ABBREVIATED TITLE

STRUCTURE OF LABOUR MOVEMENT

IN CAN. RAILWAY INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Title: The Structure of the Labour Movement in the Canadian Railway Industry

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The labour movement in the Canadian railway industry has been and still is highly fragmented, with 16 unions representing a total of only 120,000 workers. Despite the integrated nature of railway operations, where large corporations employ many different classifications of employees, craft, rather than industrial, unions dominate the railway labour movement.

To cope with the problems caused by the fragmented structure, the unions have had to develop various forms through which they could co-operate to achieve their ends. Although there have been a few mergers, the unions have primarily relied on "federal" arrangements (e.g. joint bargaining committees) to increase their economic and political power.

This study examines the development and functioning of the railway unions and their joint committees and organizations. Since many unionists feel that a more consolidated structure has become a necessity, both the forces promoting union consolidation and the forces retarding it are examined in detail.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN THE CANADIAN RAILWAY INDUSTRY

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since trade unionism established itself in North America in the 19th century, the structure of the labour movement has been a constant problem for trade unionists. Most unionists see the need for rationalization of the movement arising out of the concentration of industry, resulting in giant, often multi-national, corporations. In referring to the danger of conglomerate market organization, Donald MacDonald, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, has said: "If the working people of Canada, and of the world, are to protect their interests in the face of these circumstances, then they will have to have larger, stronger, and better-equipped unions than ever before."[1]

In this paper, the term "unity" will generally refer to the type envisioned by MacDonald above--that is, organic unity. But unity through federative arrangements, a very common practice in Canada, will also be discussed. Thus the concept of "unity" will be dealt with in terms of structural relationships, rather than more abstract forms of fraternal solidarity and unity of aims and philosophies.

Unity for the Canadian labour movement, as well as its counterpart in the United States, has been very slow in its development. In fact, the Canadian labour movement is still very much structurally fragmented. As of 1969 there

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[1] Canadian Railwayman, Sept. 13, 1969, p. 1.

were 101 international unions with members in Canada, and 59 national unions, serving a total membership of only 2,075,000 workers.[2] Only 18 out of these 160 unions had a membership of over 30,000. Crispo compares this structure with that existing today in Germany, where the Central Federation of Trade Unions is divided into 16 major industrial and craft unions, and terms the structural situation in Canada to be "illogical, if not ludicrous."[3]

The labour movement in the Canadian railway industry is a classic example of fragmentation. While there are only 120,000 railway workers in Canada, and even this number is dropping steadily, there are 16 unions claiming memberships in the industry. Workers have always been and are still organized on a craft basis, even though most of the unions are certainly "multi-craft" and even multi-industry. Since the railway work force comprises many different crafts throughout the running trades, the non-operating section, and the shopcrafts, the fragmentation of the labour movement has been a natural result of the craft basis of organization.

As is the case with leaders throughout the labour movement as a whole, most railway union leaders have repeatedly emphasized the need for rail labour unity. Tangible evidence of this emphasis has been, if not overwhelming, at least quite substantial, especially in the past four years. During

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[2] Labour Organizations in Canada 1969, (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1970), p. xii, xiii.

[3] Crispo, John. International Unionism. (Toronto, McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 168.

this period, four running trades unions merged to form the United Transportation Union (UTU) in 1968; the Transportation-Communication Employees Union was absorbed by the largest non-operating union, the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks (BRAC) in 1969; the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (CBRT) passed a strongly-worded statement on rail labour unity in 1967; and in mid-1969 the membership of the CBRT voted down a merger with BRAC at a special convention, after initial talks had begun between the executives of the two unions.

However, despitethe recent progress, the railway labour movement is a long way from being "united". Ed Finn, Research Director for the CBRT, has offered the following biting analogy, referring to the Canadian labour movement as a whole, but with particular emphasis on the railway sector: "This is a structure that resembles nothing so much as the multitude of feudal fiefdoms and baronies into which so many European countries were divided in the Middle Ages. Even the jurisdictional rivalry is reminiscent of the intrigues of a Byzantine empire."[4] Finn has also stated categorically that "there is no rational basis for having 120,000 railway workers represented by 16 unions."[5]

The central theme of this paper is an investigation

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[4] Canadian Transport, Jan. 1, 1970, p. 4.

[5] Letter to the writer, dated December 8, 1970.

into the basis of the structure of the railway labour movement in Canada. There is obviously a great deal of dissatisfaction with the present type of structure in some sectors, but there is also widespread acceptance and overall satisfaction from other groups within the railway unions. The paper attempts to present reasons for these divergent points of view, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of the present structure as compared with a more organically unified system. A large section of the paper is devoted to an analysis of both the factors which tend to promote the consolidation of railway labour and the factors which tend to retard it, or maintain the system in its present form.

Of course, in order to attempt to explain the structure of the railway labour movement, one must go back to its historical roots and analyse the conditions that gave rise to and those which perpetuate that structure. Thus the paper is necessarily somewhat historical in nature, dealing both in general trends and specific events.

The first chapter deals with the present organic structure of the Canadian railway labour movement, outlining the three groups into which the unions are divided -- the running trades, the non-operating, and the shopcraft unions. The size and jurisdictions of the unions are presented to concretize the concept of "fragmentation" which will be frequently used.

The historical development of railway union organic

structure in North America is outlined in Chapter Two, including a discussion of the industrial and social conditions which gave rise to railway unionism, as well as a discussion on the reasons for the "victory" of craft unionism.

Chapter Three is a description and analysis of the brief life of the American Railway Union (ARU), and the causes behind its meteoric rise and abrupt end. The American Railway Union, an industrial union which attempted to organize all railway workers, was founded by Eugene. V. Debs in 1893 and signed up over 150,000 members in its brief existence of little more than a year. A United Transportation Union publication called the ARU the "most notable among rail union solidarity attempts."[6]

Chapter Four deals with another reaction to the conservative, craft-dominated structure, the purely Canadian "industrial" railway union, the Canadian Brotherhood of Railroad Employees (later the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers). It includes the reasons for the formation of such a union, its differences from the international unions, and some of its jurisdictional struggles.

To add more perspective, a brief analysis of the railway labour movement in Britain is taken up in Chapter

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[6]United Transportation Union, The Unity Move in Railroad Labour, undated pamphlet.

Five. British railwaymen have had quite a different historical experience with union structure, having had a fairly consolidated structure ever since the unions gained a firm foothold. There is also a discussion of some of the factors which may have accounted for this historical difference in structure between the British and the North American railway union movements.

Chapter Six is titled "The Development of 'Federal' Arrangements", and points out the methods the railway unions have adopted to increase their strength and effectiveness without greater organic unity. In the area of collective bargaining, it deals mainly with the formation and development of the General Conference Committee of the Associated Non-Operating Unions and Division No. 4, Railway Employees Department, which is the Shopcraft Unions' bargaining arm. In the legislative or "lobbying" field, the unions have joined together to form a joint representative body, the Canadian Railway Labour Association (CRLA), whose concerns and functions are examined.

Chapters Seven and Eight deal with the forces which are promoting further consolidation (organic unity) among the railway unions, and the forces which are retarding or hampering further consolidation, respectively. Economic, political and psychological factors are all part of such an analysis. While these chapters include references to the opinions of "outside observers", heavy emphasis is

placed on the views of railway unionists themselves, both Canadian and American.

The final chapter is a "Conclusion" which underlines some of the main points raised, particularly in Chapters Seven and Eight, and offers some speculation about possible changes in the structure in the near future and in the long run.

CHAPTER 1 - PRESENT ORGANIC STRUCTURE

The railway industry contains an extremely diversified work force and has historically been comprised of various groups of skilled workers organized on a craft basis. Even with recent mergers reducing the number by four, there are still no less than 16 unions representing railway workers in Canada. Traditionally, they have been classified into two groups -- the running trades unions and the non-operating unions. The latter is by far the larger group, and is usually broken down, both for discussion and for actual collective bargaining purposes, into two - the shopcraft unions and the rest, which retain the name "non-operating" unions. The following is a catalogue listing the unions under the three divisions:

A. Running Trades Unions

1. Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE)
2. United Transportation Union (UTU)

B. Non-Operating Unions

1. Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE)
2. Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS)
3. Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees (BRAC)
4. Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP)
5. Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (CBRT)

6. International Brotherhood of Firemen and Oilers (IBFO)

7. United Telegraph Workers (UTW)

C. Shopcraft Unions

1. International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers (IBB)

2. Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of the United States and Canada (BRC)

3. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)

4. International Molders' and Allied Workers Union (IMAWU)

5. International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)

6. United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA)

7. Sheet Metal Workers' International Association (SMWIA)

With the exception of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers, all these unions can be classified under the traditional label "craft" unions. However, just what a "craft" union is has tended to become blurred, as unions which were once organized around a single specialized skill have expanded or amalgamated to include several skilled trades, as well as certain semi-skilled occupations. The United Transportation Union, for example, is an amalgamation of firemen, engineers, trainmen, conductors, and several other classifications of workers. Even the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, a union which has always

emphasized its craft nature, has included "engine wipers" from its earliest beginnings.[1] The now-defunct Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen bargained for some groups of locomotive engineers, particularly on short lines. The Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks is an extremely diversified union, as its very name indicates, and has recently increased its diversification with the absorption of the Transportation-Communication Employees' Union.

There are two somewhat different notions of what constitutes a "craft", as a United Transportation Union representative pointed out to me. The term is used here to denote the different classifications of railway workers (e.g. engineers, trainmen, electricians, carmen, etc.). However, the concept of "craft" is also used to signify a trade which carries with it an apprenticeship training program working up to certification of a worker with defined skills. Such certification then allows the worker to move from one industry to another. While this concept of "craft" applies to several classifications of railway workers (e.g. machinists, electricians, sheet metal workers, etc.), it does not apply to workers in the running trades or the non-operating employees, nor to the carmen.

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[1] Ginger, Ray. Eugene V. Debs: A Biography. (New York, Collier Books, 1962), p. 175.

Originally the skilled trades unions adopted the craft form to allow skilled workers to take advantage of their position in the market, but it is clear that this craft "solidarity" has weakened considerably over the years, due to changes in technology, market organization, union leadership, and many other reasons. Now there is very little distinction between the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, which is supposedly a craft union, and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers, which prides itself on being an industrial union. In fact, it is a difference in ideology and constitution more than in jurisdiction. In practice the CBRT has primarily confined itself to organizing those workers not already organized by other unions. Most of its members are clerical employees on the CN system, while the BRAC has jurisdiction over the CP clerks. But the difference in outlook or ideology seems to be a rather important one, as we shall see later.

The form which business organization takes in an industry is usually influential in molding union structure. A clear example of this is the economic organization of the construction industry and its impact upon the structure of the building trades unions. Also the multi-industry character of the auto companies is the principal reason why the United Auto Workers is a multi-industry union.

However, in the railroad industry, and some others,

such as the motion picture production industry, craft-type union structures persist despite the integrated nature of business organization in these industries.[2]

Some of the unions listed above are made up entirely of railway workers, such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen. Some have a diversified membership in which the railway workers are the majority. Examples of this type are the BRAC and CBRT, whose main source of membership is the railways, but who also draw members from several other areas, such as airline employees, garage workers, bus drivers, hotel employees, and seaway workers. In most of the Shopcraft unions, such as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers or the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association, the railway section of the membership is in the minority. Only about 2,000 of the 56,000 IBEW members in Canada are railway workers, while only 4700 out of 53,000 Machinists, and 1100 out of 30,000 Pipefitters are employeed in the railway shops. These unions draw membership from all the different industries which use that particular craft, except those which are organized by an industrial union.

The primary characteristic of all the Canadian railway unions, or rather, the Canadian branches of international unions, is their smallness. While many of the internationals

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[2]Barbash, Jack. The Practice of Unionism. (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 94.

are huge, such as the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, the United Transportation Union , the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and the International Association of Machinists, their Canadian memberships (in the railway industry) are relatively small. The Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers has about 34,000 members, of which 23,000 are on the railways; in Canada, the United Transportation Union has 28,000; the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees 20,000; the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks 24,000; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers 7,000; the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen 1,200; and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters only 300. In 1969 when the UTU was formed by a four-union merger, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen had about 21,000 members, but the other three were very small -- the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen had under 7,000, the Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen less than 200, while the Switchmen's Union of North America had 27 members.[3] The BRAC and the UTU are the two biggest transportation unions in the AFL-CIO, with over 300,000 and 260,000 members respectively, but their Canadian sections are far down the list of Canadian unions and branches of internationals in terms of size. Table I lists all the unions in the Canadian railway industry with their total membership and their memberships in Canada.

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[3] Labour Organizations in Canada 1968.

TABLE I

SIZE OF UNIONS WITH MEMBERS IN RAILWAY INDUSTRY (1969)

Union	Total Membership	Membership in Canada
International Association of Machinists	1,041,000	53,000
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	800,000	56,000
Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks	300,000	24,000
United Transportation Union	260,000	28,000
United Association of Journeymen & Apprentices of the Plumbing & Pipe Fitting Industry	257,000	30,000
Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees	168,000	20,000
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers & Helpers	151,000	8,000
Brotherhood of Railway Carmen	130,000	16,000
International Molders' and Allied Workers' Union	100,000	6,000
Sheet Metal Workers' International Association	85,000	14,000
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers	65,000	7,000
International Brotherhood of Firemen and Oilers	50,000	2,000
Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport & General Workers	34,000	34,000
United Telegraph Workers	28,000	4,000
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen	13,000	1,200

TABLE I (Cont'd.)

Union	Total Membership	Membership in Canada
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters	2,500	300

SOURCES:

Encyclopedia of Associations, 6th Edition, Volume I. (Detroit, Gale Research Co., 1970).

Labour Organizations in Canada 1969. (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1970).

CHAPTER 2 - HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RAILWAY UNION ORGANIC STRUCTURE

In the first half of the 19th century, the railway companies in the United States were still quite small, paid good wages, and tended to treat their employees with a rather benevolent paternalism.[1] However, railroad expansion and consolidation during the 1850's transformed the small, local companies into nation-wide giants, and paternalism became much less common. Excessively long hours of work and frequent wage cuts and mass layoffs during slack times became the norm. There was a constant downward pressure on wages as railroads engaged in vicious rate wars.[2]

These rate wars, which continued from the 1850's through to the 1890's, were in large measure responsible for the poor working conditions and problems of the railway workers. One observer has noted: "It has been said, also, that the rate wars contributed in some degree to greater operating efficiency as railroad managements sought to offset reduced revenues with lower operating costs."[3] Of course, one of the prime avenues for achieving lower operating costs was reducing wages and increasing hours worked.

Sidney L. Miller cites several reasons for the intense competition which provoked these rate wars. Among

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[1] Ginger, Eugene V. Debs: A Biography, p. 36.

[2] Ginger, Ray. The Age of Excess. (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 54.

[3] Westmeyer, Russell E. Economics of Transportation. (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1952), p. 82.

them were the consolidation of connecting lines and construction of through lines which brought companies into direct conflict; the keen rivalry between market centres such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston; the construction of mileage greatly in excess of the economic needs of the territory served; the pressure of the depression following the severe panic of 1873; and the appearance of industrial competition, as the Eastern industrial section began to be challenged by the Midwest, South and Far West.[4]

Before unions were able to obtain a law limiting hours on duty, railroad men could be forced to work 16 hours a day. Until 1870, switchmen had to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week. When trainmen set out on a run, they carried enough food to last two weeks, since they never knew when they would get home again.[5]

The lack of safety provisions and the resulting extremely high accident rate were a principal motivation behind the formation of railway unions in the running trades. Merritt points out that one of the major reasons for the founding of the earliest railroad unions was to provide burial expenses for their members. A third of the trainmen in the United States were killed or injured in some way every year, having to run back and forth on catwalks over

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[4]Miller, Sidney L. Railway Transportation. (Chicago, A.W. Shaw Co., 1925), p. 106.

[5]Merritt, Cliff. Scrapbook of Man on the Move. United Transportation Union, undated.

moving trains to set and release the brakes on signals from the engineer. The railroads also required the brakemen to ride a footboard on the front of the locomotive, leaping on and off to work the switches. This practice too resulted in hundreds being maimed or killed, as did that of stepping between moving cars to couple them by hand. Injuries to the hands were so frequent that when hiring new workers bosses picked brakemen with fingers missing, because it showed they had experience.[6]

The first to organize were the most skilled workers on the railroads, the locomotive engineers, who founded their Brotherhood in 1863. However, they were immediately set back by two strikes which were broken by the combined power of the railroads. From that time on the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers adopted a completely conciliatory attitude toward the companies, and began to rely on improving their efficiency and disassociating themselves from the other unions in order to gain concessions from the railroads. This became the pattern adopted by the remaining members of the "Big Four Brotherhoods" as well. The Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen was founded in 1868, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen in 1872, and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen in 1883. These four Brotherhoods have completely dominated the organization of workers in the

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[6] Merritt, Op. Cit.

running trades from the beginnings of union organization right up to the present time.

One of the major reasons for the formation of the Brotherhoods and one of their continuing central features was their operation of benefit funds for their members. In fact they have been mutual insurance agencies as much as bargaining unions.[7] As is evident from above, in the 19th century workers in the running trades were greatly in need of cheap life insurance. The workers couldn't afford to pay the high premiums charged by private companies. If a railroader was injured or killed his family had to rely on charity. The co-operative insurance of the Brotherhoods was the only security the workers had, and from the very beginning the Brotherhoods concentrated on this service. They tried to offer cheap insurance and a fraternal spirit to men who needed both.[8] As far back as 1882, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen established a plan for permanent and total disability benefits. In 1891 the operating Brotherhoods had already set up homes for the aged and disabled, and before World War I had undertaken their own comprehensive pension systems. One writer has termed these measures taken by the railroad unions "the pioneering efforts

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[7]Logan, H.A. Trade Unions in Canada. (Toronto, The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 138.

[8]Ginger, Eugene V. Debs: A Biography, p. 35.

in welfare unionism."[9]

However it was soon evident that the workers needed more than just insurance -- they needed a tough bargaining union which could stand up to the railroad companies. One writer has noted the retreat of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers from any sort of militant action: "The only remaining incentives to join the Brotherhood were cheap insurance and the satisfaction of membership in a rather snobbish society."[10]

Construction of connecting railway lines between the United States and Canada facilitated the entry of American unions into Canada.[11] Canadian branches of the Engineers and Conductors were organized in the late 1860's, of the Firemen in the 1870's, and of the Trainmen in the 1880's.[12] Most of the shopcraft unions (International Association of

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[9]Barbash, Jack. The Practice of Unionism. (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 396.

[10]Ibid., p. 36.

[11]The first through railway, a link of the Boston & Lowell Railroad with the Champlain & St. Lawrence Railroad, was established in 1851. In quick succession, through railway connections were opened between New York and Montreal in 1852, Portland, Maine and Montreal in 1853, and between New York and Chicago through the lower peninsula of Ontario in 1855. Links between Winnipeg and Minneapolis-St. Paul in the West were established in 1878. By 1933, United States carriers were operating 1,556 miles of railway in Canada while Canadian carriers were operating 7,312 miles in the United States. For a detailed discussion of railway connections between the two countries, see William. J. Wilgus, The Railway Interrelations of the United States and Canada, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1937).

[12]Jamieson, Stuart. Industrial Relations in Canada. (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 32.

Machinists, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, etc.) were well established in Canadian railway shops by the turn of the century, with railway memberships varying up to about 5,000 prior to World War I. The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees organized sectionmen and construction workers and, after a nation-wide struggle with the Canadian Pacific Railway, won recognition and a collective agreement in 1901.[13] The Canadian Brotherhood of Railroad Employees (CBRE, later the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers) was founded in 1908 and established itself on the Intercolonial, Grand Trunk and the other lines which were to become the Canadian National Railways. While its membership was open to all railway employees, in practice it limited itself to organizing the previously unorganized groups - clerks, freight handlers, foremen, checkers, porters, baggage-masters, parlour, sleeping and dining car employees, locomotive wipers, cranemen and labourers.[14] The international union organizing these classes of workers was the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks (BRSC, later the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks) which was founded in 1878 but grew slowly until given a boost when American railways were put under federal control during the war and

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[13] Logan, Op. Cit., p. 145.

[14] Ibid., p. 142.

railway employees no longer feared discrimination because of union activity. When the BRSC began chartering Canadian branches in 1917, it found the CBRE well-established on the Intercolonial, the National Transcontinental, the Grand Trunk and Canadian Northern. But it was left free to organize the Canadian Pacific Railway as the CBRE had been beaten in a strike there in 1912. With the aid of the Trades and Labour Congress, the international union won recognition on the CPR and has held it ever since, with the CBRT continuing to bargain for the clerks on the CNR.

Conditions of work on the Canadian railways in the early years made the workers receptive to the organizing of the international unions, and led to the formation of the national union, the CBRE. Railroad work was dangerous, the hours were often intolerably long and for such groups as clerks, baggage handlers, and express employees, wages were low.[15] There was no minimum wage and hour legislation, no grievance procedures, and no seniority rules. Railway management was extremely autocratic, particularly on the CPR. Employees could be dismissed after years of faithful service because of a trifling error or misdemeanor, without any right of appeal. Greening and Maclean sum up what working conditions were like in the late 1800's and early 1900's: "The railway workers at this period, like nearly all

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[15] Greening W.E., and Maclean, M.M. It Was Never Easy -- A History of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers. (Ottawa, Mutual Press, 1961), p. 2.

other classes of Canadian wage-earners, were wholly unprotected against the evils of the industrial system - excessive hours, low wages, discrimination, unemployment, and disability due to sickness, accident and old age."[16]

There have been many reasons advanced for the "victory of craft unionism", as it has been called, in the period prior to the 1930's, These range from "trade fraternity" to "class consciousness" explanations. In the railroad industry, it would seem that the craft form of organization resulted to a large extent from the fairly clear definition of skills within the work force, and also due to the very large status and salary differences between classifications. In the running trades a definite hierarchy was always present, with engineers and firemen on top. And the running trades as a whole was a sizeable step above the non-operating workers, particularly the mainenance of way men, who were generally common labourers. Since, in their earliest days at least, the railroad Brotherhoods were basically fraternal societies, with many features similar to organizations such as the Masonic Lodge and Shriners, the craft form of organization was obviously more appropriate. Skilled workers identified closely with their craft, in what has been called "trade solidarity". In that way there was also a hierarchy of unions, corresponding to the hierarchy of classifications,

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[16] Ibid.

with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers on top.

When the workers began to demand militant action around wage demands and working conditions, it appears that the Brotherhoods had a great deal of difficulty delivering the goods. Eugene Debs and a great many others, who had fought in the Brotherhoods for years, attributed this ineffectiveness largely to the craft form of union organization, under which the railroads could play groups of workers off against each other. However, when an attempt was made in the 1890's to organize all railroad workers in the United States into a single industrial union, it failed to last, and craft unionism had won a victory which it has never relinquished. While the history of the ill-fated American Railway Union (ARU) will be taken up in more detail in the next chapter, it must be pointed out here that the failure of the ARU, and consequently of industrial unionism on the railroads, seems to have been in large measure due to the fact that in the previous twenty-odd years the Brotherhoods had firmly established themselves and had to one extent or another won the acceptance of the railroad companies, the American Federation of Labor, and the federal government. Not only did the Brotherhoods fail to support the ARU, they were openly hostile toward it, as it was inceasingly dangerous and effective rival. The railroads and government of course preferred the conservative Brotherhoods to the militant ARU. Small wonder the craft unions won their victory.

The international craft unions were able to establish themselves in Canada largely due to their already established base in the United States. At the time (1860-1890, roughly) the Canadian railway work force was simply too small and too dispersed to make a purely national organization a viable alternative. Canadian railway workers naturally looked to their fellow railwaymen in the United States for assistance, particularly to those in the same classification. The International Brotherhoods' accident and life insurance plans were very attractive to Canadian workers, who saw them as their only possible means of getting security.

There has never been a serious attempt in Canada at forming an all-inclusive industrial union on the railways, such as the American Railway Union. No doubt the fate of the ARU acted as something of a deterrent in this regard. In the first part of the twentieth century, however, a reaction to the International Brotherhoods did take place with the formation of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railroad Employees. The CBRE was founded on the two principles of Canadian nationalism and industrial unionism, but the first was and is by far the more prominent. In practice, the CBRE (CBRT) has basically respected the jurisdictional lines established by the international railway unions.

With two notable, and recent, exceptions, the organic structure of the Canadian railway labour movement has remained essentially the same since the post-World War I years when

the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks was finally able to get off the ground and penetrate into Canada. The exceptions are very important for two reasons. First, they reduced the number of unions in the railway sector by four. Secondly, one merger reduced the number of unions in the running trades from five to two. This was a merger of four unions, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT), the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen (BLF&E), the Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen (ORC&B), and the Switchmen's Union of North America (SUNA), to form an entirely new union, the United Transportation Union. The BRT was large and fairly powerful union but the other three were small and weak. While the BLF&E was once a strong union, it was threatened with extinction as the job of "fireman" was gradually being eliminated due to dieselization. The UTU is now carrying on the fight to keep firemen on the trains with much more vigour and strength than the old BLF&E was able to muster. The UTU merger was definitely BRT led, directed and controlled. The BRT President, Charles Luna, became the first UTU president, and the UTU took over the BRT's headquarters in Cleveland, to which the others subsequently moved.

The other notable exception was the absorption of the Transportation-Communication Employees Union into the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks. Since the BRAC was a much larger union and already included many

different types of non-operating employees, it was obviously felt that a change in name was not warranted. This type of absorption can take place to some extent among railway unions, probably as long as there are any "small" ones left. But any large scale consolidation of the railway unions will most likely have to be worked out along the lines of the UTU merger, rather than through simple takeover.

A few other railway unions have made brief attempts at organizing Canadian railway workers, such as the Brotherhood of Railroad Station Employees, the United Brotherhood of Railroad Employees, the Canadian Association of Railwaymen, and the American Railway Union, but they have not been able to make lasting entry. However, the latter made a significant impact during its brief life span of just over a year and deserves considerable attention in a study of the railway labour movement, for the dream held by the ARU's founders is still a force in the movement today.

CHAPTER 3 - THE AMERICAN RAILWAY UNION

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the railway Brotherhoods were, in the nineteenth century, primarily fraternal, mutual benefit societies rather than bargaining unions. The "no-strike clause" was a prevalent feature in most of their constitutions, and when spontaneous railway strikes did occur, the Brotherhoods frequently furnished the railroads with strikebreakers.[1]

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen (BLF&E), of which Eugene V. Debs was secretary-treasurer, had a policy of "ignoring strikes". It maintained that it was an insurance organization, denied that it was a trade union, and constantly courted the favour of the railroad companies.[2] However, at the 1885 convention of the BLF&E the delegates, who were fed up with the blacklist, yellow-dog contracts, wage cuts, unemployment, and long hours, determined to change the orientation of the organization. Their first steps were to depose all the union's officers ——— except Debs, knock the no-strike clause out of the constitution, and set up a $15,000 strike fund. One of the deposed, Grand Master Frank Arnold, had written the following words to a railroad president a few months earlier: "Labour always cripples and weakens itself whenever it antagonizes Capital

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[1] Ginger, Eugene V. Debs: A Biography, p. 38

[2] Ibid., p. 55.

.... So long as we keep it (the BLF&E) a benevolent organization, just that long will it thrive ...."[3]

At this time it was practically impossible for the Brotherhoods to gain any improvements for their members. The crafts were constantly divided and strike after strike saw one union furnish strikebreakers to be used against another, or one condemning another's strike.[4] The most notable strike of this period was that on the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad in 1888, which ended in defeat, largely due to the lack of co-operation between the Engineers' and Firemen's unions. This and other defeats led to proposals of federation of the railway Brotherhoods. One of the chief architects of the federation scheme was Eugene V. Debs.

Federation was achieved in 1889 when the Firemen, Brakemen (later Trainmen) and Switchmen united to form the Supreme Council of the United Orders of Railway Employees. The Supreme Council was extremely successful, forcing the railroads to yield unprecedented gains.[5] The Brotherhood of Railway Conductors, and the Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen, who had agreed on merger terms, made application to join the Council. However, after a year's existence, the Council collapsed, apparently due to the

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[3] Ibid., p. 59.

[4] Ibid., p. 80.

[5] Ibid., p. 81.

accusation that the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen had conspired with the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad to destroy the Switchmen's Union, which was a jurisdictional rival.[6] The friction which this created made it impossible for the Supreme Council to continue.

The failure of the Supreme Council caused Debs and others to change their attitude toward rail labour unity. Debs had always promoted federation, but now he saw that class enrollment fostered class prejudices and class selfishness, and with the differences in organizations and differences among Grand Officers, federation was impractical and impossible.[7] Also, the fact that the combined membership of the Brotherhoods was less than 100,000, only one-tenth of all railway workers, indicated that there was something seriously wrong with the railway labour movement. Jurisdictional strife was still rampant between the Engineers and Firemen, while the Trainmen were systematically raiding both the Conductors and the Switchmen.[8]

Over the next three years Debs formulated the plans for the American Railway Union (ARU), which was going to organize all railway workers. The new union was launched in June of 1893, with membership open to all white workers who served a railroad in any way, except managerial employees.

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[6] Ibid., pp. 87-93.

[7] Ibid., p. 97.

[8] Ibid., pp. 104-105.

Dues were set very low -- only a dollar initiation fee and a dollar a year to the national union.

The craft union leaders immediately declared their opposition to the ARU. The depression had deeply hurt the Brotherhoods as their memberships dropped rapidly, largely because workers couldn't afford the dues.[9] The prospect of an industrial union encroaching further into their territory was a frightening one.

Membership in the ARU grew very rapidly, as members of the Brotherhoods flocked to the ARU.[10] However, the majority of the new industrial union's members were those unorganized workers who couldn't meet the high dues of the Brotherhoods. After one year the ARU had signed up 150,000 railroaders, while the Brotherhoods could muster a total combined membership of only 90,000.

In its first year, the American Railway Union won two strikes, including a decisive victory over the mighty Great Northern. Debs later wrote that the Great Northern strike was the only clear-cut victory of any consequence ever won by a railway union in America.

But the success of the ARU was short-lived. The high spirits and expectations resulting from the Great Northern strike led the new union into a battle against the powerful Pullman Company of Chicago, for which it was

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[9] Ibid., p. 109.

[10] Ibid., p. 111.

not prepared. Debs personally thought the ARU was not ready to tackle Pullman but the decision of the rank-in-file in convention was to come to the aid of the 3,000 Pullman workers with a nation-wide strike.[11]

It was the largest strike in United States history -- over 100,000 men had quit work and between Chicago and the West Coast the railroads were paralyzed. However, the ARU had to face the combined opposition of the Pullman Company, the General Managers' Association (representing 24 railroads terminating or centering in Chicago), the railroad Brotherhoods, the American Federation of Labor, and most important of all, the federal government.

The General Managers' Association ultimately succeeded in its goal of pitting the strikers against the U.S. government, having been aided in this by Attorney-General Richard Olney, a former railroad lawyer, and Special U.S. Attorney Edwin Walker.[12] The court actions initiated by these men (first injunctions, then indictments for conspiracy to interfere with interstate commerce) deprived the ARU of its leaders and opened the way for the General Managers to divide and confuse the Union members. The organization collapsed and, after more than two months, the strike was broken.

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[11] Ibid., pp. 134-135.

[12] Selvin, David F. Eugene V. Debs: Rebel, Labor Leader, Prophet. (New York, Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard Co., 1966), p. 131.

It seems that the Brotherhoods were as intent on smashing the ARU as was the General Managers' Association. They engaged in strikebreaking, repeatedly denounced the ARU in their journals, and their Grand Chiefs refused to debate the issues with Debs. The Brotherhood leaders hoped that by helping to wreck the ARU they would both destroy a rival and prove their own reliability to the railway companies.[13]

The railroads had lost nearly five million dollars, but they had defeated the ARU. The general manager of the Rock Island Line testified as follows to the strength of the ARU as compared to the ineffectiveness of the old craft unions: "Gentlemen, we can handle the Brotherhoods, but we cannot handle the American Railway Union. We have got to wipe it out."[14] The New York Times had called the ARU "the greatest and most powerful railroad labour organization."[15]

Thus it can be seen that this single intervention by the U.S. government in 1894 has had a profound effect on the structure of the railway labour movement in the United States and, because of the nature of international unionism, on the Canadian structure as well. While the potentialities of a railway industrial union had been glimpsed, craft unionism had won its victory on the railways, and was to become even more solidly established in the 20th century. But many rail

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[13] Ginger, Eugene V. Debs: A Biography, p. 196.

[14] Selvin, Op. Cit., p. 96.

[15] Ibid., p. 102.

unionists still share Eugene Debs' dream of establishing industrial unionism on the railways. The United Transportation Union, which includes three of the original "Big Four" Brotherhoods, speaks respectfully of the American Railway Union as "the most notable among rail union solidarity attempts".[16]

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[16] United Transportation Union, The Unity Move in Railroad Labor. (Cleveland, Ohio, undated).

CHAPTER 4 - THE UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF RAILWAY EMPLOYEES AND THE CANADIAN BROTHERHOOD OF RAILROAD EMPLOYEES

There was very little penetration by the American Railway Union into Canada during its short time of existence. The organization had to over-extend itself just to organize the workers on most of the major railroads in the United States. However, not long after the demise of the ARU, two attempts were made at establishing industrial railway unions in Canada. The first, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees (UBRE) was very similar to the American Railway Union, and it met an end in Canada similar to that of the ARU in the United States. But the next organization, the Canadian Brotherhood of Railroad Employees (CBRE) was to become firmly entrenched on Canadian railways. However, it was a far different type of organization than the UBRE, and this appears to be one of the major reasons for its ability to survive.

The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees was organized in the United States in 1901, as part of the growing "radical" labour movement of the West at that time. The UBRE worked very closely with the Western Federation of Miners, and both were members of the Western Labor Union, a new trade union centre in the United States. Lipton states, rather dramatically, that between 1901 and 1903 the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees "flashed like a star across the western horizon".[1]

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[1] Lipton, Charles. The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959. (Montreal, Canadian Social Publications, 1968), p. 100.

In 1902 the UBRE President began an organizing campaign in Winnipeg which resulted in about 1,000 workers, mostly unskilled, being recruited into the new union. At the time, the skilled workers on the Canadian Northern were out on strike with Winnipeg as their chief base. The new UBRE members went out alongside the skilled workers.

The UBRE was left on its own, however, after the international unions representing the skilled workers reached a settlement with the company which was to cover the skilled workers only. The UBRE continued the strike alone for seven months but made no headway. Later that year the Manitoba executive committee of the Trades and Labour Congress deplored "the action of the Brotherhoods in thus disregarding the broad principles of co-operative action between unions ...."[2]

In 1903 the UBRE took on the powerful Canadian Pacific Railway with a strike for recognition. The strike centered around Vancouver, where the UBRE had built a strong base. In many ways, this strike was similar to the Pullman strike, which the American Railway Union fought in the United States. First, as the General Managers' Association had vowed to destroy the ARU, so the CPR was "ready to spend a million dollars to break the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees".[3] Secondly, the international railway Brotherhoods condemned

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[2] Ibid., p. 101.

[3] Ibid.

the UBRE and the strike in their journals and threatened to expel any member or revoke the charter of any local which encouraged the UBRE strikers.[4] Thirdly, the government played an active role in the conflict. A Royal Commission was appointed to investigate both the CPR strike and strikes at several coal mines in British Columbia. The Royal Commission brought down an "unqualified condemnation of the methods of these revolutionary organizations".[5] This condemnation, plus the failure of the strike against the CPR, according to Logan, "seem to have brought the formal operations ... of the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees to a hasty close as far as Canada was concerned".[6]

Thus the fact that there were strong craft unions in opposition and that the railways and government preferred these organizations to a militant industrial union, was largely responsible for the defeat of both the American Railway Union in the United States, and the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees in Canada. However, it is also probably true that a great many railway workers were satisfied with the craft Brotherhoods or at least were not strongly enough opposed to wage a fight for industrial unionism. This was the opinion of two members of the B.C. executive committee who reported to the Trades and Labour Congress Convention

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[4] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

[5] Logan, Op. Cit., p. 298.

[6] Ibid.

in 1903 that the great bulk of union men "temporarily stepped aside and allowed the political socialists to run their course".[7]

Only five years after the withdrawal of the UBRE, another industrial union of railway workers was formed in Canada. This time it was on the east coast, beginning with the Intercolonial Railway. An independent, national union, it was founded in 1908 as the Canadian Brotherhood of Railroad Employees (CBRE), and later was renamed the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers, to reflect the growing diversity of its membership. Although the Brotherhood has prided itself on being an industrial union and has repudiated the narrow craft exclusiveness of the international Brotherhoods, it has actually limited itself primarily to recruiting those classes of employees who were not already organized in existing, recognized railway unions, as was previously mentioned.[8]

The CBRE was founded as a bargaining union, rather than a mutual benefit society like the Big Four Brotherhoods. Its first sickness and accident insurance plans were made available in 1926, eighteen years after its founding.

As they had with the ARU and the UBRE, the officers of the craft unions in the running trades and the railway

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Greening and Maclean, Op. Cit., p. 9.

shops looked on this new experiment in industrial unionism with a great deal of contempt, especially since the President, A.R. Mosher, was a lowly freight-checker. But by the time a concerted effort was made to supplant the CBRE with an international union in the early twenties, it was already too powerful and had won the confidence of thousands of Canadian workers.

There are two major reasons why the CBRE was able to establish deep roots among Canadian railwaymen. First, it did not attempt to be a true industrial union, but basically limited itself to recruiting the unorganized. In this way there was a minimum of conflict with the international craft Brotherhoods. Secondly, as mentioned before, the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks was not able to get fully off the ground in the United States until after the first World War, ten years after the CBRE was founded. Thus the CBRE did not have to face an international rival in the jurisdiction it was organizing until it had had time to establish the roots necessary to meet the challenge of the bigger U.S. union.

There seem to be several reasons why the Canadian Brotherhood of Railroad Employees chose the industrial form of organization. The CBRE founders were dismayed at the lack of co-operation between the railway unions themselves, and between them and unions in other industries. The Big Four Brotherhoods remained outside the "house of Labour" as they refused to affiliate with either the American Federation of

Labor (AFL) in the United States or the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) in Canada. They felt they didn't need these federations, and were for some time wary of the "radical" philosophy of the AFL.[9] The history of treachery and strike-breaking activities of these unions was also well known. About the time of the founding of the CBRE, the machinists on the CPR and the trainmen on the Grand Trunk struck for better working conditions, but both strikes were complete failures. President Mosher attributed these failures to the weakness of the craft form of organization, which made it difficult, and practically impossible, for one union to assist another in time of crisis or need.[10]

Another reason for the adoption of the industrial form was that effective organization of the employees who became the first members of the Brotherhood was completely impossible on craft or class lines. While the classifications in the running trades were fairly clearly defined, there were so many separate classifications of non-operating employees (clerks, freight handlers, foremen, checkers, porters, etc.) that the lines of demarcation between them were very imprecise. More important, these various classifications did not possess enough bargaining strength to be successful in negotiating separate collective bargaining agreements.

To the present, the CBRT has maintained its juris-

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[9] Ginger, Op. Cit., p. 55.

[10] Greening and Maclean, Op. Cit., p. 23.

dictional lines on railways, though it has expanded into other areas such as Seaway workers, deep sea fishermen, tug-boat workers, hotel employees, garage workers, bus company employees, and also some airline employees. And, except for periodic struggles with its international rival the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, it has maintained working relations with the other international unions on the railways. Norman Dowd has written in Canadian Labour: "From the beginning, the Brotherhood has advocated industrial unionism, but it has been willing to co-operate with other labour groups, notably in the railway service, with a view to promoting the interests of the workers of Canada to the fullest possible extent."[11] However, relations have improved greatly since the merger of the Trades and Labour Congress and the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) in 1956. One of the bases of this merger was that rival unions from the two federations would respect each others jurisdictions.

In 1921, after the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks had been revived in the United States, and had organized the clerks and freight handlers on the CPR, the executive of the BRSC succeeded in convincing the Trades and Labour Congress to expel the CBRE. Attempts at merging the two unions failed, largely due to the BRSC's refusal to grant any autonomy to the Canadian union. The reasons for the expulsion were that the policy of the Congress was one of

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[11] Canadian Labour. October 1958, p. 43.

exclusive jurisdiction and international unionism; that Mosher had made efforts to get the TLC involved in the Winnipeg General Strike; that the CBRE had abused and vilified the President of the AFL, Samuel Gompers, in its official journal; and that it had attacked the League of Nations.

After the expulsion the CBRE played a leading role in the formation of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL) in 1927, with Mosher being elected its first President. In its programme the ACCL attacked international unions in no uncertain terms: "The Canadian Labour movement must be free from the reactionary influence of American-led unions."[12] An editorial in the CBRE "Monthly" in 1928 listed ten reasons why Canadian branches of American unions should be independent:[13]

1. Canadians are paying dues to United States organizations which they cannot control.
2. Canadian members of American unions are in a financial dilemma.
3. United States unions cannot make progress in the face of national sentiment in Canada.
4. The identity of agreement and interest between Canadian and American organizations is untenable.
5. The United States unions are not militant enough to make progress in Canada.
6. The American unions are not politically-minded.
7. Canada is big enough to support its own labour movement.
8. The craft basis of organization is obsolete.

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[12] Greening and Maclean, Op. Cit., p. 91.

[13] Ibid., p. 95.

9. The day is past when American unions are needed in Canada.

10. American unions are fighting Canadian unions with Canadians' money.

All these arguments, perhaps with the exception of #3, which has taken on new forms, continued to be used over the years in the running battle between the CBRE and the BRSC, and are still being used today to a major extent. Some of these points are pure and simple nationalism, but others bring in important problems such as servicing, militancy, internal union democracy, and political action.

Officials of the AFL-TLC unions, particularly those on the railways, kept up a continual campaign of abuse against both the CBRE and the All-Canadian Congress of Labour as a whole. They claimed that the Congress was dangerously radical and Communist-dominated, and that both it and its affiliates were too weak to serve the needs of Canadian workers.[14] While it is hard to ascertain just what was meant by "dangerously radical", it is a fact that the CBRE stood for intensive political action in support of progressive social policies. In the opinion of the CBRE leaders, the AFL unions, including the international railway Brotherhoods, were almost completely ineffective in the political and legislative fields, as they clung to the Gompers' "reward your friends and punish your enemies" doctrine. The "Monthly" claimed that the AFL, through its domination over the TLC unions, was exerting

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[14] Ibid.

a reactionary, anti-progressive force upon the Canadian labour movement and was preventing Canadian workers from supporting parties and policies which would advance their own and their country's needs.[15] The CBRE, on the other hand, recognized Labour's need for political action. The pages of the "Monthly" frequently included articles by socialists J.S. Woodsworth and A.A. Heaps, while divisions of the Brotherhood gave support to the Canadian Labour party.[16] Later, the CBRE became the first union in Canada to affiliate with the CCF party (later the New Democratic Party). It was also the first union on this continent to join the International Transportworkers' Federation, an international (not bi-national) association of unions in the transportation industry.[17] All these actions are indications of the CBRE's independence from and hostility toward the Gompers' brand of business unionism which dominated the North American labour movement.

The jurisdictional rivalry between the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers and the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks

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[15] Ibid., p. 93.

[16] The Canadian Labour party was formed in 1921, under the sponsorship of the Trades and Labour Congress. It endeavoured to co-ordinate the various labour and socialist provincial parties and in its platform called for "a complete change in our present economic and social systems." It was originally modelled on the British Labour Party, but in 1927 it was taken over by the Communists and ceased to function as a national party. (See Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics, pp. 60-61)

[17] Canadian Transport. October 1, 1968.

could be the subject to an entire study in itself. Ever since the BRAC entered Canada in 1917 continual raiding has taken place by both unions, though the BRAC seems to have been the more guilty, particularly in the early years. The CBRT has also suffered raiding attacks by the Firemen and Oilers, the Teamsters, the Confederation of National Trade Unions, the Seafarers and others. Being an extremely diversified union has left the CBRT somewhat prone to raiding, but it is a tribute to the Brotherhood's ability to service its members' needs that most of the raiding has been unsuccessful and that the membership has continued to grow steadily.

CHAPTER 5 - THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE

It is certainly true that the structure of a labour movement is heavily influenced by the political and economic system under which it grew up, and thus we find significant structural variations amongst different countries. While there are certain differences between the railway labour movements in the United States and Canada, the structures are basically alike, due to the dominating factor of international, or more properly "bi-national", unionism and all the underlying factors which promoted international unions.

However, when you examine the structure and history of railway unions in other countries, such as Britain, France, and West Germany, you find significant differences from the American system. An outline of the British system, whose structure is basically free from political effects (as compared to France) is useful to add more perspective to the discussion. While the British railwaymen have not achieved complete unity of their labour movement either, it is quite consolidated when compared to the U.S. and Canadian structures.

In the period 1850-1870, several craft unions, or "associations", were formed on the British railways. However, every time a strike took place the workers and their fledgling unions were beaten by powerful managements. But those years taught militant workers a valuable lesson -- that they could win if well enough organized, and that they must

not organize according to individual grades or crafts, for then they could be defeated piecemeal by the enlistment of other grades to break the strike. Hence, when a new organizing movement began in 1871, it was along industrial lines -- the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS).[1]

However, in 1879 a group of engineers charged that the ASRS was not defending engineers' interests strongly enough and broke off to form the Associated Society of Locomotive Enginemen and Firemen (ASLE&F). Not all enginemen left the ASRS, though. In fact, the latter continued to hold more enginemen than the ASLE&F. Also, because of the relatively high dues of the ASRS, the poorly-paid shop workers could not afford to join, so in 1889 the General Railway Workers' Union (GRWU) was formed. It had a much lower membership fee and quickly recruited shop workers. With the addition of the United Pointsmen's and Signalmen's Society (UPSS) and the Railway Clerks' Association (RCA), there were five unions then on the railways, although the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants was by far the largest. Sectional unionism (the British term for craft unionism) received a further shot in the arm following the 1911 national railway strike when Sectional Boards were set up, crystallizing settlement of claims on a grade-by-grade basis rather than on a industrial basis.[2]

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[1] Bagwell, Philip. The Railwaymen. (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 44.

[2] Ibid., p. 303.

Towards the close of the 19th century the railway companies, faced with sharply increased costs due to rises in the prices of steel, coal, and iron, and restricted in their attempts to increase charges by the provisions of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1894, began to draw closer together to eliminate competitive waste and provide a stronger front for resisting trade union demands.[3] The response of the railway unions was federation, which was achieved in 1903. The leadership of the ASRS, however, hoped that federation would prove to be a stepping-stone toward amalgamation. But by 1905 the federation scheme was abandoned as relations between the ASRS and the ASLE&F deteriorated. According to Bagwell, it was mostly due to the opposition of Albert Fox, General Secretary of the ASLE&F, to an all-grades campaign, and to his irascible temper which always led him to say things he must have afterward regretted.[4] When the ASRS called a conference to discuss amalgamation, Fox responded by urging all locomotivemen to join the ASLE&F.

The impetus to amalgamation was provided by the experience of the national railway strike in 1911, when the unions were forced to work together. Another impetus was the growing influence of the syndicalists, who advocated workers' control and organization on an industrial rather

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[3] Ibid., p. 314.

[4] Ibid., p. 317.

than a craft basis. Technology was also drawing them closer -- it was becoming difficult to find out where the skilled man left off, and the unskilled man began.[5] In January 1912, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, the General Railway Workers' Union, and the United Pointsmen's and Signalmen's Society amalgamated to form the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR). The only holdouts were the Associated Society of Locomotive Enginemen and Firemen, which refused to submit to the industrial form of organization, and the Railway Clerks' Association, which was an extremely conservative association, closely dependent on management and very reluctant to strike.[6] Membership in the National Union of Railwaymen was open to "any person employed on any railway or in connection with any railway in the United Kingdom."[7] Though the NUR has never succeeded in bringing in the ASLE&F or the RCA (now the Transport Salaried Staffs Association), it is in every way a true industrial union.

As of 1970, its membership totalled 191,000, compared to about 32,000 for the ASLE&F, and 70,000 for the TSSA. According to General Secretary Sir Sidney Greene, the NUR has repeatedly made merger offers toward the ASLE&F, but the latter has always "firmly rejected such moves".[8]

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[5] Ibid., p. 324.

[6] Ibid., p. 311.

[7] Ibid., p. 332.

[8] Letter to the author, dated December 9, 1970.

Why was industrial unionism established on the British but not on the North American railways? Obviously the reasons for the domination of the craft unions in the United States and Canada are many and varied, ranging from broad socio-political attitudes to specific historical events. But one difference noted by Perlman surely must have been a factor -- that is the degree of class consciousness embodied in European wage-earners as opposed to their American counterparts.[9] Early American rail union leaders (e.g. P.M. Arthur, Frank Arnold, Eugene Debs prior to the 1880's) tended to look upon railway Labour and Capital not as antagonists, but as partners in the development of a burgeoning young America, particularly in the opening of the frontier. Because the class lines in America were not as tightly drawn, the centrifugal forces in the labour movement were bound to assert themselves. The leaders of the craft unions built their organizations "by making an appeal to the natural desire for autonomy and self-determination of any distinctive group".[10] Thus craft autonomy became a sacred shibboleth, while the essential degree of unity was maintained.(i.e. the craft unions learned to work together when the chips were down, thus at least preventing the strike-breaking fiascos of the late 1800's).

Differences in class consciousness seem also to be

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[9] Perlman, Selig. A History of Trade Unionism in the United States. (New York, Macmillan, 1922), p. 121.

[10] Ibid.

the prime factor in the different orientations the unions in the United States and Britain took at their founding. The U.S. unions concentrated almost exclusively on mutual benefit schemes or "welfare" unionism, while the British were much more heavily oriented towards business or even "radical" unionism -- strikes, bargaining, grievances, etc. By the time the U.S. unions had shifted their approach to placing heavy emphasis on business unionism (around 1880-1890, when wage cuts and layoffs became most severe, with the depression cutting heavily into living standards), the craft form of organization was already well-established, and there were organizations and traditions to preserve.

When the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants began to organize in 1871 as an industrial union, there were no strong craft unions in opposition. But when the American Railway Union was formed, the railway Brotherhoods were already reasonably strong, certainly more because of their "friendly society" features than from their ability to win benefits for their members, as is evidenced by their strike record.[11] The presence of the Brotherhoods gave management and government an opportunity, which the craft unions were only too happy to take, of playing them off against the industrial union. The General Managers made it clear after

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[11] This is obviously only a surface approximation of the reasons behind the different sequence of initial development of British and American railway unions. Deeper underlying reasons, such as the geographical dispersion of the work force, the influence of the frontier, and indeed the whole range of socio-political attitudes, which of course themselves are the result of further underlying factors, cannot be of further concern to us here.

the Pullman strike that they bore no ill feeling against the Brotherhoods, and Attorney-General Richard Olney later intervened on behalf of the Trainmen in a legal case.[12] It is probably reasonable to speculate that the inroads the American Railway Union would have made into craft union territory in the absence of the disastrous Pullman strike would have resulted in a far more structurally unified railway labour movement than that in existence today.

But, as Logan has pointed out, as the craft unions have developed they have managed to garner most of the advantages offered by industrial unionism by means of federations of various sorts. This led him to say (in 1948) that: "Industrial unionism, as an inclusive proposition for the industry, whatever its merits, is not an issue today."[13] The main forms of joint action are discussed in the following chapter.

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[12] Ginger, Op. Cit., p. 157.

[13] Logan, Op. Cit., p. 137.

CHAPTER 6 - THE DEVELOPMENT OF "FEDERAL" ARRANGEMENTS

Ever since 1935, when the leaders of 21 railway unions approached the railroads jointly to demand the complete restoration of wage deductions imposed during the depression, the railway unions have been experimenting with various forms of federations, or federal-type committees, both in collective bargaining and in legislative action.

In collective bargaining, the running trades Brotherhoods consistently stood by the pattern of craft unionism, but since 1918 they have been increasingly acting in mutual support and with the other railway unions.[1] The chief agency for co-operation was the General Conference Committee of the General Chairmen of the international railway unions, and their Joint Negotiating Committee which was established in the thirties. The General Chairmen are officers elected in the various districts of each railway by each craft to administer grievances that are not settled at the local level, and also to co-operate with the companies in bringing in necessary innovations not provided for in contracts as standing.[2] By nature the General Conference Committee was flexible, and on some issues did not include all the railway unions, particularly the shopcrafts.[3] However, the Big Four Brotherhoods also

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[1] Logan, Op. Cit., p. 139.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

acted as a group by themselves, for example in the development of a "master agreement" defining the basis on which a cost-of-living bonus should be paid, July 1941.

In 1946, an important step toward unity was taken when the General Committees and national officers of all railway unions in Canada, both international and national, decided to get together and strengthen their positions in their negotiations with the railway managements. This Joint Conference Committee represented the first time such a united front had been presented by the railway unions, and a "satisfactory" increase in wage rates resulted.

As has been the case in many different industries and countries, the necessity of carrying out a massive strike required the railway unions to work more closely together at all levels -- local, regional, and national. The first nation-wide rail strike in Canada's history took place in 1950. The paralysis of the nation's rail-transportation facilities was complete, and the federal government was forced to end the strike with special back-to-work legislation. Apparently the spirit of unity which developed during the strike has had significant effects on improving relations and co-operation between the railway unions, particularly between the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers and the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks.

The second national rail strike in August 1966 also

required the unions to work closely together and at least pointed out clearly the need for extremely close co-operation among the unions. The script was much the same as in 1950 -- joint walkout, almost total stoppage of trains, special strike-ending legislation.

The shop trades began co-ordination in bargaining as far back as 1908, when the CPR notified the Boilermakers that it was reducing their wages, with the other crafts taking it for granted that theim would be reduced in turn.[4] A federated trades movement was established, and during World War I the various shop crafts began writing their agreements jointly within a single contract. With the establishment of Division No. 4 (Canadian) of the Railway Employees Department, AFL (later AFL-CIO), a "federation of federations" became the structure. There are national "craft districts" covering all the railway employees in one craft, and these are associated again in "system federations" -- the significant two being System Federation No. 11 of the CNR and System Federation No. 125 of the CPR. Finally, for maximum bargaining strength these system federations are brought together in Division No. 4. Prior to 1965, the shopcrafts participated in joint bargaining with all the other non-operating unions. Today, a joint negotiating team of Division No. 4 does the national bargaining for the shopcraft unions.

Logan calls shopcraft bargaining a rather complex

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[4] Ibid., p. 147.

arrangement, but says that because it was developed pragmatically in relation to year-to-year requirements, it does not impress those who operate it as unnecessarily complex or costly.[5] He also finds that "this is the federal principle in trade union structure operating at its best as contrasted with the industrial form of organization".[6]

Today, the non-operating railway unions (Group B catalogued on page 8) co-ordinate policy in matters affecting wages and working conditions through the General Conference Committee of the Associated Non-Operating Railway Unions. The bargaining for this group is done by their Joint Negotiating Committee. The Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers was given full membership in this body in 1952, but in 1963 and 1965 it split off from the others and bargained through its own Joint Protective Board. In the 1968 negotiations, however, it returned to the fold. Prior to the 1965-66 negotiations which resulted in the national railway strike in the summer of 1966, the non-operating unions including the shopcrafts, which had previously bargained together as a unit, split into three groups -- Division No. 4 Shopcrafts, the Associated Non-ops, and the CBRT. However the groups co-operated fully with each other in calling the strike, and also with the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, who struck after its own conciliation board recommendations

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[5] Ibid., p. 150.

[6] Ibid.

proved to be unsatisfactory.

The withdrawal of the CBRT from joint negotiations in 1963 and 1965-66 resulted from policy disagreements regarding wages and job security. The shopcraft unions proposed wage demands which would have given proportionately greater increases to craft workers, while the CBRT insisted on flat rate cents per hour increases and emphasis on job security. These same issues caused the three-way split at the preparatory conferences of the unions for the 1966 negotiations. The groups had always differed on the issue of the type of wage demands to be made, but this was the first time in almost two decades that they were not able to compromise in the process of hammering out a set of acceptable common demands.[7] It seems that a majority of shopcraft workers decided the time had come when restoration of wage differentials had to take priority over labour unity.

Only in the running trades is the joint bargaining system not used. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the United Transportation Union bargain separately, and indeed, the UTU firemen section bargains separately from its ground personnel section. Unusually enough, there has been a degree of joint bargaining in the running trades in the United States, though there have never been any formal arrangements. However, though there has been joint bargaining

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[7] Peitchinis, Stephen B. Labour-Management Relations in the Railway Industry. Task Force on Labour Relations, Study No. 20, (Ottawa, Information Canada, 1971), p. 224.

between the BLE and the UTU (and the BLE and the four unions which now comprise the UTU before that) in several wage movements, it seems to be quite an ad hoc arrangement, being determined by the types of demands put forward and the prevailing relations between the unions.

J.M. Callaway, Special Representative of the United Transportation Union in Canada, sees the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' traditional avoidance of strikes and hard-line bargaining as the major reason why a system of joint bargaining has not developed in the running trades.[8] He points out that the BLE is much more conservative than the UTU (or the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen before it), which has frequently initiated strikes and played brinkmanship. While even the BLE membership will admit that their union is the soft underbelly which management prefers to deal with first, they seldom are hurt by this practice, due to their high pay levels (relative to other railroaders) and their positions of responsibility. Moreover, the BLE and the railways have signed agreements in the past which guarantee the BLE an automatically higher settlement if the Trainmen were able to extract a better one. The BLE is thus able to protect its flanks in this way.

Over the years the railway unions have also been moving toward more co-ordinated action in the legislative

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[8]Letter to the author, dated February 1, 1971.

field. In the thirties, the four running trades Brotherhoods, along with the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees and the Order of Railroad Telegraphers, established a Dominion Joint Legislative Committee to speak for the member organizations in legislative matters -- that is, to lobby. Federated action in this field was particularly important to the Big Four because, as they were not affiliated to the Trades and Labour Congress, they had no other lobbying force. Later Division No. 4 joined this group as did several others, and the name was changed to National Legislative Committee, International Railway Brotherhoods. In 1965, all the international and national railway unions joined to form the Canadian Railway Labour Executives Association, which was formally established later in 1968. In late 1969 it dropped the word "Executives" from its name to get rid of its "bureaucratic connotations" and became the Canadian Railway Labour Association (CRLA).[9]

The Canadian Railway Labour Association is an active voice for the railway unions in all matters affecting railway workers, and in most cases, workers in general. It presents an annual brief to the federal government which touches on a wide range of subjects affecting labour, and also presents briefs on special matters such as rail-line abandonments, the Woods Task Force Report, etc. One suggestion of the CRLA was recently implemented by the government -- the establishment of permanent federal Mediation Services. It has also taken

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[9] Canadian Transport. January 1, 1970, p. 8.

the lead in fighting rail-line abandonments, and more recently has been formulating arguments for rejection of the government's appeal for voluntary wage restraints. To illustrate the range of the CRLA's concerns, this is a list of matters dealt with in its February 1969 Brief: labour relations generally, changes in the Industrial Relations and Disputes Act, the Labour-Management Consultation Branch of the Department of Labour, injunctions, picketing, railway safety, protection at level crossings and pedestrian safety, the National Transportation Act, unemployment insurance, policies for price stability, and taxation policy.[10]

The three largest rail unions in Canada -- the United Transportation Union, the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks, and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers -- have joined together in a campaign aimed at mobilizing public opinion to prevent the phasing out of inter-city passenger service, or "railway passenger abandonment."[11] The campaign, known as "for a Sane Transportation Policy (S.T.O.P.)", has been using advertisements in Canadian periodicals and newspapers, as well as an information booklet, to get their message across. (The message essentially is that the railways are a relatively cheap, safe means of transportation which do not ravage the environment with air and noise pollution like the automobile

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[10] Canadian Transport. February 22, 1969, p. 1.

[11] S.T.O.P. advertisement, Canadian Dimension. April 1971, p. 47.

and the airplane, but that railway passenger service is being allowed to disappear by a federal government which is subsidizing neither the service nor the development of a more efficient technology.) S.T.O.P. has recently commissioned and published a book called Right of Way, by Robert Chodos, which presents S.T.O.P.'s arguments in detail.

Although there has been little progress towards organic unity in the history of Canadian rail labour, with the exceptions previously mentioned, it is clear that the railway unions have achieved a certain degree of unity in collective bargaining and legislative action. As Logan says, in this way they have been able to garner many of the advantages of industrial unionism. However, two fundamental questions remain -- why is there a great deal of dissatisfaction with the present system and why has industrial unionism (or at least a much more consolidated system) not been established on the Canadian railways? The following two chapters examine these questions.

CHAPTER 7 - FORCES PROMOTING CONSOLIDATION

Many people within the railway labour movement, including most of the rail union leaders, have talked about the need for fewer and strong unions. While opinions diverge somewhat on the form which further organic consolidation should take, there is a general consensus that such consolidation is not only desirable but necessary at this time.

The following are a sample of the pro-consolidation statements which have been made:

Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers Policy Statement on Rail Labour Unity: "In all of Canadian industry there is none so much in need of a consolidation of union representation as the railway industry, and indeed the transportation industry as a whole."[1]

C.L. Dennis, President of the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks: "For several years I have been convinced that working men and women, both in the railway industry and in many other parts of the national economy, will sustain many benefits through consolidation of overlapping trade unions. In this modern era of vast technological change, organized labour in the United States and Canada has a responsibility to its members and to the public to adapt to new conditions in the industry."[2]

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[1] The National Executive Board, CBRT&GW, A Policy Statement Recommending the Unification of Railway Labour in Canada, Convention Resolution, CBRT&GW 27th Regular Convention, Ottawa, October 1967.

[2] Canadian Railwayman, March 8, 1969, p. 1.

Charles Luna, President, United Transportation Union: "We need not only closer co-operation, but also a common organization .... Our desire is for unity of membership, and we offer the hand of friendship - for merger."[3]

W.J. Smith, President Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers, 1955-1970: "Not only are the various unions divided, but they are all -- including our Brotherhood -- shrinking in size, and consequently in strength."[4]

Ed Finn, Research Director, Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers: "There is no imaginable reason why the employees of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railways should not all be members of a single national union instead of being scattered among one national union and sixteen internationals."[5]

W.P. Kelly, Director of the Conciliation and Arbitration Branch of the Department of Labour (former Vice-President of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen): "If there is one thing in which opinion is practically unanimous, it is the fact that there are just too many unions in this day of automation, computerization, and cybernetics. Merger of unions in the railway industry is long overdue."[6]

In a purely business or technocratic sense there are

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[3] Canadian Transport, May 1965, p. 2.

[4] Canadian Transport, May 1, 1969, p. 1.

[5] Labour Gazette, November 1970, p. 772.

[6] Labour Gazette, March 1969, p. 152.

three major arguments which are usually put forward in favour of consolidation. These are:

1. Greater strength in the collective bargaining process.
2. Greater influence in public policy.
3. Better services through decreased wastage and duplication.

Mr. Callaway of the United Transportation Union adds a fourth, which he calls "Motherhood". This expresses a feeling that most if not all unionists share a desire to see the labour movement "unified" in one way or another.

Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining, in the true sense of the phrase, has never really existed in the Canadian railway industry. There has always been a great deal of argument across the table, but as one conciliation board chairman put it: "There was an obvious reluctance on both sides to concede any point for the purposes of arriving at a settlement. No middle ground was even discussed before the Board."[7]

There are a great many reasons why this is the case. The unions have been faced with severe problems, particularly in the area of job security and technological unemployment, while the railway companies have been constricted in the rates they can charge by government control. Management have used this government regulation of their operations as

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[7] Currie, A.W. Canadian Transportation Economics. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 359.

a basis for refusal to bargain.[8] Moreover, the railway industry has been steadily losing a greater and greater share of the transportation market to the trucking industry, the airlines, and pipelines, as shown in the tables below.

TABLE II

Shares of Canadian Inter-City Travel by Mode (%)

	Auto	Bus	Rail	Air
1953	78.7	7.1	11.3	2.9
1967	81.8	3.7	5.3	9.2

Sources: 1953 J.C. Lessard, Transportation in Canada, a study prepared for the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1957)
1967 Dominion Bureau of Statistics, document no. 50-001, November 1969

TABLE III

Shares of Freight Ton-Mileage in Canada by Mode (%)

	Rail	Truck	Water	Air	Pipeline
1944	74	3	23	*	*
1950	61	8	30	*	1
1960	47	10	26	*	16
1967	41	9	25	*	24

* - Less than 1%

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, document no. 50-001, March 1970, Appendix 1.

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[8] Peitchinis, Op. Cit., p. 282.

Another factor hampering the railways' operations has been the fact that they are restricted by government (in the "public interest") in abandoning unprofitable branch lines and eliminating costly services. Thus with management really determined to keep down costs (of which labour costs are about 55% of the total[9]) and the unions determined to keep up with wage settlements in other industries, an impasse in negotiations nearly always results.

The unions are being increasingly forced into hard-line bargaining and brinkmanship by the growing militancy of the rank and file.[10] Some recent manifestations of this militancy are: members of the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks picketing the head office of their union in Montreal; wildcat strikes (booking off sick) by Western Canadian members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in defiance of the orders of the international union; and rejection and slim majorities of approval of memoranda of settlement in recent ratification votes.[11]

Perhaps the most important factor behind what former Prime Minister Pearson called "the ritual dance"[12] of collective bargaining is the knowledge on the part of the unions and the railways that the government will impose a

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[9] Currie, Op. Cit., p. 352.

[10] Ed Finn, Letter to the author, dated May 25, 1971.

[11] Canadian Transport, May 15, 1971.

[12] The Montreal Star, September 1, 1966.

settlement and not allow a real showdown of strength to take place. Despite their losses in the transportation market, the railways are still a critical part of the Canadian economy and a prolonged strike could be extremely harmful, particularly to the regions outside the St. Lawrence Valley where trucking is less of an alternative. A national railway strike has immense repercussions on other industries as well -- in the 9 day strike of 1950, over 23,000 workers in other industries were laid off as a result of the strike.[13] Moreover, the political repercussions of a railway strike could hurt the government, particularly if it was in an election year.

This factor of government intervention has tended to produce a situation where neither the unions nor management are willing to concede anything at all, but rather cling as tenaciously as possible to their original positions so as not to prejudice their chances when a settlement is imposed. Robert Stewart has described the situation in the following terms: "Everybody knew that the real decision on what the workers would get and the railways would have to pay would be made not at the bargaining table but by the federal cabinet. There was a price the government was willing to pay (in the form of subsidies to the railways) to keep the trains running, and the whole elaborate exercise was directed towards determining that price."[14]

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[13] Currie, Op. Cit., p. 362.

[14] The Montreal Star, January 16, 1971, p. 27.

A cursory examination into the history of railway negotiations certainly bears this out. The 1968 settlement was the first time a "voluntary accord" had been reached in the railway industry since 1946.[15] Short national rail strikes occurred in 1950 and 1966, and on nearly every other occasion a strike vote was taken, and a strike only narrowly averted by government intervention. These close calls occurred in 1948, 1954, 1958, 1961, and 1971.

The 1968 agreement, which was reached before the old contract ran out, was due to a number of factors, the more significant ones being: the 1966 strike itself, which proved quite costly to both sides, both in terms of money and hostile public reaction; the beginnings of an easing of government control of rates, which encouraged the railways to enter into more meaningful negotiations than before; and the role of the government-appointed mediator, William Kelly, former Vice-President of the Trainmen, who sat in on negotiations right from the beginning (this has been called "preventive mediation").

The 1970-71 negotiations also resulted in agreement without a nation-wide strike. However it came months after the contract had expired, and only after eleventh hour negotiations with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, with the Minister of Labour engaged directly in hammering

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[15] Canadian Transport, January 1, 1969, p. 2.

out a settlement. The membership of the BLE, particularly in Western Canada, defied their union headquarters by walking off their jobs at many points.

There seems to be a great deal of dissatisfaction with the 1971 contracts. The initial settlement worked out with the shopcraft unions was rejected by a ratification vote of the membership. Also, the non-op settlement was ratified by only a 73 per cent vote, with only 61 per cent of the CBRT membership voting in favour.[16]

It appears that despite threats to the contrary, the railway unions have become very reluctant to engage in another nation-wide strike. The near hysteria that resulted when the clerks went on strike in 1970 in the United States and when some Engineers walked out in Western Canada in 1971 no doubt is acting as somewhat of a deterrent in this regard. Despite this, and despite the fact that the railways seem to be taking less intransigent positions in negotiations, the growing militancy of rank and file railway workers, as partially evidenced by the votes and walkouts mentioned above, would seem to indicate that the unions must be prepared to undertake a nation-wide strike again, and to make it an effective one.

The railway strikes of 1950 and 1966 and the latter in particular, have had a wide impact upon the question of union consolidation. The CBRT Policy Statement on Rail

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[16] Canadian Transport, May 15, 1971, p. 1.

Labour Unity assesses the impact of the 1966 strike as follows: "The federal government's intervention was made easy because of the fragmentation of railway workers among so many unions, with its attendant diffusion of leadership, and the absence of one strong source of authority and direction. It is evident that one union embracing all railway employees would be much better equipped to preserve our democratic right to strike."[17] Ed Finn states that: "The 'unity' created by joint bargaining alone proved insufficient to withstand government and company pressures to end the strike. Individual unions were played off against one another, so that the weakest ones cracked first, and the resulting 'domino effect' led to the other unions caving in one by one."[18]

The problem with federated bargaining, as the above quotations point out, is that to succeed it requires a tremendous amount of solidarity and moral responsibility to the group on the part of the individual unions. If the government intervenes in a strike and one union decides to break ranks and return to work, the rest are more or less forced to. Without complete labour solidarity in face of the companies, the government, the press, and largely hostile public opinion, it is impossible to sustain prolonged strike action. In 1966 the Trainmen went back to work and even the CBRT was then forced to yield, despite widespread refusals

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[17] The National Executive Board, CBRT&GW, Op. Cit.

[18] Letter to the author, dated December 8, 1970.

among the CBRT rank and file and other railway men to return to work. In a desperate measure to placate the large number of militants, the CBRT leaders tried to establish a work-to-rule slowdown. However, their call to the other unions was ignored and the tactic never got off the ground.[19]

Unless the easing of government controls under the National Transportation Act of 1967 allows the railways to substantially improve their profit positions, it seems likely that rail strikes will continue to occur. History would seem to disprove a statement made in 1937 by Harry Henig: "Railway strikes are no longer a technique for the settlement of employer-employee issues."[20] Henig made this statement precisely as a counter-argument to those advocating the need for industrial unionism on the railways. It seems clear that the unions would be better prepared to carry out a strike, and consequently have a stronger hand in negotiations, with a more consolidated structure.

Immediately, of course, one could object that if the government will legislate an end to the strike very quickly, what is the point of having a more unified union system? The answer lies in the possibility of defiance of the government or of a change in the type of government intervention. At least one union leader in Canada said that he might have to go to jail over the 1970-71 dispute. There is

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[19] The Montreal Star, September 3, 1966.

[20] Henig, Harry. The Brotherhood of Railway Clerks. (New York, Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 183.

no doubt that the militancy of railway workers is strong and growing, and this makes the possibility of defying back-to-work legislation a very real one. Faced with complete solidarity in rail labour ranks, the government would be placed in a difficult position. There is always the possibility that it could smash the union movement with massive arrests and fines. Certainly no one would find such a head-on confrontation desirable. In fact it would have such serious repercussions on the whole economic and political system that it is hard to believe the government would let it happen. Alternative forms of settling the dispute would have to be devised.

The government could pass legislation prohibiting railway strikes altogether and set up some form of compulsory abbitration system. Unless they wanted to challenge the government's authority, the unions' only recourse would be to work for the repeal of such legislation. There are many forms of political action the unions could use in their attempts to achieve such a repeal, but in every case they would likely be more effective if they were more consolidated in structure. But if such a repeal were achieved we would be back to where we are now with the government using ad hoc legislation to protect "the public interest". As Peitchinis says, "Unless a bargaining process is devised which will ensure the conclusion of agreements without resort to strike

action, government involvement cannot be avoided."[21]

Thus railway workers are faced with either legislation forbidding them to strike altogether or legislation forcing them back to work after a short strike (as little as 24 hours in the United States). In either case, to be effective they may well have to defy the government, with all its attendant consequences. What is needed, of course, is a means whereby the right to strike is preserved yet the public interest is protected. A possible solution could be one suggested by George P. Shultz -- continued operation of the industry but on a limited scale (e.g. wheat shipments). The responsibility for directing operations would be given to a "public official whose objective and legal responsibilities are purely and simply to get certain goods transported ... in certain small quantities."[22] This, of course, brings up problems as well, but it seems to be a realistic alternative to compulsory arbitration or the present ad hoc type of intervention.

No matter how the system evolves, given past events and the militancy of railway workers (both in Canada and the United States), it appears that in all likelihood strikes will still be used as one means of settling disputes in the industry. Thus the problem of carrying out an effective strike will continue to exist and, as the CBRT Policy

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[21] Peitchinis, Stephen G. Labour-Management Relations in the Railway Industry. Task Force on Labour Relations. (Ottawa, Information Canada, 1971), p. 265.

[22] Shultz, George P., "Strikes: The Private Stake and the Public Interest", in Richard A. Lester, Labour: Readings on Major Issues. (New York, Random House, 1968), p. 469.

Statement points out, effectiveness in strike action is in this case closely tied to the structure of the railway union movement.

To assess how well the present system of union structure has been "delivering the goods" is not an easy task. On the question of wages, it has been argued that railway wages and fringe benefits should be roughly equal to those in the "durable goods" industries -- basic iron and steel products, household appliances, etc. This standard was originally introduced by the railway companies in 1950, when the standard showed that railway workers were relatively well off. However, by the mid-1950's the reverse was true, and both parties made an about face in their positions. The railways lost their enthusiasm for the standard while the unions became its devotees.[23] Railway wages lagged behind until 1965 when they caught up with and surpassed those in the durable goods industries once more. The widening gap has been due chiefly to a more aggressive and militant leadership in the rail union (non-op) negotiating committee (partly in response to growing rank and file militancy) since Frank Hall retired as chief negotiator.[24] The unions abandoned the durable goods standard because it did not come up to their members' rising expectations and determination. As Finn says, "the unions decided to use their economic muscle for a change, instead

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[23] Currie, Op. Cit., p. 371.

[24] Ed Finn, Letter to the author, dated May 25, 1971.

of relying on the patterns set by unions in other industries."[25] The national rail strike of 1966 was a reflection of this new outlook.

In addition, wage comparisons are difficult to make as, in industry at large, rates of pay vary from one part of the country to another, while on the railways they are generally uniform. Thus comparisons of railway with non-railway pay may be favourable to one side here and to another there. Also, the risk of accident and the size of fringe benefits, such as pensions, health insurance, vacations, and free travel during vacations and after retirement, are other factors which make it difficult to compare railway and non-railway wages.[26]

Table IV shows the average annual wages and salaries in the railway and durable goods industries in Canada from 1939 to 1967.

Undoubtedly the key problem for railway workers and for the rail unions is job security. Table V shows the total number of employees in the Canadian railway industry from 1925 to 1967. As can be seen from the table, employment hit a peak in the mid-1950's and has been declining quite rapidly ever since. Some of the reasons for this decline are:[27]

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Currie, Op. Cit., p. 369.

[27] Ibid., p. 353.

TABLE IV

AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARIES AND WAGES OF EMPLOYEES IN THE CANADIAN RAILWAY AND DURABLE GOODS INDUSTRIES 1939-1967

(in dollars)

Year	(1) Railway Salaries & Wages	(2) Durable Goods Salaries & Wages	(1) - (2)
1967	6,274	5,932	342
1966	5,727	5,607	120
1965	5,372	5,354	18
1964	5,065	5,094	-29
1963	4,835	4,896	-61
1962	4,589	4,670	-81
1961	4,504	4,528	-24
1960	4,218	4,378	-160
1959	4,150	4,247	-97
1958	3,931	4,052	-121
1957	3,726	3,876	-150
1956	3,623	3,700	-77
1955	3,453	3,531	-78
1954	3,371	3,398	-27
1953	3,416	3,309	107
1952	3,126	3,138	-12
1951	3,062	2,854	208
1950	2,747	2,575	172
1949	2,721	2,458	263
1948	2,696	2,266	430
1947	2,331	2,032	299

TABLE IV (Cont'd.)

Year	(1) Railway Salaries & Wages	(2) Durable Goods Salaries & Wages	(1) - (2)
1946	2,200	1,808	392
1945	2,059	1,855	204
1944	2,125	1,863	262
1943	1,908	1,828	80
1942	1,847	1,711	136
1941	1,697	1,490	207
1940	1,581	1,389	192
1939	1,549	1,263	286

Sources: Railway Data - Canada Year Book (various issues)

Durable Goods Data - DBS 11-502 (1939-1962)
Canada Year Book (1963-1967)

TABLE V

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN CANADIAN RAILWAY INDUSTRY

1926 - 1967

Year	Number of Employees
1967	150,218
1966	151,546
1965	154,832
1964	157,643
1963	156,527
1962	162,861
1961	166,081
1960	175,531
1959	187,981
1958	192,809
1957	212,426
1956	215,324
1955	195,459
1954	196,307
1953	211,951
1952	214,143
1951	204,025
1950	190,385
1949	192,366
1948	189,963
1947	184,415
1946	180,383

TABLE V (Cont'd.)

Year	Number of Employees
1945	180,603
1944	175,095
1943	169,663
1942	157,740
1941	148,746
1940	135,700
1939	129,362
1938	127,747
1937	133,753
1936	132,781
1935	127,526
1934	127,326
1933	121,923
1932	132,678
1931	154,569
1930	174,485
1929	187,846
1928	187,710
1927	182,143
1926	179,800

Source: Canada Year Book (various issues)

a) the total volume of railway freight did not expand during the 1950's and early 1960's as rapidly as the volume by other modes of transport.

b) the amount of passenger traffic has declined both absolutely and relatively to the amount of travel by private passenger automobile and airplane.

c) unprofitable branch lines and non-paying passenger trains are being abandoned.

d) stations with low annual gross revenues are being closed under the Master Agency plan.

e) diesel locomotives, hump yards, power-driven equipment for the maintenance of track, and other technological advances make it possible for each employee to do more work per hour.

As Table V shows, the railway work force declined by 65,000 employees between 1956 and 1967 -- a drop of over 30%. 1969 DBS figures show a further decline of nearly 15,000 over two years, to 135,532.[28] This puts the problem of job security and technological change clearly at No. 1 on the unions' agenda.

Crispo notes that to cope effectively with problems of technological change, the unions are going to have to be more united. He also feels that the alternative to mergers -- inter-union alliances -- with its limited liaison, "may prove insufficient in Canada, if only because of the comparatively small number of workers involved."[29] It is evident that with the present structural system the railway

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[28] Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Railway Transport 1969, Part VI, (Employment Statistics), DBS Catalogue No. 52-212.

[29] Crispo, Op. Cit., p. 171.

unions are not coping with the problem as effectively as they are going to have to. The so-called "job security program" which is all that has been achieved so far is at best no more than a pale imitation of the major recommendations of the Freedman Report, which will be discussed further later.

The question of job security is a key one for the non-operating employees, and a crucial one for the running trades workers, but is not as important to the shopcraft unions. Shopcraft workers tend to be by and large more secure in their positions, and are also much more mobile than the others as their skills are in demand in many other industries. This was a major reason why the shopcraft unions decided to split off from the non-operating group and to bargain alone in 1965 and from then on.

On the other hand, the running trades unions, and in particular the United Transportation Union, are extremely concerned about job security, as their workers are skilled only in terms of the railroad industry. The UTU has had to pick up the battle to keep the job of "firemen" in existence, and while it has been relatively successful, there will soon no longer be any firemen on the railways due to retraining and attrition.

The goal of the unions is not to bring all technological change to a halt. Rather, it is to give the workers themselves a say in those decisions which have, or could have, a great effect on their lives. The unions want to be involved

in determining the criteria by which certain changes are deemed essential to the industry and the country. They want to protect the workers from any form of arbitrariness on the part of management and ensure that when technological change is deemed necessary the displaced workers have other employment opportunities to turn to. The present "severance pay" scheme is not good enough, in the unions' view, especially for those workers whose skills are valuable only in the railway industry.

Peitchinis states that there has been a lack of progress in the area of negotiating technological change because on both sides there is virtual ignorance of vital manpower information and no comprehensive data on the aspects of the relationship between technological and operational changes and the quantity and nature of functions performed by employees.[30] As Peitchinis notes, this becomes an especially serious problem when innovations are implemented unilaterally, and workers are unable to take precautionary measures, such as looking for alternative employment, acquiring additional education and training, etc.[31]

At present, the entire railway labour movement is not making a determined battle over job security, though a majority of the unions are. However, given the success they've had so far, it seems evident that to achieve meaningful job

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[30] Peitchinis, Op. Cit., p. 292.

[31] Ibid.

security and negotiated technological change it will probably require making it first priority for all the unions. This seems nearly impossible within the present bargaining structure -- therefore, rail union consolidation may be necessary to achieve adequate job security for all groups in the railway work force.

Another facet of the joint bargaining system which has caused some concern is the problem of making final joint demands correspond reasonably closely to the wishes and needs of the memberships of the various unions. As demands proceed up the scale through local meetings, regional conferences, and national conferences, and then finally through meetings of the national officers of the participating unions, they tend to bear less and less resemblance to those original demands formulated at the local level by the rank and file. It is possible that union consolidation could alleviate this problem somewhat as conflicting demands and interests could be worked out at a low level rather than at the national officers level where compromise is undertaken without the consultation of the memberships.

Public Policy

The structure of the railway labour movement is also an important factor in the consideration of labour's role in public affairs in general. Crispo makes the point that the increased cohesiveness which a reduced number of unions would bring to the movement would undoubtedly increase its

ability to make an impact on public policy.[32]

By the very nature of the railway industry, railway unions are extremely concerned with political action. Since the government regards any prolonged railway work stoppage as unacceptable, thus limiting the unions' ability to apply their economic power against the railway companies (and vice-versa), the unions need to be able to influence the government both from the point of view of the length of strike tolerated and the type of settlement finally established. To the railway unions, then, political influence is critically important, as Peitchinis notes: "The failure of the unions, over the years, to seek out alternative ways to compel the companies to enter into negotiations should be interpreted in one way only: that they expected to make greater gains through the exercise of their political power on the government than through the application of their economic power on the railways."[33]

At least three other key areas immediately come to mind:

a) legislation to make technological change a negotiable item (Freedman Report)

b) influence on the rulings of the Canadian Transport Commission (CTC)

c) prevention of legislation which would restrict or deny the right to strike in the railway industry.

Of course, railway labour is concerned with many other such problems, but these seem to be the key ones.

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[32] Crispo, Op. Cit., p. 171.

[33] Peitchinis, Op. Cit., p. 283.

Rail union consolidation would serve to focus the resources and energy that are presently divided into so many different organizations. The Canadian Railway Labour Association (CRLA) is an attempt to achieve joint action on political or "legislative" questions, but this type of tool is severely limited. Its basic function is to lobby for legislative change, presenting occasional briefs to the government or the Canadian Transport Commission. While this undoubtedly has had some beneficial effects, its impact is highly restricted due to the nature of the CRLA itself, as it cannot make contributions to individual candidates or parties, as well as to the nature of the parliamentary system. Callaway points out that it matters little what a politician tells you if he's committed to the party line in caucus.[34] It's a different matter in the United States, however, where if you make a substantial campaign contribution, such as is available with a consolidated organization, you find that you have many friends, from the State Legislators right through Congress and Senate.[35]

Of course, even with a consolidated union structure, the effect of contributions to campaign funds would be limited due to the rigid party structure. However, with a unified membership, the union or unions would be able to make a greater contribution to the New Democratic Party,

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[34] Letter to the author, dated February 1, 1971.

[35] Ibid.

both financially and organizationally, which would enhance that party's chances of being elected. It is quite possible that such a new union would choose to affiliate with the NDP, as the NDP has consistently battled for the railway unions against the companies and the government. The Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers is a staunch supporter of the NDP, but most of the international railway unions do not permit political affiliation.[36] Horowitz points out that if a union is highly centralized and consists of a small number of huge locals, a pro-NDP leadership will be able to secure affiliation of a high proportion of the locals with relative ease, while if the union is very decentralized and consists of a large number of small locals it will be much more difficult to get a high percentage of locals to affiliate.[37] Thus rail union consolidation, by increasing the size and decreasing the number of local unions, should allow the leadership, if pro-NDP, to get a larger section of the membership affiliated to that party, and thus obtain a greater voice in party policy formulation.

As mentioned before, one can seriously question the effectiveness of the CRLA in bringing about the legislation

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[36]As of 1966, only six unions in the railway industry had locals affiliated to the NDP and only three of these were unions with a majority of railway members. The CBRT had 5733 members affiliated, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen had 375, and the Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen had 159. The other unions were the Machinists with 2674, the Plumbers and Pipefitters with 4,000, and the Moulders with 942. (Horowitz, p. 256).

[37]Horowitz, Op. Cit., p. 255.

that railway labour needs. Again, one can refer to the key question of job security and technological change, and the fact that the CRLA, and railway labour in general, has not been able to have the major recommendations of the Freedman Report implemented. This report, published in 1965, resulted from an investigation by Mr. Justice Samuel Freedman into the problem of railway "run throughs". In his report, he pushed back the boundaries of management's rights by recommending that the current system of permitting management to make unilateral changes in working conditions during a contract be altered.[38] New working conditions arising from technological change should be subject to negotiations, conciliation, and the right to take strike action. If the proposed innovation was a major one (as settled by an arbitrator), the union would be given a veto over such a change during the life of the agreement. The employer could introduce the change only with the union's approval.[39] The present "job security

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[38] Currie, Op. Cit., p. 378.

[39] Unlike Freedman, the Task Force on Labour Relations proposed that the present barrier to strike action during the life of an agreement should not be eliminated, but rather should be relaxed to permit the parties to opt out of this restraint at the time the collective agreement is negotiated. The Task Force proposal "would give to the employer confronted with a union demand during negotiations over technological change three options: he could grant the requested clause to the union; he could deny the request and offer to agree to a reopener on the conversion issue and take his chance on a strike during the life of the agreement; or he could grant neither and run the risk that the issue of conversion either by itself or along with other rejected demands would bring on a strike directly". (H.D. Woods, "Some Comments on the Task Force on Labour Relations, Freedman, and Reopeners: A Reply to David P. Ross," Relations Industrielles, Vol. 26, No. 1, January 1971, p. 224.)

program", which is all that has been achieved in the six years since the report, is simply insufficient. Rather than compelling railway management to negotiate proposed material work changes with the unions, it merely requires them to give advance notice of any changes and discuss possible ways of alleviating the adverse effects on the employees. As Finn says: "Actual protection of workers from arbitrary management decisions is still negligible".[40]

While increased political effectiveness seems to be a factor favouring rail union consolidation, the political differences between unions may seriously hamper consolidation efforts. Callaway notes that all railway unions (in the United States) have endorsed political candidates for years, but very often the unions did not agree on which candidates to endorse. He goes on to say that "Traditionally ... the BLE, if they could find any justification at all, would endorse Republican candidates, while the BRT (now the UTU) supported the Democrats".[41] It is difficult to say just how much of an effect these political differences would have, but they certainly must constitute some sort of additional stumbling-block to organic unity.

As for the centrally-planned, highly-integrated overall transportation policy which railway labour advocates, this would seem to be a fairly strong argument in favour of merger

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[40] Canadian Transport, January 1, 1970, p. 5.

[41] Letter to the author, dated February 5, 1971.

of railway unions. In the context of a system with a high degree of planning it would be a necessity for railway labour to be highly centralized, if it is going to play the role expected of it in the development of a comprehensive national transportation policy and program. This may require going beyond an all-inclusive railway union into a general transport workers' union. One of the Vice-Presidents of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers stated at the 1970 Convention of the CLC that unions in the four main sections of transportation -- air, road, rail and sea -- must begin to talk about a "nationally constituted federation", and eventually about organic unity.[42]

Services

This is one area in which everyone seems to agree that rail union consolidation would bring benefits. Finn calls the present system "wasteful, inefficient, and counterproductive".[43] Consolidation would eliminate costly and useless duplication of efforts -- conventions, publications, bureaucracies, specialized departments, etc. The cost of conventions alone is quite staggering -- the 1970 convention of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers cost the union $ 289,511.00.[44] If you reduced the number of

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[42]Report of Proceedings, 8th Constitutional Convention, Canadian Labour Congress, 1970, p. 73.

[43]Letter to the author, dated December 8, 1970.

[44]Canadian Transport, June 1, 1971, p. 3.

conventions from the present ten (excluding the Shopcraft Unions except the Carmen) to one, two, or even three, albeit larger ones, a tremendous saving would be available for other services.

Also, it takes a very large union organization to afford specialized services, such as research, public relations, and education departments, which are becoming more and more vital. Such departments in Canada are either non-existent or are badly understaffed. It is argued, though, that the Canadian branches of the international railway unions have access to the specialized services of their parent unions in the United States. However, it seems that the Canadian branches actually make very little use of the facilities available at U.S. headquarters.[45] This is hardly surprising -- Canadian conditions and problems differ enough from the American to make the parent unions' facilities only marginally useful.[46] This problem is quite a serious one because the people across the bargaining table from the railway unions

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[45] Crispo, Op. Cit., p. 169.

[46] Some of the more important differences are: Canada has a different governmental structure from the United States; a different political system, where lobbying plays a much smaller role and party politics a greater role; a different railway system -- only two major transcontinental railways, one of which is publically-owned, as opposed to a multitude of railways of various sizes in the United States. Much of the research done in Canada relates directly to the economic performance of the railway industry and the national economy as a whole, as well as to various other aspects of railway operations in Canada. For the international unions in Canada the research documentation available is to a very large extent only that done by the Canadian Railway Labour Association.

represent two of the largest corporations in Canada, with research and public relations facilities which make the unions look like Little League, at best. As J.-J. Servan-Schreiber has noted: "Labour unions that are divided and weak are always hesitant about making commitments. In order to be in the same league with management and government in complex and far-reaching negotiations, they need scores of experts at their disposal and millions of members behind them."[47]

Canadian Nationalism

It seems clear that there is a growing nationalist sentiment among Canadian unionists. At the 1970 Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress, the Congress adopted three minimum standards of autonomy for its American-based affiliates.[48] They are voluntary guidelines that each American union is free to observe or ignore, but the mere fact that the Congress, with close to three-fourths of its membership in international unions, has acknowledged the need for greater autonomy is a reflection of a burgeoning new nationalism.

There is a strong undercurrent of nationalist and autonomist sentiment in at least two of the largest international railway unions, the United Transportation Union and the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship

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[47] Servan-Schreiber, Jean-Jacques. The American Challenge. (New York, Avon Books, 1969), p. 219.

[48] Labour Gazette, November 1970, p. 767.

Clerks.[49] The BRAC granted increased autonomy to its Canadian section at its 1971 convention. Canadian BRAC members now have the right to select their own officers, and the Canadian officers now have the right to determine policy dealing with Canadian affairs and to act as spokesmen for the BRAC in Canada.[50] It is possible that the growing Canadian nationalism reflected in these autonomy demands will have a profound effect upon the organic structure of the railway labour movement.

An extremely important event in terms of rail labour unity was the special convention of the CBRT held in June 1969. The convention was called specifically for the purpose of authorizing formal merger talks between the National Executive Board (NEB) of the CBRT and the leaders of the BRAC. Despite the fact that a majority of the NEB was in favour of the merger, rank and file CBRT'ers filled the pages of their journal, Canadian Transport, with letters denouncing the merger in no uncertain terms, and at the convention they refused to authorize the merger talks by an overwhelming vote of 305 to 61.

Some of the pro-merger delegates thought that the majority had let their nationalist feelings get carried away, and this had caused them to lose sight of the fact that the movement would be stronger if they merger with the BRAC.

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[49] J.M. Callaway, Letter to the author, dated February 1, 1971.

[50] Canadian Railwayman, June 12, 1971, p. 1.

But it is evident that the reasons went much deeper than this. One reason was the memory of old feuds with the BRAC -- its role in having the CBRE expelled from the Trades and Labour Congress, its raids on the CBRE, its part in the smashing of the Canadian Seamen's Union. They also rebelled at the conservatism of BRAC and the AFL-CIO to which it is affiliated. In addition, there was the fear that the BRAC would not live up to its sweeping promises of autonomy for the Canadian section, and to a union with a 62-year history of independent national unionism, this was crucial. As the NEB Minority Report stated: "Detailed assurances of guarantees about this or that freedom for Canadians within BRAC are of little value as that union is governed by majority votes at big American-dominated conventions."[51]

But by far the most important reason was that the delegates knew that a merger with the BRAC would completely undermine the chances of achieving what they really wanted -- one national industrial railway union. At the CBRT's 1967 Convention a policy statement on rail labour unity was passed, which declared as the CBRT's objective "the bringing together of all railway workers in Canada -- or at least all the non-operating railway workers -- into a single national union".[52] After getting no response to their call for voluntary merger, it appears that the NEB offered the BRAC merger to the rank

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[51] Canadian Transport, June 1969, p. 3.

[52] Ibid.

and file on an "it's this or nothing" basis. However it appears from the convention reports that a sizeable segment of the rank and file believes that the CBRT leaders just did not work hard enough at achieving a merger on a nationalist basis.

The demands for a purely Canadian union are probably stronger in the railway industry than most others. For on the rails, all the usual autonomist arguments hold, to varying extents -- the internationals profiting on their Canadian operations, the lack of research, education, and social action programs geared to Canadian context, the splintering of union structure, lack of control over their own funds, etc. -- and in addition, the "new gospel of the continentalists", as Finn calls it, does not apply.[53] This "new gospel" is that international unionism is now imperative for effective bargaining with multi-national corporations. But Canadian National and Canadian Pacific are not multi-national corporations (at least not in the sense usually used, denoting corporations with U.S. head offices and branch plants in other countries) and many of the problems in the Canadian railway industry are purely Canadian problems. And there is no doubt that the 120,000 railway workers in Canada could be the basis of a viable national union. The strength and vitality of the similarly-sized Canadian Union of Public Employees would seem to be evidence of that.

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[53] Labour Gazette, November 1970, p. 772.

It is clear that the questions of Canadian nationalism and union structure are very closely linked. For those who demand a complete break from the international unions, the only possible alternatives are either one industrial union or two -- say, one operating and one non-operating. Any less consolidation would be completely impractical on the basis of the small numbers of workers involved. The more prevalent demand, however, is for greatly increased Canadian autonomy. This could also lead to a more consolidated structure, as one of the key demands of the autonomists is the right to merge when Canadian, rather than American, conditions are favourable.[54] This would seem to be a more feasible possibility as the international unions so far seem to be willing to accomodate most of the Canadian demands for autonomy.

Canadian nationalist sentiments probably have the backing of the companies, the government, and the general public as well, for at least two reasons. First, railway unions in the United States are more opposed to any changes in work rules than their Canadian affiliates.[55] They tend more to insist on the continuance of obsolete regulations governing the assignment of work, what constitutes a day's work for the purposes of pay, etc. Secondly, it has been alleged that U.S. unions fight battles in Canada in order to soften up their opposition in the United States and boost

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[54] Ibid., p. 771.

[55] Currie, Op. Cit., p. 356.

their U.S. members' morale.[56] An example of this is the 1962 Engineers' dispute over featherbedding, in which it was alleged that the U.S. headquarters ordered the strike in Canada to establish a precedent for a similar conflict in the United States.[57]

Socialist Influence

An additional factor promoting rail union consolidation is the effect of socialist or "radical" unionists, who advocate industrial unionism on the basis that it contains within it "the seeds of radical change".[58] It tends to foster unity among the workers, rather than the divisiveness, competition, and jealousy which has usually characterized craft unions. And for those who see the working class as the instrument of social change, the development of unity within that class at every point and place is something which must be encouraged. Also, an industrial union contains within it the type of organization, or the seeds of one, which they feel will be needed to supercede present capitalist methods of running industry. The industrial union is a means of organizing a type of "dual management" in preparation for the taking over of the operation of the enterprise (the railway system in this case) from the

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[56] Ibid., p. 355.

[57] Financial Post, March 24, 1962.

[58] Henig, Harry. Op. Cit., p. 183.

present managers. It is difficult to assess how strong the socialist or syndicalist influence is or will be in the drive toward rationalization of the railway labour movement. It is likely to be a primary motive in the minds of only a small number of workers, but it is definitely a factor which is promoting the organic unity of railway labour.

Changes in Union Leadership

It has often been put forward that the "old guard" of union leaders were a major obstacle to the rationalization of the labour movement, and that with many of these old gentlemen now retiring some long-standing barriers to mergers would be lowered.[59]

It is difficult to judge how much of a factor changes in leadership have been in promoting consolidation of the railway unions. It does not seem to have had much, if any, effect on the merger which created the United Transportation Union. None of the leaders of the four unions which took part in that merger could be classified as "young men", the youngest among them being 52 at the time.[60] The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers has had two changes of leadership since 1960, but still turns a deaf ear to merger talks. However, the present Grand Chief Engineer, C.J. Coughlin, has been bound by a convention resolution against participating

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[59] Business Week, April 20, 1968.

[60] Labour Gazette, March 1969, p. 152.

in any merger discussions until the next convention in 1971, so it is conceivable that the BLE's attitude towards organic unity could change under his leadership.

One should not be surprised that leadership changes seem to have little effect on rail labour unity, at least in the short run. New leaders are generally picked from those who have given long years of service to the union and who are generally in agreement with the policies of the preceding administration. Only over a period of many years or decades, do you usually have new directions in leadership arising.

But in the long run, changes in leadership will be part of the forces pushing railway unions toward unity, as old grudges and personal animosities are forgotten. Guy Brown, former Grand Chief Engineer of the BLE said in 1961:[61] "While I didn't think it (merger with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen) would come in my lifetime, and certainly would not come in my tenure in office, some day men would come along who were wise enough and who were able enough to smooth out the conflicts and dig up solutions to the problems that have prevented this through the years. I said that if he (President of the BLF&E) and I could learn to get along together and to co-operate and work at least reasonably well together when we had differences of opinion, there was reason to hope that some day these mountains as they

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[61] Nelson, Robert S., and Johnson, Edward M., eds. Technological Change and the Future of the Railways. (Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University, 1961), p. 121.

appeared to us would be levelled out to where they were mere ant hills, and somebody would be able to roll right over them. I don't know how soon this is going to come."

CHAPTER 8 - FORCES RETARDING CONSOLIDATION

One can hardly help but find the reasons for a consolidation of railway unions impressive. But the fact that widespread organic mergers have not taken place yet, in spite of these reasons, indicates that there are some very powerful factors which are retarding consolidation.

Crispo notes in International Unionism that many hold the opinion that little can be done by Canadians to rationalize the structure of the labour movement and that any changes, or at least substantive changes, will be the result of changes in the structure of the U.S. movement. While it is certainly not true that Canadians are powerless to control their own destiny in this respect, this idea does point out that, by and large, the fact of international unionism is a formidable block against the rationalization of the Canadian railway labour movement. For reasons which have been outlined previously, and which are principally linked to the size of the membership, U.S. parent unions, because they are self-sustaining, do not feel the same degree of urgency to amalgamate as their Canadian branches. Also the upsurge in Canadian nationalism tends to push the desire for consolidation in Canada further out in front of that in the United States.

Thus, while there are strong reasons for the U.S. parent unions to amalgamate, and while there have been some moves in this direction already, it is likely that Canadian railway workers will have to wait longer than they want to

for organic unity, unless they break away from their parent unions. If Canadian branches do try to break away to form a national union, then how large a stumbling-block international unionism would constitute would depend on what kind of pressure the Internationals and the Canadian Labour Congress would put on the breakaway unit(s).

Ironically enough, the "federal" arrangements which were the first response to the need for rail labour unity are perpetuating themselves and are hampering the development of organic unity. Particularly in the non-operating sector, participation in the Joint Negotiating Committee caused an attitude of "peaceful co-existence" to develop. The merger of the Trades and Labour Congress and the Canadian Congress of Labour in 1956 also helped this attitude grow. The Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers states, in reference to this: "Though such a development was desirable and inevitable, it left us without the strong and unifying motivation of trying to achieve one union of railway workers. Without a star to which we could hitch our wagon, we tended to look inward on ourselves rather than outward toward the common good and inevitably we lost that sense of purpose which had for so many years sustained us."[1]

Another factor retarding consolidation is the persistence of a "craft mentality", particularly among the

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[1] National Executive Board, CBRT&GW, Op. Cit.

engineers and the shopcraft workers. A Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers publication, dated 1963, states: "A strong craft-conscious philosophy has developed among locomotive engineers and is reflected throughout the structure and organization law of their Brotherhood. The potential candidate for membership is immediately made aware of the high personal and craft standards which the organization seeks to perpetuate."[2] The BLE is what the British call a "sectionalist" union. Sir Sidney Greene, General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, described sectionalists as follows: "Sectionalists have only one object in mind -- to obtain as much for their members as possible, even at the expense of the remaining workers in an industry."[3]

The BLE's persistent craft attitudes are summed up in the following excerpt from its official weekly journal: "The BLE is the one rail labour organization that can and does represent engine service employees exclusively, and the one rail labour organization that has proven capable of obtaining the very best rates of pay and working conditions for the engine service workers it represents. If you know anyone in engine service who might benefit by knowing these facts and figures, do him a favor and let him read this."[4] (my emphasis) Obviously the BLE is a long way from being

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[2] Hoffman, Miles E. A Contemporary Analysis of a Labour Union, Labor Monograph No. 3, (Cleveland, BLE, 1963), p. 29.

[3] Letter to the author, dated December 9, 1970.

[4] The Locomotive Engineer, January 22, 1971, p. 1.

serious about mergers, and is actively enticing members away from other railway unions.

There seems to be no documented reason for the BLE adopting and maintaining an independent stance.[5] Some unionists attribute the BLE's opposition to merger to what Finn calls their "elitist attitude" and "their long history of independence and isolation stemming from their concept of themselves as the only true railroaders".[6] Traditionally they have been loners, shunning the AFL-CIO and the CLC, and only reluctantly becoming involved in the Railway Labour Executives' Association in the United States and the Canadian Railway Labour Association. Callaway states: "It's a strange phenomenon. Their rank and file pay lip service to the desirability of unity, but always with their tongue in cheek. The BLE is a classic example of a union that should have died a natural death in the fifties. Not only did they refuse to lie down and die, they have fought back to the point where the firemen in the United States and Canada are now leaning towards the BLE as the only union that can adequately represent engine-service employees".[7]

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[5] J.M. Callaway, Letter to the author, dated February 1, 1971.

[6] Ed Finn, Letter to the author, dated May 25, 1971.

[7] Ibid. The BLE was indeed dying in the fifties as firemen were often remaining in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen after they were promoted to engineer. The introduction of the diesel engine dealt the BLF&E a fatal blow, however, and probably saved the BLE as a distinct organization.

As for shopcraft workers, craft consciousness appears to be still very strong, despite the fact that the different crafts work in close proximity in the shops and that to a certain extent their work overlaps (e.g. an electrician has to do a certain amount of work with pipes similar to work done by a pipefitter). Of course this consciousness is promoted by the systems of apprenticeship and skill testing.

Also, there is no doubt that craft consciousness is actively promoted by the craft unions themselves. This stems partially from a simple desire to maintain the identities of the organizations, in the same way as citizens at large tend to be reluctant to change names and symbols of which they have been proud in the past. Then there is the more down-to-earth consideration -- that the shopcraft unions do not wish to lose their railway memberships. Unlike running trades and non-op employees, the shopcraft workers make up only a small percentage of their unions (with the exception of the Carmen) -- generally less than 10%. Thus in any merger of railway employees involving shopcraft workers, unions such as the Machinists, the Electrical Workers, etc, would suffer losses in membership. And even considering the relatively small numbers involved, no union wants to lose 5 or 10 per cent of its membership, however noble the sacrifice would be.

Another reason for the unions' emphasis on preserving their identity and for fostering craft consciousness is their desire to preserve the quality of the jobs involved and to keep as much control as possible over conditions of work in

the shops. This argument was developed by Mr. Rolland Thivierge of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.[8] According to him, this attitude is so fundamental to shopcraft unionists that it is often taken for granted and not expressed.

According to Mr. Thivierge, if the shopcraft unions were to merge it would be playing right into the hands of the railway companies. The companies have always wanted to be able to get around the rigid craft divisions in the shops and assign members of one craft to do the work of another if it was expedient. In this way they could make more efficient use of available manpower and avoid shortages of labour in one area combined with an oversupply of workers or lack of work in another. They would like to create only one basic division of worker -- the composite mechanic -- who could do any maintenance work which was assigned to him. This would not mean that particular craft skills would no longer be necessary, but it would mean fairly major changes in the work situation, and ones which would likely not please highly-trained, highly-skilled craftsmen.

Mr. Thivierge maintains that the merging of shopcraft unions, whether into an organization of their own or into a broader non-operating union, would promote the development of the composite mechanic system, or at least not retard it. He notes that continued craft identity, boundaries of work

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[8] Interview with the author, April 13, 1971.

jurisdictions, and skill payments would have to be negotiated in the master agreement between the companies and the merged union, and without the craft unions to act as watchdogs in these areas these craft distinctions could easily be lost.

Before discussing the validity of this argument against consolidation, it must be noted that whether valid, invalid, or partially valid, it is obviously a subjective factor standing in the way of organic unity.

At the core of this argument is probably the fear or apprehension skilled workers tend to feel about industrial and multi-craft unions. In many industries, particularly the automobile industry, skilled workers have often felt that their interests are not being adequately represented by the industrial union. Depending on the state of the economy, they have usually pointed to higher rates in "outside" industries. However, at least in the United Auto Workers, the skilled trades workers have been able to resolve their points of dissatisfaction while remaining inside the industrial union.[9] It is an uneasy relationship to some extent, depending on the rates in the auto industry compared to those in construction and other industries. Since it is extremely difficult to make accurate and reasoned comparisons of wages and benefits in different industries, brief flare-ups of dissatisfaction are bound to arise. The key point is that the skilled workers

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[9]Gerald Hartford, Publicity Director, United Auto Workers. Letter to the author, undated.

in industrial unions seem by and large quite satisfied, as evidenced by the lack of breakaways.

This apprehension of industrial unions is manifested here in the fear that such a union would not be able to, or willing to, protect the skilled nature of the jobs and would allow the skill requirements and wage differentials to fall.

As far as being able to protect these "skill factors" there is no reason why an industrial union would not be in a better position to do so, if only for the reason that it would be able to concentrate more resources and expertise on the problem. As for being willing to do this, this would seem to depend on how important preserving these skill factors was to the workers themselves, and the degree to which they could influence the policy of the consolidated union. The skilled workers in the UAW have a great influence on union policy, and in fact have been able to achieve a veto with respect to the section of the union's demands which concern them by means of a constitutional provision for separate ratification.

Thus this emphasis on preserving the "skilled" nature of the shopcraft work, argued as a factor favouring craft unionism, does not seem to stand up under analysis. One would tend to suspect that behind all these arguments and justifications lies the desire of the craft unions to hang on to their railway memberships.

There is an additional factor which causes the Shop-craft unions to be dubious about merger with the non-operating

unions and to be hesitant even about resuming joint bargaining with them. They maintain, and the evidence backs them, that under the system of joint bargaining, which was in effect until 1965, the special skills of the craft workers were not given the recognition they merited in the form of a skill differential. The shopcraft leaders became so dissatisfied with the way the Joint Negotiating Committee, under the leadership of Frank Hall, was pushing for narrowed differentials that they decided it was time to call an end to joint bargaining.[10] Since the split, the shopcraft unions have widened the average differential between themselves and the non-ops to approximately 52¢ per hour in wages and benefits (as of the 1971 contract).[11]

The present leaders of the non-operating group admit that the shopcraft unions have some justification for their dissatisfaction with the Frank Hall regime and say that they are quite willing to incorporate the shopcrafts' demands for skill differentials into a system of joint demands.[12] However this does not appear to be likely to satisfy the shopcraft leaders, or at least not for some time. The General Vice-President of the International Association of Machinists, Mike Rygus, sums up the attitude of the shopcraft unions as

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[10] Interview with Mr. J. Carl Walsh, Special Representative for the Plumbers and Pipefitters, and Mr. Rolland Thivierge, International Representative, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

[11] Interview with Thivierge.

[12] Ed Finn, Letter to the author, dated May 25, 1971.

follows: "It is one thing to say in theory that the non-ops would recognize the right of skilled workers to additional pay for their skills and it is quite another thing to put it into practice. The skilled workers know perfectly well that they would be outnumbered in the final vote when the contract were to be accepted or rejected, regardless of the good intentions of the Union."[13]

Such distrust and skepticism are anything but favourable to a resumption of joint bargaining, let alone merger. However, it is quite understandable, given the histories of the unions and of joint negotiations. It is possible and even quite likely, though, that the distrust will lessen over time, particularly since the unions are working together in other areas such as the Canadian Railway Labour Association, and that this factor will become less of a barrier to consolidation than it is now.

The difficulty of joining together various insurance and benefit schemes has been cited as a problem holding back rail union mergers. This was always one of the factors that kept the Engineers and Firemen from merging, as the Firemen's insurance was vested within the union while the BLE had an entirely separate association, the Locomotive Engineers Mutual Life and Accident Insurance Association. However, this "problem" is probably in reality only a molehill grown extremely large when combined with personality clashes and

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[13] Mike Rygus. Letter to the author, dated March 24, 1971.

historical feuds. The BLE's (former) Grand Chief Engineer, Roy E. Davidson, flatly said that the BLE's and BLF&E's insurance programs were not compatible and that merger could only be accomplished by individual firemen joining the BLE![14]

A final obstacle to consolidation is the memory of historical battles. Over the years the craft unions have engaged in various jurisdictional fights and other types of mutual hostilities that tend to remain in the workers' minds, not to mention those of the union leaders, for a long time. This is certainly true of the CBRT members' memories of past struggles against the BRAC. BLE-UTU (BLF&E) members remember the past hostilities between their unions, too. When merger talks start becoming fairly serious, anti-merger members only too quickly pull out the skeletons of past battles for the newer members, and any who might have forgotten, to see.

To some extent, the continuance of the present structure is due to simple inertia. People become attached to a union and identify with that particular organization. Where the organizations are very old ones, as is the case with the railway unions, any major change in the structure requires a strong push by economic or political forces. Mike Rygus, of the Machinists, notes that "of course there are too many unions. Too many of them have too few members and too meager resources to do a first-class job in this day and age. But there are also too many churches, too many political parties,

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[14] Business Week, May 16, 1964.

too many business and professional organizations, too many governments with tangled jurisdictions, too many small provinces in Canada, too many small countries in the world, too many of a lot of things. In theory, the simple answer to these problems would be to have fewer of them. But unfortunately, that's not the way things happen -- or at least they don't change quickly. There is something about human nature that motivates people to preserve what they have ...."[15]

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[15] Mike Rygus. Letter to the author, dated March 12, 1971.

CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSION

In addition to the problem of keeping wage increases large enough to meet the rising cost of living, which they share with all trade unions, the railway unionists are faced with an increasingly serious situation with regard to employment. The railway work force has been shrinking steadily due to both technological change and the declining position of railways in the transportation market. They are also faced with restrictions on what they call their "democratic right to strike"[1] as the government imposes back-to-work legislation, and standing legislation to limit or prohibit railway strikes could soon be implemented, particularly in the United States.

These problems are forcing the unions to take a good look at the effectiveness of their present "federal" structure and are causing them to be more conscious of its defects. Most recognize that it is highly probable that consolidation would increase the unions' effectiveness in collective bargaining and political action, and that it would lead to better services and a more productive use of total resources.

Other factors which are moving the Canadian railway labour movement toward consolidation are the growing Canadian nationalism and the desire for autonomy from the international unions; the influence of socialists within and outside the movement; and the replacement of some of the older leaders by

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[1] National Executive Board, CBRT&GW, Op. Cit..

younger ones who are more easily able to ignore past animosities.

On the other hand, while there have been some important steps taken toward unity lately, particularly the United Transportation Union merger, the fact that there are still sixteen unions in the Canadian railway industry indicates that there are powerful factors at work which are retarding the drive for consolidation. Some of these factors are: the international affiliation of Canadian railway union branches, whose parent unions feel less of an urgency to merge; the persistent craft mentality of certain of the "skilled trades" unions, particularly the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; the attitudes of "peaceful co-existence" which have been engendered by the present "federal"-type structure; a certain degree of incompatibility of insurance programs; and memories of past battles fought.

There are quite a number of interesting structural possibilities for the railway labour movement in the future. It seems highly unlikely that there will be any major "voluntary" mergers in the near future. The big unions such as the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, the United Transportation Union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees seem to want organic unity, but still basically on their own terms. There will probably be a number of instances where one of these strong unions, particularly the BRAC, simply "takes over" one of the smaller unions, such as the Signalmen or the Sleeping Car Porters, and a certain degree of

consolidation will be achieved this way. But to achieve a voluntary merger between any of the major unions will be only a long-term possibility, unless economic conditions decline to the point where it becomes absolutely necessary, as the desire to be independently strong and retain one's identity seems to outweigh the pro-consolidation arguments at this point.

It may well be that the voluntary merger route is not a good one for railway labour to take in any case. Callaway maintains that the best way to consolidate railway unions is by a physical takeover one of the other. He believes that "the voluntary merger route is not only very very costly in economic terms, but because of the political ramifications, much of the benefit of a consolidated union force is lost through political compromise in order to bring about the consolidation."[2]

In the above discussion, the question of Canadian nationalism has been overlooked, assuming that the Canadian branches will remain in the Internationals and merge when their parent unions do. But, as has been pointed out in Chapter 7, there is a strong possibility that the present undercurrent of Canadian nationalism will have a profound effect on the structure of the Canadian railway labour movement.

In both of the two largest Internationals, the BRAC and UTU, there are autonomy groups who are going to their next

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[2]Letter to the author, dated February 1, 1971.

conventions with the idea of forming completely autonomous Canadian unions. If an autonomous unit should evolve from either one or both of these groups there is a possibility of the formation of a Canadian industrial union. Callaway predicts in such a case that "one break by any major union in the direction of an autonomous Canadian unit will lead in very short order to a consolidation of the Canadian railway union membership and formation of an industrial rail union."[3] However, there are many deterrents to the breakaway of Canadian units from the Internationals. One is the difficulty of a local or regional group seceding from a national bargaining unit. Another would be the antagonism of the international unions and the Canadian Labour Congress, and the reluctance of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers to assist the breakaway group(s). The CBRT leadership does not want to destroy the good relations it has developed with the Internationals, with whom they are now co-operating through the Joint Negotiating Committee and the Canadian Railway Labour Association.[4]

There is likely to be some impetus for the autonomy groups in the forthcoming changes to the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act, which it is believed will set down criteria covering the conduct and structure of the Canadian segment of the international unions.[5] Both the

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ed Finn. Letter to the author, dated May 25, 1971.

[5] J.M. Callaway. Letter to the author, dated February 1, 1971.

federal and some provincial governments are behind the autonomy demands.[6] So, it appears that there at least will be a great deal more autonomy granted to the Canadian memberships by their parent unions, including, eventually, in all likelihood, the right to merge when the Canadian membership so desires. As has been pointed out in Chapter 7, it is likely that, if given the right to do so, the Canadian sections would merge before the U.S. unions.

The purpose of this discussion has been simply to point out some of the possible structural changes which may take place in the Canadian railway labour movement. The trend has been toward increased organic unity, particularly over the past few years, and there is no doubt that the trend will continue. The speed of the movement toward consolidation will largely be dependent upon the severity of the problems facing particular unions, and the level of expectations and militancy of the railway workers themselves.

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[6] Labour Gazette, November 1970, p. 767.

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