed to convincing Winnipeggers that the walkout was illegitimate, criminal and Bolshevistic. Among those who accepted this explanation were the news sources of five of Toronto's six daily newspapers; namely, Mary Dawson Snider of The Evening Telegram; American papers, newsmen and press services; Winnipeg stringers and the C.P. bureau in Winnipeg. The circuit was complete when the anti-strike Toronto press printed news and editorials based on these incoming reports. Thus, unknown to the overwhelming majority of readers in Toronto they were receiving a version of the strike actually advanced by Winnipeg's established business and professional community.

In contrast The Star presented a different account of the strike, one closer to that of The News. Here the influence of Joseph Atkinson was paramount. His motives for taking such a stand were mixed. The desire to augment circulation offered a financial consideration, while the opportunity to embarrass Borden's government served a political end. Since The Star catered to the working class,

special coverage of the strike was not only natural but essential. Finally, Atkinson backed the action of the workers out of personal convictions. He felt that the grievances of Winnipeg's labouring class were valid and their cause just. He therefore selected Main Johnson and William Plewman for the strike assignment. With Johnson and Plewman providing continuous "on-the-spot" coverage of the dispute The Star, unlike its competitors, did not have to rely exclusively on the same channels of information -- sources hostile to the walkout. On the basis of this pro-strike material Atkinson was able to support the strike by editorials.

Judging by modern studies the version of the strike presented by The Star is more accurate than that of the anti-strike Toronto press. Professors Masters, Graham and McNaught confirm The Star's assessment of the central issues of the walkout. They agree with the paper's appraisal that Winnipeg's labour troubles were not the result of an O.B.U.-Bolshevik conspiracy but a peaceful protest over legitimate worker grievances. Also, they support The Star's contention that the use of the sympathetic strike, while an extreme measure, was not part of a foreign coup. On the final issue -- the breakup of the strike -- there is some disagreement with the position taken by The Star. McNaught champions Atkinson's editorial stand while Graham defends the action of Arthur

Meighen and the Dominion government. Masters admits on the one hand that Ottawa's representatives embarked on a programme that was both drastic and unconciliatory yet he also states that the federal authorities had reason to fear for the maintenance of law and order. However all three historians concur with The Star that the reason for the breakup of the strike was not to crush a Bolshevik plot but to prevent Winnipeg labour from successfully challenging the city's recognized and constituted authority.

From this study too emerges considerable doubt about the objectivity or neutrality of the press; in fact, what is apparent is that news and news gathering are conditioned by the convictions of those in control of the press.

On the one hand there was the anti-strike viewpoint. The reasons for its existence were the social, economic and political outlook of the newspaper owners in Winnipeg and Toronto. Caught up in the "Red Scare" they viewed with increasing alarm the growth of working class militancy during the war and came to believe that the prevailing industrial unrest was the result of "Bolshevik" activity. Given their inability to empathize with the cause of the working man and their inherent suspicion of organized labour they were quickly convinced foreign Bolsheviks caused the general strike. Added to this was the fear of financial loss to their vested

interests, a feeling dramatically reinforced by the temporary closure of Winnipeg's three dailies at the outset of the walkout. Finally there existed political reasons. For the allies of the Union government there was a special need to support Ottawa's actions; but for all there was a wish to maintain the stability of duly elected governments.

In contrast Atkinson and The Star had different convictions. Because of his advanced social conscience and progressive stance towards industrial reform Atkinson sympathised with the struggle of Winnipeg's workers. Besides, The Star no longer wished to endorse the Union government; thus Borden's ministers -- Meighen and Robertson -- were roundly criticised.

Since editors and reporters followed the guidelines of publishers news was reported within a certain biased framework. John Conklin of The Free Press provides a perfect example. When he worked for The Star he sent back copy that was pro-strike in slant, but when he acted for other client papers he changed his assessment. Similarly it is true that Main Johnson and William Plewman of The Star and Mary Dawson Snider and Garnet Porter of The Evening Telegram analysed events according to the editorial disposition of their employer. However it would be unfair to claim that all press representatives, even Conklin, were merely "following orders".

Each reporter had personal opinions which also influenced interpretation of the strike. Given the pro-labour background of Plewman, for example, it is not difficult to see why he was sympathetic to the workers. Thus news and news gathering are conditioned by a combination of two elements: first, the established editorial policy of a reporter's paper, and second, that reporter's individual beliefs.

A final point to this thesis is that it raises the question about the role played by the political bias of newspapers in Canadian history. At the time of such controversies as the trial of Louis Riel, reciprocity or conscription were Canadians aware of the built-in prejudice of the newspapers they were reading? How accurate was the treatment of both sides of the story? Also, have not language differences in Canada created even further complications for press coverage of similar events? Since a good deal of historical research makes use of the press, it would be wise to re-investigate events with the knowledge of the individual prejudices of various newspapers.

APPENDIX "A"

Chronology of Events of the Winnipeg General Strike¹

A. Prelude

- 1918 May 3-24 - Strike of Winnipeg civic employees including city electricians, waterworks employees, teamsters, firemen, telephone operators and streetcar conductors.
- 1919 April 30 - Winnipeg building and metal trades strike over wages and recognition of collective bargaining by Metal Trades Council.
- May 6 - The W.T.L.C. decides to take a strike vote of affiliated unions in sympathy with building and metal trades.
- May 10-12 - Mathers Commission holds session in Winnipeg, Main Johnson present for The Star.
- May 13 - Result of strike vote, 11,000 in favour to 500 opposed. General sympathetic strike called for 11.00 A.M. Thursday, May 15.

B. The Main Events

- Day 1 May 15 - City transportation system closes down. Bread and milk delivery stop. Building elevators stop running. Postal employees go

¹ Summary of the main events is based chiefly on A. Balawyder, The Winnipeg General Strike. Problems in Canadian History. General editor J. T. Copp (Toronto, 1967) pp. 1-5.

home. Restaurants and barbershops close. Firemen strike, except for special life-saving crews. About 3,000 clerks, book-keepers, and stenographers join strike C.P.R., C.N.R., and G.T.R. employees, not affiliated with the W.T.L.C., strike in sympathy. About 27,000 workers walk out on the first day. Formation of Citizens' Committee of One Thousand.

Day 2 May 16
(Friday)

- Telephone operators and telephone electrical workers join the strike. Printers, Webb pressmen and stereotypers vote to strike, city newspapers threatened with need to close down. Special "milk depots" are set up in the city.

Day 3 May 17
(Saturday)

- Commercial, brokerage, and news agency telegraphers join in the walkout. Limited bread and milk delivery possible through "Strike permits". Some restaurants allowed to open but may only serve striking union men. Mayor of Winnipeg, Charles F. Gray, calls on federal Minister of Labour to come to city. Senator Gideon Robertson replies he will come only if both sides show a willingness to negotiate. Appearance of first issue of special strike bulletin of The Western Labor News.

Day 4 May 18
(Sunday)

- Main Johnson arrives in Winnipeg, sees William Ivens at Labor Temple, and later travels to Thief River Falls, Minnesota to file his first report of the strike to The Star.

Day 5 May 19
(Monday)

- Citizens' Committee of One Thousand publishes first issue of The Winnipeg Citizen.

- Day 7 May 21
(Wednesday)
- After three days of conferring with metal trades employers, Mayor Gray announces their unwillingness to negotiate until the general strike has ended.
- Day 8 May 22
(Thursday)
- William Plewman arrives in Winnipeg to join Main Johnson in coverage of the strike for The Star.
- Day 12 May 26
(Monday)
- Winnipeg City Council passes resolutions firing all civic employees who had struck on May 15, preventing Winnipeg firemen from joining international unions, and obliging candidates for the fire brigade to promise not to join any sympathetic strikes.
- Day 15 May 29
(Thursday)
- Winnipeg police are required to sign statement promising never to strike before arbitration of any dispute with the city, and never to participate in a sympathetic strike.
- Day 16 May 30
(Friday)
- The post office having fired all employees not reporting back to work by May 26, begins mail delivery with new employees. At the same time, a large number of civic workers have signed the anti-strike pledge, and Winnipeg's three daily newspapers, have resumed normal publication. But while the Citizens' Committee has staffed essential and public services, most of the people who left work on May 15 are still on strike.
- Day 17 May 31
(Saturday)
- Returned soldiers hold first parade in support of strike.
- Day 19 June 2
(Monday)
- A second parade is organized by returned soldiers in spite of the strike committee's urgings to strikers to keep off the streets.

- Day 21 June 4
(Wednesday)
- Parades organized for and against the strike almost clash in front of the Manitoba legislative building. The strike committee again stops deliveries of milk, bread and ice. Dairy owners set up emergency distribution depots in schools.
- Day 22 June 5
(Thursday)
- Mayor Gray issues his first proclamation prohibiting parades.
- Day 26 June 9
(Monday)
- All but sixteen members of the Winnipeg police force are fired for refusing to sign the anti-strike pledge
- Day 27 June 10
(Tuesday)
- Special police-organized by the Citizens' Committee -- appear on Winnipeg streets. Contact with strike supporters turns into the "riot" of June 10.
- Day 28 June 11
(Wednesday)
- Second proclamation by mayor against parades.
- Day 29 June 12
(Thursday)
- Commercial, brokerage and, news agency telegraphers return to their keys.
- Day 33 June 16
(Monday)
- Metal shop employers publish conciliatory proposals said to be aimed at meeting strikers' demands.
- Day 34 June 17
(Tuesday)
- Striking railway workers claim metal shop employers' proposals are satisfactory, call for an end to the strike. However majority of strikers remain firm. During the night of June 16-17, 12 strike leaders, including William Ivens editor of The Western Labor News, are arrested by federal authorities for seditious conspiracy. J. S. Woodsworth and Fred Dixon take over direction of The Western Labor News.

- Day 38 June 21
(Saturday) - Six of the arrested strike leaders are released on bail early in the morning. In the afternoon a silent indignation parade is organized in Winnipeg. When it begins, in spite of prohibition by civil authorities, special police and Mounties are called out to stop it. In the mêlée that follows, named "Bloody Saturday" by the strikers, two men are killed and more than 30 injured.
- Day 40 June 23
(Monday) - Main Street patrolled by soldiers with rifles, Mounties with carbines and revolvers, and trucks mounted with machine guns. J. S. Woodsworth, temporary editor of Western Labor News, arrested for seditious libel and the paper formally banned.
- Day 41 June 24
(Tuesday) - Dixon, in hiding, changes The Labor News to The Enlightener.
- Day 42 June 25
(Wednesday) - Dixon, still in hiding, changes The Enlightener to The Western Star. The W.T.L.C. announces the end of the strike.
- Day 43 June 26
(Thursday) - General strike is officially called off at 11.00 A.M..

C. Aftermath

- 1919 July and August - Preliminary hearing of strike leaders before Police Magistrate R. M. Noble.
- 1919 November and December - Trial of R. B. Russell before Court of King's Bench, Justice Metcalfe presiding. Russell found guilty and sentenced to two years in penitentiary.
- 1920 January 22-April 7 - Trial of seven other strike leaders before Court of King's Bench, Justice Metcalfe presiding.

Results: a year in²prison for each
of the five accused², six months
for R. E. Bray and acquittal for
Fred Dixon.

2 William Ivens, R. J. Johns, John Queen, George Armstrong
and William Pritchard.

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