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# Canadian Railways And The International Brotherhoods: Labour Organization In The Railway Running Trades In Canada, 1865-1914

Joseph Hugh Tuck

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CANADIAN RAILWAYS AND THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOODS:  
LABOUR ORGANIZATION IN THE RAILWAY RUNNING TRADES  
IN CANADA, 1865 - 1914

by  
Joseph Hugh Tuck  
Department of History

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies  
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London, Ontario

October, 1975

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## ABSTRACT

The railway boom in mid-nineteenth century British North America added a new occupational group to the working class of the area — the men in the 'running trades' who operated the trains. By the mid-eighteen eighties, these men had become members of trade unions, the 'railway brotherhoods', which had their headquarters and most of their members in the United States. These unions were the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, the Order of Railway Conductors, and the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen (which became the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen in 1889). This 'Americanization' of the running trades in Canada had several causes, including a tendency for Canadian railroaders, like industrial workers elsewhere, to think in international terms when it came to unionization. Clearly, however, certain differences between Canada and the United States, and the presence of the border itself, might make it difficult at times for the international brotherhoods to serve adequately the needs of their Canadian members. This study examines their efforts in this regard.

The approach is basically chronological. The period examined is from approximately the middle of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of the World War in 1914, and covers several major areas: the entry of the brotherhoods into Canada and expansion

afterwards; the elimination of rival organizations; relations with Canadian governments and railway managements; and the administration of the brotherhoods' Canadian wings.

Expansion into Canada, beginning with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in 1865, was relatively uneventful, and growth within the Dominion was accompanied by few setbacks. Rival unions, with the exception of the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees in 1902-1903, provided little competition. In their relations with the Canadian governments, the brotherhoods experienced only one important failure, when they were unable to prevent the enactment of an undesirable provision of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act of 1907. Generally satisfactory, as well, were relations with management, although an important strike on the Grand Trunk Railway in 1910 came close to being a failure.

Perhaps the brotherhoods' greatest success in Canada was in the administrative sphere, where they evolved a technique of reserving a high-level executive position for a Canadian in recognition of the special national status of Canada. Purely honorary and somewhat informal in nature at first, this position became standardized after 1900 as the 'Canadian Vice-President' in charge of Canadian affairs. This new post, however, did not mean an increase in Canadian autonomy within the brotherhoods, but a new colonial status, since the Canadian Vice-Presidents were elected by conventions dominated by American majorities, and took orders from American presidents. Yet, undoubtedly, Canadian members of the brotherhoods were proud of 'their'

vice-presidents, and this helped convince them of the virtues of the international brotherhoods. By 1914, indeed, the brotherhoods were firmly entrenched in Canada, and the secession of their Canadian members was only a remote possibility.

Since none of the office files or correspondence of the brotherhoods have survived for the period, the brotherhoods' convention proceedings and monthly journals provided the study's factual core. This material was supplemented where necessary by daily newspapers, the Canadian labour press, and several documentary collections at the Public Archives of Canada, most notably the papers of William Lyon Mackenzie King and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and the letterbooks of the Intercolonial Railway. Little relevant material seems to have survived from the files of other Canadian railroads, with the possible exception of the Canadian Pacific, whose records — aside from the letterbooks of W.C. Van Horne — remain closed to researchers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to Professor D.G.G. Kerr for his guidance in the preparation of this work. I am indebted, as well, to Senator Eugene Forsey, former Director of Research, Canadian Labour Congress, Ottawa, for suggesting this subject, and for providing many of my initial ideas and contacts. Officers of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the United Transportation Union always proved willing to give information and assistance when it was needed. In Ottawa, the staffs of the Public Archives of Canada and the Department of Labour Library were unfailingly courteous and helpful. In my frequent trips to the Library of the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Ithaca, New York, Dr. Herbert Finch and his staff gave assistance which went beyond mere courtesy, as did Pamela Bluh at the Milton S. Eisenhower Library of John Hopkins University in Baltimore. I am indebted as well to the staff of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison. My colleagues in the Department of History at Memorial University of Newfoundland supplied valuable aid and criticism during the writing stages. I must also thank the Canada Council for assistance in completing the research. To my wife goes my thanks and appreciation for giving, throughout what must have seemed an interminable undertaking, unstinting assistance and moral support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfoFL	American Federation of Labor
ALU	American Labor Union
ARU	American Railway Union
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
BLE	Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers
BLF	Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen [after January 1907: Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen]
BRC	Brotherhood of Railway Conductors
BRRB	Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen
BRTofA	Brotherhood of Railway Trackmen of America
BRT	Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen
CB&Q	Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad
CBBA	Conductors' and Brakemen's Benevolent Association of Canada
CBRE	Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees
CNR	Canadian Northern Railway
CORM	Canadian Order of Railway Men
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CSR	Canadian Southern Railway
GTR	Grand Trunk Railway
IAM	International Association of Machinists
ICR	Intercolonial Railway
IDIA	Industrial Disputes Investigation Act

IULF International Union of Locomotive Firemen  
IWW Industrial Workers of the World  
KofL Knights of Labor  
KP William Lyon Mackenzie King. Papers.  
LP Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Papers.  
NPR Northern Pacific Railroad  
PWA Provincial Workmen's Association  
TM&B Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway  
TLC Trades and Labor Congress of Canada  
UBRE United Brotherhood of Railway Employees  
UBRT United Brotherhood of Railroad Trackmen  
WFM Western Federation of Miners

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The mid-nineteenth century railway boom in eastern British North America added a new occupational group to the working class of the area, the men in the so-called 'running trades' who crewed the trains. They pursued four major and several less important trades. The engineer (or engine-driver, as the English called him) occupied the right-hand side of the locomotive's cab. His job required experience and mechanical ability, since railroad trains, by their very nature, often operated many miles from the nearest machine shop or repair centre. Beside him was the fireman, who fueled the boiler, and considered himself an apprentice engineer. In the early days, there was often a third man in the cab as well, a 'wood-passer', but his job was phased out when supplies of cheap hard maple fuel became exhausted. The conductor was in over-all charge of the train, together with its passengers and freight, and his position was roughly analogous to that of a ship's captain. His duties varied according to the type of train, which meant different "classes" of conductors: through passenger conductors, local passenger conductors, through freight conductors, local freight conductors, and yard switching conductors, for example. Whatever his classification, however, the conductor had directly under

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him one or more brakemen (or, in the yards, switchmen), whose dangerous duties included coupling and uncoupling cars, and setting the brakes of the moving train by hand. The organization of these men into trades unions was natural and almost inevitable. Their employers were often large corporations such as the Grand Trunk Railway or the Great Western. Acting as individuals, railroaders could never hope to compel these corporations to maintain wages at acceptable levels, limit hours of work, or improve working conditions. The solution to this problem of individual impotence — one that many other North American workingmen were adopting in the mid-nineteenth century — was to engage in collective bargaining with management.<sup>2</sup> By the eighteen-eighties, the men in the running trades had organized unions for each of their major trades — for engineers, firemen, conductors and brakemen — and had established them on Canadian railroads:

Several factors, however, influenced the form and subsequent history of these unions. The first was the hazardous nature of railroading as an occupation. In 1863, *Fincher's Trades' Review*, of Philadelphia, explained what the risks of an engineer's job meant to him and his family:

The suspense at home — the watching and quaking consequent upon every delay, is fraught with dreadful forebodings, and the most agonizing suspense. It is not for us to say what is the average life of engineers, although few become superannuated; but this we do say, that many are sent to a premature grave, others are maimed for life, and not

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald N. Grob, Workers and Utopia; A Study of Ideological Conflict in the American Labor Movement 1865-1900 (Chicago, 1969), p. 9. The mid-century growth of unions in Canada is discussed in Steven Langdon, "The emergence of the Canadian working class movement, 1845-1875," Journal of Canadian Studies, VIII, 2 (May 1973), 8-12.



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a few, in the prime of manhood, are so much disabled as to prevent them, ever afterwards, from following a lucrative employment.<sup>3</sup>

Train wrecks and boiler explosions were the most spectacular accidents, and claimed the lives of numerous railroaders annually, especially engineers and firemen. But there were many other less dramatic dangers. A brakeman, for example, might be brushed off a moving train, or suffer serious hand injuries coupling and uncoupling cars joined together with primitive links and pins. Until the replacement of the link and pin by the Janney automatic coupler in the late nineteenth century, missing fingers and thumbs were the brakeman's trademark. Even as late as 1908 one Canadian casualty insurance company classed railroading as "extra hazardous," on a par with coal mining, ship rigging and iron-smelting.<sup>4</sup> Railroaders thus had a definite need for life and accident insurance, but the rates charged by commercial insurance companies were too high for most of them to afford. The solution was to make the provision of cheap insurance a function of their trade unions. So important was this function, in fact, that these associations often became as much mutual benefit societies as trades unions, especially in the early days, when the dangers were greatest.

A second factor acting upon these organizations was a psychological one — a feeling which many railroaders had of being alone and helpless in a hostile environment. This was a problem created by the economic individualism of the time, and was shared by many other

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<sup>3</sup> Fincher's Trades' Review, 10 October 1863.

<sup>4</sup> The Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation, Limited, Accident Manual (Toronto, 1908), pp. 79, 92-94, 98-110.

industrial workingmen in North America to some degree.<sup>5</sup> The basic nature of railroading, however, made this an especially acute problem for the men in the running trades. Often on the road for days on end, constantly facing danger, they had little opportunity to enjoy a settled existence or a normal family life, and could only hope that the next curve in the track did not conceal death or disablement. Earlier in the century, fraternal lodges such as the Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias had sprung up across North America to meet a similar need for security and a sense of belonging in the intensely individualistic society of the time.<sup>6</sup> Railroaders thus constructed their unions on the pattern of the fraternal order. At the centre of a typical 'brotherhood' in the running trades, such as the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen or the Order of Railway Conductors, was a Grand Lodge or Grand Division,<sup>7</sup> which consisted of delegates from each subordinate lodge or division who, at their annual convention, made rules and established policy, and elected their organization's chief executives, the grand officers.<sup>8</sup> At the top of the executive pyramid

<sup>5</sup> See Rowland Berthoff, An Unsettled People; Social Order and Disorder in American History (New York, 1971), p. 254.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>7</sup> A 'division' of a fraternal order or trades union should not be confused with a division of a railroad. The latter is a section of the railroad's total trackage, for example, the 'Western Division' of the CPR.

<sup>8</sup> After 1890, these conventions began to be held biennially or triennially. On the reasons for this, see Warren R. Van Tine, The Making of the Labor Bureaucrat; Union Leadership in the United States 1870-1920 (Amherst, Massachusetts, 1973), pp. 116-126.

was a Grand Chief or Grand Master, followed by a Grand Secretary and Treasurer and a variety of other elected officials, ranging from Assistant Grand Chiefs or Grand Masters, to Vice Grand Masters, and Grand Inside and Outside Sentinels.<sup>9</sup> From the fraternal orders, as well, the unions in the running trades borrowed ritual, regalia and secret passwords. These trappings of the lodge-hall not only met definite psychological needs,<sup>10</sup> but also served to enhance the solidarity of the organization and make infiltration by hostile outsiders, such as detectives, more difficult. Other labour organizations in North America also aped the fraternal orders and adopted some of their features, but the unions in the running trades seem to have gone further in this direction than most. They became known collectively as the 'railway brotherhoods', not just because of their official titles, but also because 'brotherhood' was a common nickname for a fraternal order in the late nineteenth century, and because the railway brotherhoods, actually were, in effect, rather specialized fraternal orders which engaged in collective bargaining.

One special factor, the existence of the border between Canada and the United States, had profound implications for Canadian railroaders because it made alternative types of organization possible:

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<sup>9</sup> One hundred years after its founding, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers still employed this structure in a somewhat modified form. See Miles E. Hoffman, A Contemporary Analysis of a Labor Union; Development, Structure, Functions, Grand International Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 16-23.

<sup>10</sup> See Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 274.

national and international. The concept of 'brotherhood', of course, suggested a type of organization which transcended national boundaries, and many of the ordinary fraternal lodges were in fact 'international' in that they had become established in both Canada and the United States. Railway labour organizations, however, were likely to encounter two difficulties if they attempted to become 'international' in this fashion. First, there were significant differences between Canadian and American systems of law and government. Could an organization engaging in collective bargaining, and selling insurance, function comfortably within the law if laws were not uniform in the two countries, or were administered in different ways? Second, while there were numerous railway links between Canada and the United States, and while the Grand Trunk Railway, for example, was to some extent an international railway, the Canadian and American railway systems were separate systems, constructed to serve discrete national purposes. In British North America before Confederation, for example, the Grand Trunk had been constructed to re-assert in the heart of the continent the commercial supremacy of the St. Lawrence waterway and the mercantile community of Montreal; after Confederation, the Intercolonial Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway were designed to provide unity for the new Dominion of Canada. A similar pattern is discernable for railway development in the United States, where the aptly-named Union Pacific Railroad, for example, was built to bind the Pacific coast more securely to the rest of the Republic during the Civil War years. The railway systems of the two countries, in other words, were constructed in large part to meet national, not international or continental needs and aspirations. Moreover, this orientation was a

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reflection of economics and geography, and had deep roots in the past. International unionism on the railways in North America was thus potentially at odds with the basic forces which had partitioned the continent into national states, and had created different systems of government. Clearly, a case could be made for national unions in the running trades.

From the point of view of the average North American railroader, however, the national state was in some ways an abstract concept, and there were sound practical reasons for thinking in international terms. First, Canadian and American railwaymen had the same job-related problems. Second, railway technology was virtually identical in Canada and the United States. An engineer or brakeman, for example, would find no significant mechanical differences between the railway equipment of the two countries and, given the relative ease of crossing the international border and the widespread use of English, could move from job to job in North America almost as though the border did not exist. Thirdly, working class attitudes and traditions were also very similar in Canada and the United States, since they operated in a similar environment and drew upon common British and European sources. There was a tendency among trades unionists everywhere, moreover, to think in terms of an international working class.<sup>11</sup> Finally, employers of labour conducted their affairs in a similar fashion on both sides of the international border, in accordance with the dictates of a business cycle which was generally unaffected by national boundaries.

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<sup>11</sup> See Langdon, "Emergence," Journal of Canadian Studies, VIII, 3 (August 1973), p. 10.

In practical terms, therefore, it made a good deal of sense for railroaders to organize on an international basis in North America, even though operating in two different national jurisdictions might present problems. Moreover, given the greater maturity of the American railway network (the first American transcontinental railway appeared two decades before the CPR was built), and the much larger number of railway employees in the United States, international unions in the running trades were likely to appear first in the United States, and retain their American centre of gravity and pre-occupation with American affairs even after expanding into Canada. While Canadian-based brotherhoods could not be ruled out, therefore, American ones clearly had an advantage over them in a test of strength.

To sum up, the structure and functions of the typical association for the men in the running trades were influenced by several factors: danger, social anxiety and the division of North America into national states. The typical association would thus combine the features of the pure-and-simple trade union, the mutual benefit society and the fraternal lodge. It would, moreover, probably be international rather than national in scope, although it might encounter difficulties in Canada because of its American orientation. A major problem for associations of this type would therefore be: could they adapt themselves adequately to Canadian conditions — to Canadian business and government — while at the same time fending off potential national rivals, and could they adequately serve the needs of their Canadian members in the process?

## CHAPTER II

### THE BEGINNINGS OF INTERNATIONAL UNIONISM ON CANADIAN RAILWAYS, 1855 - 1880

Until 1880, the only international brotherhoods on Canadian railways were associations for locomotive engineers and firemen. These associations were entirely American in origin, a response to American conditions, and did not establish themselves securely in Canada until they had achieved some measure of strength and stability in the United States. Thus an association for locomotive engineers was to be found in the U.S. as early as 1855. But, for reasons largely American in origin, nothing of this sort crossed the Canadian border until a decade later. And, as far as firemen were concerned, unionization began in 1866 in the U.S., but financial weakness, inter-union rivalry, and the great railway strikes of 1877, ensured that only a handful of Canadian firemen belonged to international unions before the 1880's.

#### The Beginnings

The first engineers' association in the U.S. was a response to the general expansion of the American railway network which took place in the early fifties. The increased demand for engineers drew into employment men whose "intemperate habits," general incompetence, and willingness to work for low wages posed a serious threat to "older

and more thoughtful engineers."<sup>1</sup> Hence, when the Baltimore and Ohio railroad fired thirteen men in 1854 and replaced them with new men, the displaced engineers decided to organize, and called a national convention. The outcome was the formation in 1855 of the National Protective Association of Locomotive Engineers of the United States. The primary function of the organization was to promote measures to restrict the entry of unqualified men into the trade.<sup>2</sup> The Association met in convention again in 1856 and 1857.

After this time, the organization appears to have dissolved as a centralized organization. In some form or other it endured until the Civil War, perhaps on a local basis.<sup>3</sup> Richardson suggests a number of reasons for its failure: adoption of standards too high for the average engineer; inadequate organizational structure; insufficient solidarity among engineers; and the depressions of 1854-55 and 1857.<sup>4</sup> An old-time engineer in the 1890's offered his own reason for the Association's final disappearance: the American Civil War, "which scattered the members...."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reed C. Richardson, The Locomotive Engineer 1863-1963: A Century of Railway Labor Relations and Work Rules (Ann Arbor, 1963), p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 108; Locomotive Engineers' Journal, October 1892, pp. 920-922. (Hereafter cited as Engineers' Journal.)

<sup>3</sup> Engineers' Journal, June 1897, p. 498.

<sup>4</sup> Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> Engineers' Journal, June 1897, p. 498.



In its last convention in 1857, however, the Association apparently took note of the growth of railway mileage in Canada, an expansion of trackage in which the highly ambitious project, the Grand Trunk Railway, took the lead, with the Great Western not far behind. The convention adopted a resolution "permitting engineers of the Canada roads joining [sic] the association, providing they were willing to abide by its laws."<sup>6</sup> The demise of the Association shortly thereafter, however, probably ensured that no Canadian branches were formed.

The Brotherhood of the Footboard and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers

The National Protective Association undoubtedly was premature. The Civil War years, however, saw a return of prosperity in the U.S., and with it renewed interest in unionization in a number of trades. For locomotive engineers in the U.S. during the war years many of the same conditions existed that had brought about the abortive organization of 1855: incompetent or drunken engineers and the consequent safety threat they embodied; inadequate pay and conditions of employment combined with inadequate grievance machinery and oftentimes arbitrary railroad officials; the desire to project an improved public image; and the need for financial safeguards in a dangerous occupation.<sup>7</sup>

The spark for a renewed organizational drive was provided by the management of the Michigan Central Railway. The company raised engineers' wages in 1862, probably at the request of individual engineers.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 551.

<sup>7</sup> Richardson, *Locomotive Engineer*, p. 120.

but at the same time increased the engineers' workloads. Shortly after, the company removed the wage increase and further increased the hours of work. William D. Robinson, an engineer on the Michigan Central, and secretary of the old National Protective Association, thereupon joined with twelve fellow engineers to issue a call for an organizational meeting in Detroit on 5 May 1863.<sup>8</sup>

The delegates to the Detroit meeting rejected any attempt to revive the old Protective Association and instead formed Division Number One, Brotherhood of the Footboard. Within three months nine additional divisions had been formed, and on 18 August 1863, the order became a national one, with the formation of the Grand National Division, Brotherhood of the Footboard. W.D. Robinson was elected Grand Chief Engineer.<sup>9</sup> The order had not yet become 'international', although this development could easily be foreseen: organized originally in Michigan, the order included engineers on the western lines of the Grand Trunk Railway in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

The footboard is the platform which forms the floor of the cab of a steam locomotive, and, as the order's name suggests, the intention was to include firemen and even machinists as well as engineers within the membership.<sup>11</sup> In a narrow sense, therefore, the

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 121-122.

<sup>10</sup> Engineers' Journal, January 1892, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., February 1867, p. 1. In the early days of railroading, locomotive engineers might be either promoted firemen or machinists. It was not until after 1870 or so that the practice of promoting firemen only became almost universal. Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, p. 154.

order was 'industrial', encompassing more than one trade, and this slightly radical tinge reflected the order's origins in a somewhat acrimonious dispute with management during a period of general social upheaval. In short, the Brotherhood was born in battle, and felt forced to use any available weapon, and every available ally.

But a radical approach proved ill-suited either to the ultimate survival of the organization or to the temperament of the majority of its members. The tumultuous first year saw a series of unsuccessful strikes, unsuccessful in part because the Grand Division officers were unwilling or unable to provide effective assistance. A thorough reorganization seemed in order, and this was accomplished at the first annual convention in 1864. Robinson was replaced as Grand Chief Engineer by Charles Wilson of the New York Central Railway, a man of highly conservative temperament. The order was made strictly craft-oriented and membership was restricted to engineers in active service. Finally, to symbolize the break with the past, the name of the order was changed to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE).<sup>12</sup>

Chief Engineer Wilson moved immediately to emphasize that, as long as he was in power, the Brotherhood would follow a conservative path. Strikes were not ruled out, but every effort would be made to improve the character and efficiency of engineers to the point where "the employer would be so well pleased with their work that he would of his own free will provide better recognition of labor and higher pay."<sup>13</sup> Under Wilson, then, the Brotherhood was set on the path

<sup>12</sup>Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, pp. 122-123.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

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which it was to follow long after Wilson left office — a path which, both immediately and in the long run, led to strength and stability.

#### The Establishment of the BLE in Canada

Significantly, it was at this point that the order became an 'international' one, in aspiration if not immediately in fact: the Grand National Division of the Brotherhood of the Footboard became the Grand International Division of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.<sup>14</sup> In tactical terms expansion into Canada made a good deal of sense. The railway lines of the Province of Canada made contact at the U.S. border with American lines already organized by the BLE and, in the case of the Grand Trunk actually crossed the U.S. border into BLE territory.

Despite this, BLE organization did not begin in Canada until late 1865. The first Canadian division, Toronto Division Number 70, received its charter on 5 December, for the purpose of organizing engineers on the Grand Trunk in Canada West. A few days later, the organization of the Great Western Railway was begun, with the chartering of London Division Number 68. After this initial effort organizing in Canada lagged. The lines of Canada East were not provided for until March 1867 when Point St. Charles Division Number 89 at Montreal was chartered, and no further organizing activity took place until 1870. Indeed, until September, 1871, when a division was chartered at Hamilton, Ontario, the entire Great Western line from the suspension bridge at Niagara Falls to Windsor was represented by London Division Number 68.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-123.

<sup>15</sup> Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, "Establishment Dates of Canadian Divisions Etc." (photocopy in writer's possession), n.p., n.d.; Engineers' Journal, August 1870, p. 368.

In every way, the Brotherhood's growth in Canada in the sixties was extremely slow. In 1870, after almost five years in the Dominion, the Brotherhood could boast only 109 Canadian members, in three divisions.<sup>16</sup> Growth was probably slow because the Grand Division did not consider Canada to be an especially important region. This is scarcely surprising, since Canada's railway network was still relatively small in comparison with the U.S. and, moreover, was not to become fully integrated with the American network until the standardization of Canadian gauges in the early seventies.<sup>17</sup> The general organizing thrust of the Brotherhood at this time was toward the east and south from its original centre of Michigan. Canada was not bypassed, but was on the fringe of the organizing drive.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the first Canadian divisions were organized during the term in office of Grand Chief Engineer Charles Wilson, a cautious, conservative man who was not inclined towards an aggressive organizing policy. As Stevenson has said, "Instead of carrying the Brotherhood to the Engineers [Wilson] permitted the engineers to come to the Brotherhood."<sup>19</sup>

In the early seventies, however, Canadian growth speeded up somewhat. It is not clear exactly why. But the boom of the early seventies followed by severe depression in 1873 may have had their

<sup>16</sup> Engineers' Journal, January 1870, p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., September 1871, p. 450.

<sup>18</sup> George J. Stevenson, "The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and its Leader, 1863-1920" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1954), p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

effect, and so too may the replacement in 1874 of the sluggish Wilson as Grand Chief Engineer by Peter M. Arthur, a man of great energy and ability. The Scottish-born Arthur, moreover, was scarcely likely to overlook opportunities offered by the British provinces to the north of the American border. By mid-1875, at the beginning of the difficulties with the Grand Trunk, there were 357 Brotherhood men in Canada, in five divisions, and by mid-1876 there were over 400, in eight divisions.<sup>20</sup> This spurt of the mid-seventies completed the work begun in 1865, for by 1876, the BLE could speak for 90 percent of the locomotive engineers in what had been the old Province of Canada.<sup>21</sup>

Growth in Canada in the years before 1876 was more than matched by growth in the U.S. In 1875 the Brotherhood had some 10,000 members on American railways.<sup>22</sup> Canadian residents thus made up less than four percent of the total membership of the order in 1875. Nonetheless, almost from the beginning, Canadian members took an active part in Brotherhood affairs, and some sort of informal rule appears to have existed, again almost from the beginning, that the Grand International Division should include a Canadian officer. In 1868, for example, A. Davis of Montreal was elected Third Grand Assistant Engineer at the annual convention, defeating W. Harrison of London, Ontario.<sup>23</sup> In 1869, Robert Pearson, of Toronto, was elected Second Grand Engineer,

<sup>20</sup> Engineers' Journal, May 1875, pp. 256-257; September 1876, p. 413, August 1879, pp. 366-369.

<sup>21</sup> Toronto Globe, 8 January 1877.

<sup>22</sup> Engineers' Journal, November 1875, p. 590.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., November 1868, p. 339.

a post with a \$50 per annum honorarium.<sup>24</sup> The 'international' status of the Brotherhood clearly was a source of pride to its American membership and its Grand Division. In 1871, the BLE's Eighth Annual Convention was held in Toronto, the first time in Canada. First Grand Engineer C.H. Sherman, an American, took advantage of the occasion to marvel that

the restless, untiring genius of the great republic has smiled approvingly on our efforts and purposes; the old time-honored and grave spirit of a constitutional monarchy has come forward to recognize and greet us as a worthy part of the great world's industrious hive.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, 'internationalism' also may have been stressed in order to override Canadian objections to belonging to an American organization. In other words, precisely because the Brotherhood was 'international', it posed no threat to the national loyalties of its Canadian members. Wilson (who, after all, had lived through the Civil War years) seems to have understood that patriotism was potentially as divisive as party politics or religion — both forbidden topics of discussion within the Brotherhood.<sup>26</sup> Wilson made it very clear at the Toronto convention in 1871 that

although our policy is framed with a view to annex and unite all good locomotive engineers in one common cause, yet I hope our Canadian neighbours will not think we have anything to do with politics as a Society.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Proceedings of the Annual Convention, 1869, p. 31. (Hereafter cited as BLE Proceedings.)

<sup>25</sup> Engineers' Journal, November 1871, pp. 486-487.

<sup>26</sup> See Ibid., November 1869, p. 492.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., November 1871, p. 481.

Generally speaking, the managements of Canadian railways approved of the BLE. Wilson's conservative policy was proving to be a success. The Great Western became so impressed with the positive virtues of the Brotherhood, in fact, that it supplied London Division Number 68 with a fully-furnished meeting hall in 1872. The occasion of the dedication of the hall was marked by a "grand festival" and dinner at City Hall, and by a ball accompanied by music of the Seventh Battalion band which went on until "daylight in the morning." W.A. Robinson, Mechanical Superintendent of the Great Western, took the opportunity to praise the Brotherhood, and its "excellent motto . . . 'Sobriety, Justice and Morality'," declaring that he encouraged "the engineers on the Western to become members. . . ." <sup>28</sup>

Relations with management on the Northern Railway and the Canada Southern were also cordial in the early and mid-seventies. <sup>29</sup> The Grand Trunk, of course, was likely to be another matter, given its debt-ridden condition and hard-pressed management. But even as late as May 1875, not much more than a year before the strike of 1876, Grand Trunk engineers at Brockville still found it possible "to speak in the highest terms of the officers of that road and their management" to visiting Grand Chief P.M. Arthur. <sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., June 1872, p. 258.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., November 1875, p. 596.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., May 1875, p. 257.



The Grand Trunk Strike of 1876-1877

The perennial financial problems of the Grand Trunk railroad were a major cause of the strike of 1876-1877.<sup>31</sup> Ever since the beginning, in the 1850's, the Grand Trunk had known more bad years than good. In 1873, even before the failure of Jay Cooke's banking house signalled the end of the post-war boom, it was once again in financial difficulties. The year before had been one of the few good years, but a rapid rise in operating costs, coupled with rates fixed at a low level by the demands of competition, brought a serious decline in earnings in 1873. The slump did little to alleviate the problem. The lower operating costs which one might expect were slow to materialize, and this was particularly so because the cost of labour remained persistently high.<sup>32</sup>

The obvious solution was to cut wages, and few nineteenth-century businessmen would have raised any theoretical objections, moral or otherwise, to this course of action. The growing militancy of labour in North America since the Civil War, however, was likely to make this solution difficult to implement in some industries, and this was especially so on the railways after 1873.<sup>33</sup> Richard Potter, president.

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<sup>31</sup>This discussion of the Grand Trunk strike of 1876-77 owes much to Shirley Ann Ayer, "The Locomotive Engineers' Strike on the Grand Trunk Railway in 1876-1877" (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1961).

<sup>32</sup>A.W. Currie, The Grand Trunk Railway of Canada (Toronto, 1957), pp. 132-133, 138.

<sup>33</sup>See Herbert G. Gutman, "Trouble on the Railroads in 1873-1874: Prelude to the 1877 Crisis?" Labor History, II (Spring, 1961), 215-235, *passim*.

of the GTR, was well aware of this: "Workers on American railways had the bit in their teeth and ... had to be treated with caution."<sup>34</sup> Potter was faced with a real dilemma: reduction of wages would mean lower operating costs, but might, at the same time trigger off a strike — and strikes could be expensive.

In March 1875, the Grand Trunk management finally grasped the nettle and announced a general reduction in wages. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers reacted immediately. The Brotherhood men on the Grand Trunk formed a grievance committee and summoned Grand Chief Arthur to Montreal. Arthur conferred with General Manager Joseph Hickson and Mechanical Superintendent Herbert Wallis. An agreement was reached. Running time wages for engineers and firemen were to remain at the previous level, but detention time wages were reduced from twenty cents an hour to ten. The *Montreal Daily Witness* reported that "the men represented their case so forcibly that company officials, afraid of a strike they did not desire at the time, appeased the engineers and firemen."<sup>35</sup> The true worth of unionization to the working man had thus been demonstrated, but so had the wisdom of the Grand Trunk management in buying off its best-organized employees. The wages of other Grand Trunk employees, not represented by a strong union, were reduced by ten percent with no fuss and no bother.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Currie, Grand Trunk, p. 138.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Ayer, "Strike," p. 54.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

And there things might have remained, had the company kept its head. Instead, in September 1876, it proceeded to violate the spirit of the agreement by modifying its method of grading and paying engineers and firemen. The Grand Trunk at this time followed the fairly common practice of 'classifying' its engineers and firemen, for pay purposes, according to their length of service with the company. At the time of the 1875 agreement, the GTR had three classes of engineers, the lowest class receiving about seventy-five cents a day less than the highest. But after March 1875, a fourth class was introduced, getting less pay than third-class men, and used in their place. Third-class men could now be used to replace men in the higher classifications who would in turn be given less work or even discharged.<sup>37</sup>

But, even more serious than this abuse of the classification system, from the point of view of the Brotherhood, were actual violations of the 1875 agreement, violations that began to make it appear that the GTR management had now begun to think in terms of ridding itself completely of the annoyance of having to deal with its engineers as a group. According to P.M. Arthur, the 1875 agreement was directly violated in that "the men were to be promoted according to their time of service on the road; but this has not been done, as members of the Brotherhood are passed over, while others are promoted...."<sup>38</sup>

A grievance committee met at once with Mechanical Superintendent Wallis who "treated them very coolly, and was very indignant .

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-55.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Ibid., p. 54.

at them for coming to him with their complaints." Joseph Hickson proved more courteous, but insisted upon retaining the new classes of engineers and firemen. The committee was not satisfied, but decided not to pursue the matter further.<sup>39</sup>

On 11 October 1876, Richard Potter resigned as president of the GTR. He was replaced by Sir Henry Tyler — Captain Tyler — a stubborn man whose military bearing was in considerable contrast with that of the cultured Potter.<sup>40</sup> On 11 December, the Grand Trunk reduced wages and discharged many employees, including train crews, despatchers, laborers and mechanics. But even here, according to Arthur,

the engineers would not have objected to the reduction had the company followed its stated policy of considering seniority. The engineers became alarmed only when each member of the grievance committee and all old engineers who were prominent members of the Brotherhood were served with discharge notices. The chairman of the committee, John Eaton of Toronto, was discharged before the expiration of his notice with no reason given. By the end of the month about 150 drivers had been discharged. Places of some of those discharged were filled with newly-promoted firemen.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, the Grand Trunk now flatly refused to meet either the grievance committee or Grand Chief Arthur. Wallis declared that he would discuss the situation with any individual engineer, but not with a committee.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

<sup>40</sup> Currie, Grand Trunk, pp. 150-152.

<sup>41</sup> Ayer, "Strike," p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

As a result, the men came to believe that the Grand Trunk intended to destroy the Brotherhood,<sup>43</sup> and they were not alone in this belief. The *Montreal Daily Witness*, for example, stated that "about fifty" engineers had been told to leave the Brotherhood or be fired.<sup>44</sup> The company countered such charges by claiming that no discrimination existed, and that twenty percent of all grades had been discharged to prevent wage reductions. In reality, the company declared, no real wage reductions had taken place, more first-class men were discharged because they were in the majority; and the large number of Brotherhood men discharged was because ninety percent of the company's engineers belonged to the organization.<sup>45</sup>

It seems clear, however, that the Grand Trunk had decided upon a showdown with the BLE. Company officials felt that there was little chance of a strike. They believed that they had had enough reserve men to convince the BLE of the futility of striking, and that non-union men had no sympathy with the Brotherhood. Nonetheless, company officials prepared for the worst. Employees able to run engines were stationed at various points on the main line and previously discharged men were rehired if they promised to stand by the company. An oath of allegiance was demanded of engineers still in service. 'Strangers' were hired to run engines.<sup>46</sup> The engineers' committee sent Hickson an

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-61.

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ultimatum at 7 p.m. on Friday, 29 December 1876. He refused to accept it, and the trains stopped running at 9 p.m.

The ultimatum contained eight 'propositions' to which the company must accede. It demanded the reduction of classes of engineers to two, strict seniority in case of reduction of staff, no discharge without cause, and the reinstatement of engineers discharged after 23 December. Three propositions called for higher wages, and finally, the last proposition called for the discharge of unpopular foremen at Montreal and Belleville.<sup>47</sup>

The strike lasted six days, and almost from the beginning the strikers had the upper hand. They were aided, at first, by a severe snowstorm, which made engine running especially difficult for inexperienced engineers. But the strikers' trump cards were extensive public sympathy for their cause and the refusal of the federal government to intervene. At various points along the line where the company attempted to operate trains, large hostile crowds made such operation almost impossible. There was some violence. Stones were thrown, cars were run off the rails, and in at least one instance, an engine was sabotaged. The company called upon civic authorities to maintain order, but they encountered reluctance to intervene. At a few points, the militia was called out — Brockville, Belleville, Brantford — but proved singularly ineffective. In part, this was sheer inefficiency; proper winter clothing and even ammunition were in short supply in some cases. But many militia men, as well, sympathized with the strikers and refused to turn out when called.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Montreal Gazette, 1 January 1877.

<sup>48</sup> Ayer, "Strike," p. 119.

Joseph Hickson appealed to Prime Minister Mackenzie to intervene and declare a state of general emergency. This would put the militia under central authority and obviate the ineffective appeals to local authorities. But Mackenzie refused. The national emergency required by law for this move did not exist, he declared. Further appeals by Hickson only increased the stubbornness of the inflexible Mackenzie.<sup>49</sup>

The extensive public sympathy for the strikers was reflected in the failure of the company to get enough replacement engineers and firemen. Although the Brotherhood bought off some potential strikebreakers with cash, many others were intimidated by the threat of mob violence. But this was not all. A Montreal newspaper commented that "the strangest part in this affair is that nearly all the men recently put on to take the place of those discharged, have been amongst the first to strike."<sup>50</sup> The Grand Trunk was now paying for its general unpopularity in the past — for the public complaints about high freight rates and poor service,<sup>51</sup> for the involvement in the partisan politics of the time and the subsequent charges of corruption.

On Wednesday, 2 January, Hickson capitulated. A few special trains were running between isolated communities, but the main

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 123; Dale C. Thomson, Alexander Mackenzie, Clear Grit (Toronto, 1960), pp. 293-294; Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power; The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order, 1867-1914," Canadian Historical Review, LI, 410-412.

<sup>50</sup> Ayer, "Strike," p. 73.

<sup>51</sup> Currie, Grand Trunk, pp. 125-126.

line was still blocked. Losses to the company were estimated at some £12,000.<sup>52</sup> Hickson agreed to reduce the number of classes of firemen and engineers, to take back strike-breakers not guilty of acts of violence, and to institute small increases in wages. The grievance committee, now aided by Grand Chief Arthur, agreed on their part to accept a twenty percent reduction in operating staff — subject, of course, to the application of the seniority rule for the discharge of surplus staff. Ironically, the termination of the strike made this concession meaningless (for the time being) because of the backlog of business built up during the strike.<sup>53</sup>

The strike was clearly a victory for the strikers. Arthur declared that "the men are now perfectly satisfied with the arrangement that has been made."<sup>54</sup> Hickson, on his part, was very bitter, and looked for, and found someone to blame: Prime Minister Mackenzie for refusing to authorize military force. Hickson wrote the Prime Minister:

The terms which have been made with the men I do not consider by any means satisfactory, and law and order, and that discipline necessary amongst the staff of a great railway company, in order to secure the maximum of safety to the public using the railway, have received a rude shock by the proceedings of the last few days for which I may be pardoned saying, it seems to me the Government of the country is responsible.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Ayer, "Strike," p. 100.

<sup>53</sup> Toronto Mail, 8 January 1877.

<sup>54</sup> Toronto Globe, 6 January 1877.

<sup>55</sup> Canada Sessional Papers, 1877, No. 55, p. 30. See also Thomson, Mackenzie, p. 294; Morton, "Civil Power," p. 41f.



Hickson may well have been right. Had the government intervened with sufficient military force, the trains might have been got running again, and the strike might have been broken. That this was a viable tactic was soon to be seen, in the railroad strikes in the U.S. that summer. But the cost of this tactic, in terms of human blood and property damage, also became clear at the same time. Meanwhile, however, the BLE was victorious in its first contest with Canadian management, and (thanks to the Canadian government) had proven the worth of international unionism to Canadian railroaders. The lesson was not lost upon Canadian firemen.

#### The First Firemen's Organization

The first international union for locomotive firemen had its beginnings ten years earlier, in 1866, probably as a consequence of the transformation of the Brotherhood of the Footboard into the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in 1864. Early records for nineteenth-century labour organizations are notoriously incomplete, hence there is no way of determining just how many locomotive firemen were expelled from the BLE in the reorganization of 1864. It is clear, however, that some firemen retained an interest in belonging to a labour organization.<sup>56</sup>

On 20 April 1866 a Locomotive Firemen's Union was formed in Jersey City, New Jersey.<sup>57</sup> By September of 1867, it claimed thirty subordinate unions.<sup>58</sup> Relations between the BLE and the Union were

<sup>56</sup> Fincher's Trades Review (Philadelphia), 21 October 1865.

<sup>57</sup> Engineers' Journal, July 1867, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., September 1867, p. 30.

friendly from the beginning, and it is quite probable that the BLE, or some of its subordinate divisions, played an active role in the Union's formation.<sup>59</sup> By 1874, the Union had become the International Union of Locomotive Firemen (IULF), with headquarters in Schenectady, New York, and had declared its intention to organize subordinate unions in Canada.<sup>60</sup> By 1877, however, it appears that only one Canadian subordinate union had been formed, at Stratford, Ontario.<sup>61</sup>

Solid data concerning the development and growth of the IULF is scanty. It published a *Firemen's Journal*, although no copies seem to have survived. Moreover, at some point in its history it was "prosperous", with over eighty subordinate divisions scattered across the U.S. from Baltimore, Maryland to Oakland, California, and from Chicago to Virginia.<sup>62</sup> In the seventies, however, it began to decline in strength and its *Journal* appeared irregularly.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps the depression which began in 1873 was partly responsible for this decline, a decline which took it down to fewer than fifty subordinate unions by the mid-seventies, contrasting badly with the 189 divisions in the BLE.<sup>64</sup> But there were reasons other than the onset of the 'great depression' for

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1868, p. 28.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1874, p. 484.

<sup>61</sup> Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine, April 1877, p. 139. (Hereafter cited as Firemen's Magazine.)

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1878, p. 367.

<sup>63</sup> Engineers' Journal, May 1876, p. 222.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1876, p. 501; Firemen's Magazine, April 1877, p. 139.

this decline. First, there were weaknesses within the Union itself. The insurance and other beneficial features of the order apparently did not entirely meet the needs of firemen, who probably contrasted them with the benefits received by BLE members.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, there appears to have been a lack of adequate leadership, since the Union's president in the seventies, Henry Hoppman, was not himself a fireman, but an engineer.<sup>66</sup>

But the IULF might have continued to straggle along peacefully for some years, given the friendship and support of the BLE. Peace, however, is rarely granted to a labour organization, and the IULF was no exception. In 1873, a second firemen's organization appeared, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen (BLF), and it soon began to take over the IULF, branch by branch.

The BLF was founded on 1 December 1873, at Port Jervis, New York, by eleven firemen on the Erie Railroad; as a mutual benefit association. The founders realized that such an association had little chance of success without a large membership, and immediately began to solicit members elsewhere in the eastern United States. Growth was slow, probably because of the depression, and only twelve subordinate lodges were organized in the first year of operation.<sup>67</sup> Yet, while slow,

<sup>65</sup> Firemen's Magazine, May 1878, pp. 179-180.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., March 1877, p. 120.

<sup>67</sup> "Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen; A Brief Narrative Telling the Story of the Founding of the Institution and a Brief Historical Outline of its Growth and Development Into a Mighty Influence for the Elevation of Mankind," Ibid., December 1923, p. 259. (Hereafter cited as BLF "Celebration," 1923.)

expansion was steady for the first several years: there were thirty-one lodges in 1875, fifty in 1876, and sixty in early 1877.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the Brotherhood was making steady inroads upon the membership of the rival IULF. In early 1877, the *Firemen's Magazine* boasted that the Brotherhood had absorbed thirty-six IULF local unions, including Union Number One in New Jersey.<sup>69</sup>

The first annual convention of the new Brotherhood in 1874 devoted most of its time to establishing an insurance association and to making provision in the constitution for sickness and funeral benefits. The minimum amount for the former was limited to fifty cents a week and the latter to twenty-five dollars.<sup>70</sup> It was not until the 1875 convention that machinery was set up to handle labour-management disagreements. A Grievance Committee was formed to act in conjunction with the Grand Lodge "to adjust any troubles that may take place between railroad companies and employes."<sup>71</sup> Despite this, however, the original emphasis upon insurance was retained. The annual convention resolved in 1876 that

our officers are competent and fully empowered to act for us as a body, and do not approve of strikes except where all other means have failed. We, as a Brotherhood, are not organized for the purpose of strikes, but as a benevolent order.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 259-261.

<sup>69</sup> *Firemen's Magazine*, January 1877, p. 52; April 1877, p. 139.

<sup>70</sup> *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, Proceedings of the Annual Convention*, 1874, p. 8. (Hereafter cited as *BLF Proceedings*.)

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 1875, p. 8; *BLF "Celebration"*, 1923, pp. 259-260.

<sup>72</sup> *BLF Proceedings*, 1876, p. 3.

It was ironic, therefore, that it was a strike the same year — the BLE strike on the Grand Trunk — which was the direct cause of the expansion of the BLF into Canada.

The Expansion of the BLF into Canada

Canadian firemen had "heard considerable" about the BLF before the strike, but the BLE's victory convinced them of the positive advantages of organization.<sup>73</sup> Firemen at various points in southern Ontario got in touch with the BLF Grand Lodge in early 1877, and in March, Grand Secretary and Treasurer W.N. Sayre made an organizing tour of the province. Brockville firemen were organized first, as "Island City" Lodge Number 65, on 11 March 1877, with twenty charter members. A few days later, lodges were organized at Belleville and Toronto. Organization of Canadian firemen was completed as far as Sayre was concerned on 18 March, with the formation of Lodge Number 69 at Port Huron, Michigan.<sup>74</sup> The April edition of the *Magazine* recorded proudly:

Our brothers will be pleased to learn that we have now added to our list some four new Lodges — three of them in Canada and the fourth one across the river, at St. Clair, in Michigan, yet it composes the firemen of the G.T.R.R. between Sarman [Sarnia] and Stratford. This now gives us the G.T.R.R. from Detroit, Michigan to Montreal, Canada with Lodges at Detroit, Port Huron, Toronto, Bellville [sic] and Brockville.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup>"Canada's First Lodge," Firemen's Magazine, September 1898, pp. 332-333.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.; Firemen's Magazine, April 1877, pp. 155-156.

<sup>75</sup>Firemen's Magazine, April 1877, p. 139.

Ignored in Sayre's organizing campaign was the railroad centre of Stratford, Ontario. This was the location of the only IULF subordinate union in Canada. Sayre hoped that it could be persuaded to switch allegiance to the BLF,<sup>76</sup> but in any case there was little to worry about: it was completely boxed in by the new BLF lodges. It seems to have disappeared without a trace shortly thereafter, possibly as a consequence of the great strike which erupted in mid-July of 1877.

#### The Great Strike of 1877 and Canada

The 'railroad war' which began on the Baltimore and Ohio railway in mid-July 1877 involved the largest number of people of any North American labour conflict in the nineteenth century, caused at least ten million dollars damage, and killed hundreds of people. The only major railway line in the eastern U.S. not to be damaged extensively was the New York Central, and then only because the shrewd and undogmatic William Vanderbilt, president of the line, gave in early to the strikers' demands. The conflict was much more than just a strike in much of the territory involved. Although a newly-formed, all-inclusive 'Trainmen's Union' was involved in the strike, it had not initiated the walkout. The outbreak began almost spontaneously in response to the latest in a series of wage cuts on various railroads which totalled as much as thirty-five percent over the preceding three years. It spread rapidly over the eastern lines, drawing in the discontented and unemployed in large numbers. It was only put down after the extensive use of local

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

militia and federal troops.<sup>77</sup> The strike on the Grand Trunk, with its threat of both civil and military violence, thus had clearly foreshadowed much of what had happened in the U.S. in the summer of 1877.

Canadian railways experienced none of the violence that occurred south of the border during the great strike. Three Canadian railways and their employees, however, were involved in the difficulties in one way or another, and one of these railways, the Canada Southern, was strike-bound for six days.

Lying at the heart of the difficulties in Canada — as in the United States — were general reductions of wages. With the example of American railwaymen before them in late July, Canadian railway employees pressed their employers hard for the rescinding of these reductions. The Grand Trunk proved the most willing to make concessions to its employees. Joseph Hickson undertook extended negotiations with an employees' committee and (having learned perhaps from the lesson of December) achieved a small, but real victory for the company: the Grand Trunk employees agreed to a slight reduction of wages in accordance with the January agreement.<sup>78</sup> Things went somewhat less smoothly on the Great Western, and a strike was freely hinted at.<sup>79</sup> On 26 July, however, an agreement was reached. The men accepted a reduction of wages, but this was to be in effect for only three months, instead of the six

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<sup>77</sup> Joseph G. Rayback, A History of American Labor (New York, 1966), pp. 134-135; Robert V. Bruce, 1877: Year of Violence (Chicago, 1970), *passim*.

<sup>78</sup> Toronto Globe, 25 July 1877.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 23 July 1877; London Free Press, 23 July 1877.

months originally announced.<sup>80</sup> One can only guess at the pressures applied to the company by businessmen and civic leaders who were reading of the violence in the U.S., and who were mindful of the strike on the Canada Southern which had just begun.<sup>81</sup> A report from London, Ontario at the close of the strike stated that "a great sense of relief was felt in the city.... All concur in praising the moderation of the men as well as the pacific spirit exhibited by the heads of departments."<sup>82</sup>

On 24 July, however, firemen, switchmen and brakemen on the Canada Southern lines in Michigan had gone out on strike. The strike soon became general from Toledo, Ohio, through southern Ontario, to Buffalo, New York. The strike centre in Canada was St. Thomas, Ontario, and the strike committee there issued to the press a statement of the strikers' demands: the end of the ten percent reduction; the reinstatement of strikers; the payment of back pay presently owing; and regular payment on the fifteenth of each month. Until these demands were met, the statement concluded, only mail trains would go through.<sup>83</sup>

This was on Wednesday, 25 July, the day when the strike in the U.S. was at its climax: on this day, perhaps two-thirds of the 75,000 miles of track in the United States were directly affected by

<sup>80</sup> London Free Press, 23 July 1877.

<sup>81</sup> For example, the London Advertiser, which had close connections with David Mills, federal Minister of the Interior, repeatedly called upon the company to concede the justice of its employees' demands and effect a compromise. Advertiser, 21, 23, 24 July 1877.

<sup>82</sup> Toronto Globe, 26 July 1877.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 25 July, 1877; London Free Press, 25 July 1877.



the strike.<sup>84</sup> But that night the strike on the Erie ended with a negotiated settlement which gave little to the strikers.<sup>85</sup> On the twenty-seventh, the Mid-West was pacified, with the arrival of federal troops.<sup>86</sup> The Canada Southern strikers clearly had bet on a dying horse.

On 26 July, CSR president Tillinghast decided to wait upon these developments in the U.S., and ordered all operations on the Canada Southern to be suspended "until the roads east and west of us are open for business."<sup>87</sup> By the twenty-seventh this stipulation was being met, and traffic resumed on the Detroit and Toledo divisions.<sup>88</sup> By the twenty-eighth, traffic resumed on the Niagara branch. The strike was rapidly coming to an end. Moreover, the strike had proved to be anything but general in any case. The engineers had not gone out, and had declared themselves willing to resume running again as soon as the brakemen and firemen would agree.<sup>89</sup> At 5 p.m. on the twenty-eighth, the strikers went back to work. The strike was clearly a failure, the only concession wrung from management being a promise "to adjust all grievances within a fortnight."<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Bruce, 1877, p. 271.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 289-290.

<sup>87</sup> Toronto Globe, 27 July 1877.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 28 July 1877.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 30 July 1877.

Yet it had obviously been a time of great tension for the CSR management. What if the men went on the rampage as in the States? In his relief, President Tillinghast was prepared to be magnanimous and forgiving. He "most heartily" thanked the men for returning to work and promised to "overlook the past...."<sup>91</sup>

#### The Consequences of the Great Strike for the Railway Brotherhoods

As far as the BLE and the BLF were concerned, the primary consequence of the great strike of 1877 was to weaken them severely. There was a tendency on the part of railway management in the U.S. to link together the Trainmen's Union and the BLE, and to condemn both, as frightened and hostile officials attempted to destroy all labour organizations among their employees.<sup>92</sup> In addition, the numerous assessments upon the membership to support the various strikes in which the BLE engaged at this time caused many engineers to default their dues or renounce their membership. The BLE had simply become too costly for much of its membership to afford. Membership dropped severely, and it appeared for a time that the Brotherhood might disappear entirely.<sup>93</sup>

Richardson has suggested why it did not do so:

Undoubtedly, the conservative policy of the engineers, their strategic position in their industry, and their nationally established insurance and benefit system explains the survival. ... trade unions of the 1870's were peculiarly unfit to weather the stress of unemployment and wage

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<sup>91</sup> ibid.

<sup>92</sup> London Advertiser, 21 July 1877.

<sup>93</sup> Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, pp. 179, 184-185.

reductions because of the lack of national benefit systems to hold their membership together and the tendency of their leaders to forsake the labor movement for politics during periods of depression. In contrast, the Brotherhood made its insurance and benefit system a prime function and remained clear of politics.<sup>94</sup>

The BLE's Canadian operations, moreover, were only slightly affected by the events of 1877. Membership fell off somewhat, but probably not below the level of 1875, and no divisions were lost. In the spring of 1879, Grand Chief Arthur visited Canada. He reported in the *Engineer's Journal* that the London and St. Thomas divisions had lost a few members since 1876, primarily as a result of high strike assessments. But he noted that the London division's meeting hall was still supplied by the company, which also paid its light and fuel costs. In Belleville, a Brotherhood banquet in his honour was attended by the mayor and other civic officials. Interest was being expressed in the formation of a division in Sarnia.<sup>95</sup>

The smaller and weaker BLF was hit harder by the 1877 crisis than the more firmly established BLE. Many firemen had joined the Trainmen's Union and had become involved in the troubles, thereby implicating the BLF in the difficulties. In an Indianapolis court, for example, W.N. Sayre, Grand Secretary and Treasurer of the BLF, was placed on a \$5,000 bond of good behaviour merely because he had shown undue sympathy to the strikers.<sup>96</sup> The victory of law and order over the railway workers meant that many firemen were required to renounce

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>95</sup> *Engineers' Journal*, August 1879, pp. 366-369.

<sup>96</sup> BLF "Celebration," 1923, p. 261.

their membership in the BLF to retain their employment. For the first time, the BLF suffered a reduction in membership and in the number of local branches. In addition, some of the branches which remained were merely 'on the books', being delinquent for non-payment of assessments.

Moreover, in contrast with the BLE, the BLF's difficulties in the U.S. in 1877 seriously affected its Canadian operations. The lodge in Brockville folded in the autumn of 1877, as a consequence of loss of membership and the inability to retain capable leadership.<sup>97</sup> Its charter was finally revoked in 1879, and by this time the lodge in Belleville was also dormant. The BLF now had only one lodge in working condition in Canada, at Toronto.<sup>98</sup> The newly-formed Canadian lodges had apparently not had time to take independent root before the crisis, and collapsed when the Grand Lodge's exclusive attention had to be given to events in the United States. Moreover, the Grand Lodge was in no position to alter this state of affairs later in the seventies, precariously balanced as it was on the brink of bankruptcy and dissolution.

What of the IULF? It seems likely that it was more badly hurt than the BLF by the 1877 conflict. It has been suggested, indeed, that the strike of 1877 brought the already weakened IULF to the verge of disintegration.<sup>99</sup> Even at the beginning of 1877, before

<sup>97</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1878, pp. 8, 21.

<sup>98</sup> "Interesting Items of Brotherhood History in Canada," Firemen's Magazine, January 1924, p. 24.

<sup>99</sup> "The First Firemen's Organization," Firemen's Magazine, March 1923, p. 112.

the strikes, the *Firemen's Magazine* claimed that the BLF had already taken over thirty-six IULF unions.<sup>100</sup>

The strike intensified the rivalry between the two organizations, since the necessity of regaining lost ground after the strike made it even more essential for the BLF to complete its absorption of the IULF. This was finally accomplished in October 1878 when the remaining twelve IULF unions were accepted into the BLF *en masse* as BLF lodges. The terms of affiliation were generous: IULF unions were accepted into the Brotherhood with no prejudice and at no charge. Despite this, however, the 'consolidation' was scarcely a meeting of equals: Henry Hoppman, president of the IULF, received no office in the BLF.<sup>101</sup>

#### The Brotherhoods at the End of the Depression of the Seventies

But for the great strikes of 1877, the BLE and BLF might have weathered the depression of the seventies with little difficulty. Indeed, the memberships of both organizations had been growing slowly but steadily before 1877 — the BLE at a rate of about eight percent per year, the BLF perhaps more rapidly, although from a smaller base. The crisis of 1877 served to bring this growth to a halt, and put the brotherhoods on the defensive. It did not, however, destroy them. The depression (of which the events of 1877 were an integral part) thus demonstrated the basic vitality of the brotherhoods, in contrast with the majority of North American labour unions: in 1873 there were

<sup>100</sup> *Firemen's Magazine*, January 1877, p. 53; April 1877, p. 139.

<sup>101</sup> "The First Firemen's Organization," *Firemen's Magazine*, March 1923, pp. 112-114.

approximately thirty national or international trade unions in existence in North America; by 1878 there were less than ten.<sup>102</sup> Many of those unions which survived, moreover, saw their membership cut by one-half or more. Judged by these stringent standards, the BLE and BLF emerged from the depression in 1878 in reasonably good condition.

The BLE in 1878, indeed, required only the return of prosperity to resume its former growth. It had a vigorous new leader in Peter M. Arthur, and the depression had probably pruned out dead wood. The BLF, however, required further surgery. The grafting on of the IULF in 1878 had not solved the twin problems of management hostility and financial insolvency. In 1879, the Grand Lodge convention resolved "that this order of Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen ignore strikes, and that we hereafter settle our grievances with our employers by arbitration."<sup>103</sup> By this act, the BLF therefore became primarily a mutual benefit society, hoping thereby to earn the goodwill of management.<sup>104</sup> A solution was found for the Brotherhood's financial difficulties a year later when Grand Secretary and Treasurer W.N. Sayre was removed from office for "conduct unbecoming an officer" and was replaced by Eugene V. Debs, whose sound business sense and enthusiasm

<sup>102</sup>Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 34.

<sup>103</sup>BLF, "Celebration," 1923, p. 262.

<sup>104</sup>This policy may have succeeded. See Ray Ginger, Eugene V. Debs: A Biography (New York, 1966), p. 48.

soon made their mark.<sup>105</sup> Within a year, the order was out of debt for the first time in its history.<sup>106</sup>

By 1880, therefore, both Brotherhoods were well equipped to take advantage of the favourable climate of the eighties. Moreover, they were in a good position to strengthen and extend their Canadian operations.

<sup>105</sup> BLF "Celebration," 1923, p. 263.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### THE 1880'S AND THE AMERICANIZATION OF THE RUNNING TRADES IN CANADA: ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

The 1880's in North America saw an expansion of the labour movement which can only be described as phenomenal, both in terms of increased membership for established unions and in the number of newly-founded labour organizations.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, this expansion, and the competition for members which went with it, intensified the old rivalry between reform unionism and 'pure-and-simple' trades unionism, giving birth to a confused and bitter struggle between the reforming Knights of Labor and the exclusively trades unionist AFofL of Samuel Gompers.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, by 1896, the AFofL triumphed, and reform unionism of the Knights of Labor variety was forced to the fringes of the labour movement.<sup>3</sup>

Having become the dominant force in the American labour movement, the AFofL began to look outwards, into Canada, and in a few years had established its dominance over the Canadian labour movement.

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<sup>1</sup>Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38; Robert H. Zieger, "Workers and Scholars: Recent Trends in American Labor Historiography," Labor History, XIII (Spring, 1972), 253.

<sup>3</sup>Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 38.



and its central federation, the Trades and Labor Congress. In the process, states Robert H. Babcock in his pioneering study "The A.F. of L. in Canada, 1896-1908," the AFofL came to dictate "the structure and direction of the Canadian labor movement; and the Congress was confined to the status of an American state federation of labor."<sup>4</sup>

At the level of individual 'international' unions, however, the penetration of Canada had been going on apace since the 1850's and 1860's. The Iron Moulders and the Typographers spring to mind here as early examples. In the railway running trades, as we have seen, however, only the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers was strong enough to assert any real authority over the Canadian members of its trade before 1880, and even this authority was geographically restricted to central Canada.

It was the booming eighties which saw the final establishment of the hegemony of American 'international' unions over all Canadian workers in the running trades. In the process, these unions either nipped in the bud purely Canadian movements, or made their future development impossible. The railway brotherhoods' penetration of Canada in the eighties was thus similar to the AFofL's ten years later. The problems they faced were similar as well. These were straight-forward ones accompanying expansion into new territory: the establishment of satisfactory relationships with management and society in the new territory, and the absorption, or the elimination where necessary, of potential rivals. Since the BLE and BLF already had a base in Canada

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<sup>4</sup>Robert H. Babcock, "The A.F. of L. in Canada, 1896-1908: A Study in American Labor Imperialism" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1969), p. iv.

at the beginning of the decade, this chapter will examine the way in which these two organizations dealt with problems of expansion within the Dominion.

#### Growth in Canada of the BLE and BLF in the Eighties

The organization of new Canadian subordinate divisions of the BLE in the eighties had two aims: first, to gain a foothold for the Brotherhood in sections of the country previously unorganized; and second, to provide additional divisions to accommodate growth of membership. The first aim was achieved in the Maritimes and on the Prairies by the end of 1882. The last of the major unorganized regions of Canada, the Pacific Coast, became Brotherhood territory when Division Number 320 was established in August 1886 at Kamloops, British Columbia.<sup>5</sup> The Brotherhood, moreover, had no difficulty adding new divisions during the decade when they were warranted by an increase in membership.

There was nothing particularly systematic about this process of expansion, which appears to have been dictated almost entirely by local circumstances. The first three divisions on the Intercolonial received their charters at almost the same time, in 1882. A fourth was added later the same year, and a fifth two years later. This ended divisional expansion on the Intercolonial Railway until after 1900. On the CPR, on the other hand, the division formed at Winnipeg in 1881 was the only one on that road until another was formed in 1884 at Fort William. Four more divisions were formed on the CPR in 1886, and two more in the nineties, in 1896 and 1897. The

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<sup>5</sup> Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, "Establishment dates of Canadian Divisions Etc."

difference in the expansion process on the two railroads, of course, reflected the fact that one was fully built by 1880, while the other was not completed until 1886. At the same time in the eighties, however, five new divisions were formed in southern Ontario and Quebec, for the most part on the Grand Trunk.<sup>6</sup>

The formation of new divisions slowed down considerably after 1886. Only one more division was formed in the eighties, in 1888 at Hochelaga, Quebec.<sup>7</sup> But the Brotherhood now extended from one end of Canada to the other, and had almost three times the number of subordinate divisions it had in 1880. Unfortunately, no precise data as to the number of Canadian members is available.<sup>8</sup> But it is probable that the growth of membership kept pace with the formation of new divisions. This being so, growth in Canada matched that in the U.S., with the Canadian membership maintaining itself at a fairly constant six or seven percent of the total membership during the 1880's.

If anything, the BLF's Canadian achievement was more impressive than the BLE's. Starting with one lodge in operating condition in 1879, the BLF had thirty Canadian lodges by 1890 — from perhaps forty Canadian members to over one thousand in a decade.<sup>9</sup> The first two years in the decade appear to have been devoted to

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> John F. Sytsma, General Secretary-Treasurer, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, letter to writer, 1 August 1972.

<sup>9</sup> Data drawn from BLF Proceedings, various years. See also Firemen's Magazine, September 1895, p. 821.

reestablishment and consolidation in central and eastern Canada. Eight lodges were organized or reorganized in Ontario and Quebec between 1880 and late 1882. The organization of the CPR was not begun until a lodge was formed in Winnipeg in 1882, and the Intercolonial Railway was not organized until 1885-84. By 1890, however, seven of the BLF's thirty lodges were located west of Chapleau, Ontario.<sup>10</sup>

Some Canadian membership figures are available for the BLE in the 1880's in Canada. In 1879, the Canadian membership made up only about one percent of the total, but by 1882, had reached about seven percent, a percentage which seems to have remained relatively constant for most of the eighties.<sup>11</sup>

The BLF was involved in no major disagreement with management in Canada in the eighties, probably because the Brotherhood's constitutional ban on strikes was not removed until 1886. The BLE's expansion east and west, however, was followed very quickly by 'difficulties': on the Intercolonial in the east, and on the CPR in the west.

#### A Political Solution on the Intercolonial

The difficulty on the ICR was the direct result of the attempt to organize it for the BLE.. The Chief Superintendent of the Government-owned railroad, acting in as anti-union a manner as any manager of a privately-owned corporation, tried to keep the Brotherhood off the road. This proved to be surprisingly easy (at first), indicating that most Intercolonial engineers were only mildly enthusiastic about

<sup>10</sup> BLF Proceedings, various years.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

the Brotherhood. Indeed, the attempt to organize the ICR probably owed more to the expansive ambitions of the BLE Grand Lodge than it did to dissatisfaction among the railroad's engineers with working conditions, wages, or the terms of employment in general on the Intercolonial in the year 1882. The engineers, after all, were the most fortunate of the railroad's employees.

Working conditions on the Intercolonial Railway in the early eighties were probably not much different from those on most other North American railways. The hours were long, and the work was hard and dangerous, but so had it always been, and so it was everywhere. Sir Charles Tupper, Minister of Railways and Canals, was making an effort to turn the railroad into a paying proposition by cutting corners on maintenance and thus increasing on-the-job dangers.<sup>12</sup> But the managers of privately-owned railways across North America did this quite frequently too.

Moreover, wages on the Intercolonial in the early eighties seem to have been comparable to rates being paid on adjacent railroads in North America. This was, of course, essential if the road was to retain enough experienced employees to maintain service. In July 1882, David Pottinger, Chief Superintendent of the ICR, wrote to Grand Trunk officials in Montreal to inquire about the rates the Grand Trunk paid on its Quebec lines to engineers, firemen, conductors and brakemen. On hearing that the Grand Trunk was paying higher wages than the ICR, Pottinger immediately increased the wages of the men in these four trades,

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<sup>12</sup>G.R. Stevens, Canadian National Railways (Toronto, 1960), II, 262; J.B. King, "Locomotive Engineers Celebrate Centenary," Atlantic Advocate, September 1963, p. 71.

effective 1 July.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the wages for engineers were increased even though these men had been exempted from a general reduction in wages made several years earlier.<sup>14</sup> The top rates paid now became \$2.75 a day for engineers, \$1.50 a day for firemen, \$2.00 for conductors, and \$1.35 for brakemen.<sup>15</sup> While direct comparison is difficult, these rates do not seem to be out of line for Canadian railroads in the eighties. Rates west of Ontario were definitely higher, as much as \$3.50 a day for engineers, for example, on the CPR in 1882.<sup>16</sup> But the ICR's wages seem not to have been much different from those in Ontario in these years.<sup>17</sup>

What made the real difference for both management and staff on the ICR was government ownership. Pottinger could expect continuous pressure from Maritime Members of Parliament who were well aware of the patronage possibilities of a government railroad. He must have frequently wondered how a railway could be run safely, let alone efficiently, if employees must be hired on the basis of their politics, not their skill. Fortunately for Pottinger, the most skilled of his employees were also the least subject to replacement on the whim of a

<sup>13</sup>Pottinger to W.J. Spicer, 31 August 1882, ICR Letter-books, vol. 215, pp. 779-780; Pottinger to Herbert Wallis, 31 August 1882, Ibid., pp. 1038-1039.

<sup>14</sup>Pottinger to J.H. Moore, 24 August 1882, Ibid., p. 789.

<sup>15</sup>Pottinger to W.J. Spicer, op. cit.; Pottinger to Herbert Wallis, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Manitoba Free Press, 12 December 1883.

<sup>17</sup>Ontario Bureau of Industries, Report, 1888, p. 78.

local politician: a local farmboy, could scarcely be expected to operate a locomotive or make up a train. It was difficult, however, to maintain normal standards of discipline and service when the staff's loyalty was to local politicians, not the company.<sup>18</sup>

Nor did the employees themselves necessarily like political interference either. The jobs of engineers and conductors might be relatively secure, but for the less-skilled it was a different matter. A fireman commented on this a few years later:

From an employe's standpoint there is nothing to gain from government control, no higher wages being paid, no greater enjoyment of personal liberty and above all no assurance that a situation will be permanent even should conduct be the most faultless, we have only to look at the number of employes that are discharged after each election if for no other reason than to make room for uncles, brothers and cousins of those who are now in power, to convince us that we would prefer to work for a private concern that runs its business upon business principles.<sup>19</sup>

The nature of politics, however, made it possible for Pottinger to indulge in that great luxury of nineteenth-century managers: paternalism. If the ICR's employees were in effect servants of the Crown (as some suggested),<sup>20</sup> then the Crown, through its agent Pottinger, could scarcely avoid the responsibility of making a cash contribution to their general welfare. Thus, in 1875 the ICR had established an excellent insurance scheme for its employees, and Pottinger was now in charge of

<sup>18</sup>Stevens, Canadian National Railways, I, 213-218.

<sup>19</sup>Firemen's Magazine, October 1897, p. 288.

<sup>20</sup>This was suggested as late as 1909 by E.M. Macdonald, M.P. for Pictou. Canadian Trades and Labor Congress, Proceedings, 1911, p. 57. See also Stevens; Canadian National Railways, I, 213-214.

it.<sup>21</sup> He apparently believed himself to be a good father to his men, and reacted with hurt misunderstanding when his engineers, who had "always been treated in the most kind and liberal manner" began to join a union in the summer of 1882.<sup>22</sup>

And, taking everything into consideration — wages, working conditions, job security — it would have been somewhat surprising if the élite of the Intercolonial's work force, its locomotive engineers, had a burning desire to belong to a labour organization. Yet, so long as management was silent, there was no reason for them not to join either, especially since the BLE could be represented, with some accuracy, as a secret fraternal society organized for mutual benefit, a type of association familiar to all in the 1880's. In early June 1882, Grand Chief Arthur "instructed" John Wilkinson, Chief Engineer of the Brotherhood's division in Richmond, Quebec, to go to Campbellton, New Brunswick, to organize a division there. A charter was issued on 22 June, and Wilkinson reported "no trouble."<sup>23</sup> As BLE membership grew on the ICR, to perhaps fifty or so,<sup>24</sup> two more divisions were chartered, at Truro and Moncton, the latter receiving its charter on 24 August.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Saint John Daily Sun, 21 November 1885.

<sup>22</sup> Pottinger to J.H. Moore, op. cit., p. 789.

<sup>23</sup> Engineers' Journal, September 1882, p. 454.

<sup>24</sup> Saint John Daily Sun, 30 August 1882.

<sup>25</sup> Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, "Establishment Dates of Canadian Divisions Etc."



It was on this day that the BLE's efforts finally became known to the press, the public and the Intercolonial's management.<sup>26</sup> David Pottinger reacted as though he had been stung, and prepared at once "to get rid of the Brotherhood."<sup>27</sup> A form was prepared for all engine drivers to sign renouncing the BLE, and the Mechanical Foreman at Campbellton, Joseph Moore, was instructed to dispense with the services of men who refused to sign it.<sup>28</sup> Spare engineers were despatched to every division point along the line to replace those who remained disloyal.<sup>29</sup> Pottinger explained his actions in a long letter to Moore, portions of which are worth quoting in full:

The drivers, both as a class and individually, have had no cause for complaint as they have always been treated in the most kind and liberal manner.... They can, therefore, have no reason for joining this organization, which has caused trouble wherever it has been started. If the men say that it is as a Benefit Society that they have joined it [*sic*], you may tell them that the Railway will be prepared to assist them in the formation of a Benefit Society which will be free from the objectionable features of the Locomotive Brotherhood, and by joining which the men will not subject themselves to the control of an irresponsible body situated in a foreign country. As you are aware the controlling power of the Locomotive Brotherhood is situated in the Western States.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Moncton Daily Times, 24 August 1882.

<sup>27</sup> Pottinger to Robert Carr Harris, 31 August 1882, ICR Letterbooks, vol. 215, p. 1041.

<sup>28</sup> Pottinger to J.H. Moore, op. cit., pp. 791-792.

<sup>29</sup> Pottinger to Robert Carr Harris, op. cit., p. 1042.

<sup>30</sup> Pottinger to J.H. Moore, op. cit., pp. 789-791.

Pottinger was clearly much alarmed, and therefore was very relieved when only a half dozen or so engineers chose to remain with the Brotherhood and were dismissed.<sup>31</sup> By Monday, 28 August, "The whole matter was ended..." and things were "now running smoothly as before."<sup>32</sup> On Wednesday, 30 August, he sent final instructions to the Mechanical Superintendent at Moncton:

... let me have a full report of the whole matter with your recommendations, as to who of those who joined the Brotherhood, shall be dismissed from the service, and who of those, who did not join the Brotherhood shall be promoted.

All those men who submitted cheerfully to the will of the Department must be encouraged and promoted, and those who opposed the Department must be punished according to the degree in which they offended.

The Firemen who have been promoted to be Engine drivers must be continued to be Engine drivers, because we must not make tools of them and use them as Engine drivers for our own convenience and afterwards, when the other men have been compelled to withdraw [from the BLE] push them back again into the subordinate position of fireman. Any of the Locomotive Firemen who have assisted us must also be remembered.<sup>33</sup>

All this time, Pottinger had been acting entirely on his own initiative, without instructions from Ottawa. This was to be expected, of course, under normal circumstances. The Department of Railways and Canals could scarcely ask to be consulted on the day-to-day matters of railway operation; and Pottinger had usually taken care of

<sup>31</sup>The Saint John Daily Sun, 30 August 1882, gave the figure as eight.

<sup>32</sup>Pottinger to Robert Carr Harris, op. cit., p. 1041.

<sup>33</sup>Pottinger to H.A. Whitney, 30 August 1882, ICR Letter-books, vol. 215, pp. 946-947.

hiring and firing whenever political patronage was not involved. Moreover, it is likely that he acted with the approval of much of the local elite in the Maritimes. For example, the *Moncton Daily Times*, conservative in politics, published a long editorial hostile to the BLE on 26 August, and the subsequent silence of the local Liberal press implied consent with such views. The *Daily Times* accused the Brotherhood of giving force and direction to monstrous strikes that paralyzed trade for the time being and in various ways caused great inconvenience and loss to the patrons of the railways, and cited as an example the strike on the Grand Trunk "a year or two ago...." It was to be hoped, the paper declared, that "the railway authorities can, by legitimate means, prevent the extension to this country of an organization that undoubtedly has been the active agent in causing mischief further west."<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately for Forthner, however, the dismissal of the Brotherhood engineers refused to remain a purely local affair, nor did the breaking of unions turn out to be part of his normal duties. On 29 August, the *Toronto Globe* revealed to its readers the "arbitrary dismissal of members of the Engineer's Brotherhood," and on 30 August made it quite clear that, with George Brown dead and Mackenzie in retirement, the Liberals intended to challenge the Conservatives' image as the only true friend of the workman. Said the *Globe* on the thirtieth:

It is somewhat late in the day for even a Tory Government to be running amuck against the Trades Unions. The action of the Government is incomprehensibly foolish and arbitrary. Every member of every Trades Union in the country will feel the

<sup>34</sup> *Moncton Daily Times*, 26 August 1882.

dismissal of these engineers to be a direct thrust at his organization. ... We are curious to know what excuse can be given for this interference with the Brotherhood short of a general disapproval of the existence of Trades' Unions.

Three days later the *Globe* attempted to make further political capital of the issue, identifying Sir Charles Tupper as the true villain of the piece, and quoting statements by "prominent members" of the BLE on the Grand Trunk and Great Western which were highly critical of the government.<sup>35</sup>

But Grand Chief Arthur and the Canadian leaders of the BLE were not about to be conscripted into the ranks of the Liberal Party so long as the real power lay with the Conservatives. Arthur contacted Conservative M.P. James Beaty, a former mayor of Toronto, whose sympathy to the BLE had been made clear in early August when he sat on a platform at a Toronto labour meeting addressed by Arthur.<sup>36</sup> On 15 September Beaty wrote the Department of Railways and Canals enclosing a letter from Arthur complaining of Pottinger's actions.<sup>37</sup> Sir Charles Tupper was, at this time, on vacation in England. Nonetheless, the political implications were not lost on the government, either in the person of John Henry Pope, Acting Minister, or John A. Macdonald himself. An inquiry, and probably instructions as well, were sent to the Chief Engineer of the government railways in Montreal, Collingwood Schreiner, who wired back several days later, "All engineers who have presented themselves

<sup>35</sup> *Toronto Globe*, 2 September 1882.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 August 1882.

<sup>37</sup> Department of Railways and Canals, *Registers*, vol. 55, p. 5055.

have been re-instated; one of them drove the engine of the train upon which I travelled yesterday."<sup>38</sup>

Despite Schreiber's claim, however, all was not well on the Intercolonial. On 27 September the Department acknowledged the receipt of a petition from some "members of the Brotherhood" asking for the reinstatement of Brotherhood men on the ICR,<sup>39</sup> and on 29 September, another letter of complaint was received from James Beaty.<sup>40</sup>

By this time, the Canadian leaders of the BLE had decided that the only permanent solution to the problem lay in a direct, personal appeal to the Cabinet. A seven-man delegation was appointed, consisting of officials from several divisions in Canada, including John Wilkinson, the man who had organized the Intercolonial divisions in the first place. The delegation was led by Robert Pearson, a Scottish-born engineer who, one story had it, had driven Canada's first locomotive, the Lady Elgin, and who had held office in the Grand Division several times since 1871. The delegation arrived in Ottawa on Saturday, 29 September, bearing a letter of introduction to Sir Charles Tupper from Sandford Fleming,<sup>41</sup> and almost immediately had a brief preliminary meeting with the Prime Minister. Sir John listened sympathetically to the delegation but refused to deal with the matter, which, he stated,

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 5769.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 5758.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 5760.

<sup>41</sup> Ottawa Daily Citizen, 4 October 1882.

was Tupper's responsibility. He advised them to wait until Sir Charles arrived from London, probably late on Sunday or Monday.<sup>42</sup> It was clear that Macdonald did his utmost to charm the visiting engineers at this meeting. Even the *Toronto Globe*, which headed its column on the meeting "Indignant Locomotive Engineers," was forced to admit that the men were confident after the meeting that their wishes would be granted.<sup>43</sup>

It was apparent that the government attached some importance to the visit. On Saturday, the delegation was given a special tour of the Parliament Buildings, the various departmental offices, the Dominion Observatory, and other Ottawa landmarks. They were assigned a reporter from the local government organ, the *Daily Citizen*, who listened to them with great respect and recounted their views in considerable detail. They were put up in one of the city's better hotels.<sup>44</sup>

On Monday, Sir John sent them a note making an appointment for them with Sir Charles Tupper for 10 a.m. the next day.<sup>45</sup> Pearson opened the discussion with Tupper by stating that the primary purpose of the visit was to find out why the Intercolonial engineers had been forbidden to join the Brotherhood. The BLE, Pearson, went on was mainly concerned with benevolent activities and with improving the

<sup>42</sup> Toronto Daily Mail, 6 October 1882.

<sup>43</sup> Toronto Globe, 30 September 1882.

<sup>44</sup> Ottawa Daily Citizen, 30 September 1882.

<sup>45</sup> Toronto Daily Mail, 6 October 1882.

character and the competence of its members. Strikes, he declared, were discouraged. Sir Charles had probably been carefully briefed already as to the purpose of the delegation, and as to the general line to be followed by the government, but he heard Pearson out. He then explained that he had known nothing of the decision to dismiss the Intercolonial engineers, being absent in England at the time. The subordinate officials of the road were the real culprits, he went on, but even they must be exonerated to some extent. They probably either misunderstood the real objects of the Brotherhood, or had these objects misrepresented to them. In any case, the wrong would be righted. The discharged men would be reinstated immediately to their former positions, and the ban on the Brotherhood would be lifted.<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, Sir Charles still had certain personal reservations about the BLE. He would have preferred, he told Pearson, that the engineers belonged to a purely Canadian organization. Another member of the delegation replied that

a purely Canadian association would fail to give many of the advantages which the Brotherhood bestowed. The insurance which could be paid would be only about \$500, whereas the members of the Brotherhood could secure \$3,000 for their families. Besides, the tendency in Canada was towards the fusion of all the railways into two great lines, and in case of a strike there would not be the same opportunities of getting employment as in the States, with their many railway companies.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Reports on the meeting differ slightly. See Ottawa Daily Citizen, 4 October 1882; Toronto Daily Mail, 6 October 1882; Toronto Globe, 4 October 1882.

<sup>47</sup> Toronto Daily Mail, 6 October 1882.

It is not recorded whether Sir Charles found this argument convincing.

Once again instructions went out from the Department to rehire the dismissed engineers. Pottinger, who by this time must have been thoroughly disgusted by the whole affair, wired back on 7 October: "Some of them are absent elsewhere. All who have returned were at once put to work. I will make further inquiries and let you know."<sup>48</sup> Even this did not terminate the affair, however. On 16 October, Robert Pearson wired Macdonald: "Intercolonial engineers not yet reinstated brotherhood convention meets on the eighteenth instant very important to be able to say all right please answer."<sup>49</sup> And once again an inquiry went out to Pottinger, who, somewhat wearily one assumes, merely confirmed his wire of the seventh.<sup>50</sup> The issue was finally settled. Pearson wrote Macdonald on the twentieth, thanking him and Sir Charles

for the interest you have taken in the matter and if there is anything in the future I can do for either of you please let me know and I will see if I possibly can. I may also state that I feel certain that the Brotherhood will never give you cause to rue the action you have taken.<sup>51</sup>

Macdonald thus had once again confirmed his reputation as the working-man's friend, and the *Globe* was reduced to muttering darkly about the

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<sup>48</sup>Department of Railways and Canals, Registers, vol. 55, p. 5769.

<sup>49</sup>Macdonald Papers, Pearson to Macdonald, 16 October 1882.

<sup>50</sup>Department of Railways and Canals, Registers, vol. 55, p. 5771.

<sup>51</sup>Macdonald Papers, Pearson to Macdonald, 20 October 1882.



"bold and tyrannical" ways of the unknown persons really responsible for the outrage.<sup>52</sup> The BLE on its part was given the opportunity to show that it could protect its Canadian members and, moreover, make their loyalty worthwhile: at the annual convention in October 1882, Arthur reviewed the ICR problem and told the delegates that "it is our duty to recompense our Brothers for the time lost, and it will be for you to determine the amount each one will receive."<sup>53</sup> Thus the only one to suffer in the end was Pottinger, but he had suffered before because of political interference, and was to suffer again.<sup>54</sup>

#### The 1883 Strike on the CPR

In contrast with its experience in the Maritime Provinces, the BLE encountered no opposition from management when it expanded into Western Canada. Division Number 76 in Winnipeg had twenty-five members when it was founded in August 1881; in early 1883 the number had risen to sixty-five and was still growing.<sup>55</sup> Successful negotiation with the CPR management had probably helped Division 76 to grow: in April 1882, the Brotherhood, with the assistance of Grand Chief Arthur, had negotiated a settlement with the company which granted an increase in wages to engineers and firemen. Certain features of this settlement, however, made it the central issue in a strike which erupted in December 1883.

<sup>52</sup>Toronto Globe, 5 October 1882.

<sup>53</sup>Engineers' Journal, November 1882, p. 565.

<sup>54</sup>Stevens, Canadian National Railways, I, 200-222.

<sup>55</sup>Engineers' Journal, April 1883, p. 191.

The agitation for higher wages had begun early in 1882. The engineers contended that, even though wages were high on the CPR in comparison with those elsewhere in Canada, so was the cost of living. Moreover, the current land boom in Winnipeg made adequate housing difficult to obtain at reasonable cost.<sup>56</sup> For some time, however, the CPR management remained unyielding. The company intended to revise its whole system of payment of train crews shortly, from an hourly to a mileage basis, and the engineers' demands may have been seen as an attempt to obstruct this changeover.<sup>57</sup> It seems likely too, in the light of subsequent events, that the engineers were somewhat less than diplomatic in presenting their demands. Finally, the executive of Division 76 sent an "urgent request" to Grand Chief Arthur for assistance in adjusting the dispute.<sup>58</sup> Arthur arrived in Winnipeg on 15 April and immediately began to discuss the problem with Superintendent J.M. Egan, Mechanical Superintendent Kenneth Blackwell, and the new General Manager (since November 1881), W.C. Van Horne.

Although Van Horne has recently been described as anti-labour, a man who "fought the labor unions...",<sup>59</sup> Arthur found him to be a man "gentlemanly in his manner" who "evinced a willingness to do all

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<sup>56</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 17 April 1882.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 19 April 1882.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 17, 19 April 1882; Engineers' Journal, May 1882, p. 234.

<sup>59</sup> Pierre Berton, The Last Spike: The Great Railway 1881-1885 (Toronto/Montreal, 1971), p. 84.

in his power to satisfy the men."<sup>60</sup> But, then, Van Horne was a man who respected strength and firmness, and the Scots-born Arthur had not survived for a decade as a labour leader without exhibiting these traits in good measure. Moreover, Van Horne was probably reasonably well-disposed towards BLE grand officers as a result of his experience on American railroads. In March 1873, for example, when he was General Superintendent of the St. Louis, Kansas City and Northern Railway, BLE Division 86 went on strike without consulting the then Grand Chief, Charles Wilson. Wilson suspended the Division's charter, and the members implicated in the strike were deprived of "the benefits and fellowship of the order" until the annual convention in November.<sup>61</sup>

In any case, what emerged from the negotiations between Van Horne and Arthur was a new schedule of wages which gave up to \$3.50 for a one hundred-mile working day to engineers, and up to \$1.85 for firemen. This schedule was to take effect on 21 April.<sup>62</sup> In addition, entirely on his own initiative and in an entirely separate document, Van Horne took note of the high living costs in the West, and instituted a cost of living bonus for all men in train service of \$12 per month for engineers and conductors and \$7 for firemen and brakemen. Some of the men in the shops may have received a bonus as well.<sup>63</sup> Van Horne was

<sup>60</sup> Engineers' Journal, May 1882, p. 235.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., April 1873, pp. 168-171.

<sup>62</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 12 December 1883.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 7, 12 December 1883.

careful to state that this bonus was to be temporary, since the high cost of living resulted from "various more or less temporary causes..."<sup>64</sup> Yet it is likely that many of the men came to regard it as a permanent and integral feature of the settlement reached between Arthur and the General Manager. Indeed, the bonuses probably made the settlement possible.<sup>65</sup>

The agreement was reached almost on the eve of the collapse of the Winnipeg land boom. A week or two later, Arthur might not have found Van Horne quite so willing to discuss matters "in a friendly spirit..."<sup>66</sup> The bubble's burst affected the fortunes of both Manitoba and the CPR; and left a depression in its wake which was as much psychological as financial. A general climate of social unrest was the result — on the farm, on the frontier, and in the workshops and trains of the CPR.<sup>67</sup>

Labour unrest on the CPR became open rebellion in late February 1883 when the company's machinists and boiler makers at its Winnipeg shops went on strike. The grievance which triggered off the strike was minor enough, a new method of checking time which required the men to check in on their own time, and which in some cases meant walking about a quarter of a mile to do so. The men simply requested

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 12 December 1883.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Engineers' Journal, May 1882, p. 234.

<sup>67</sup> Berton, Last Spike, p. 80.

that a check box be put in each shop. A letter to the *Manitoba Free Press* suggested more fundamental reasons for the strike, however: "The high-handed manner in which the C.P.R. officials rule over their employees" and frequent and "disagreeable" changes in working rules.<sup>68</sup> And a correspondent to the *Engineers' Monthly Journal* commented that "it seems the present management of the C.P.Ry. are bent on dogging and quarrelling with their employes...."<sup>69</sup> As the strike dragged on, the Winnipeg men were joined by the boiler makers in the St. Paul, Minnesota, shops of the Manitoba Railway, who refused to repair locomotives which had been sent down from Winnipeg because of the strike.<sup>70</sup> After three weeks without wages, however, the men had had enough, and went back to work on the understanding that "the check system should be made convenient as soon as possible."<sup>71</sup> The correspondent to the *Engineers' Journal* judged that the strike had been lost, and that the men had gained nothing.<sup>72</sup>

In December it was the turn of the engineers. Early in the month, General Superintendent Egan announced that the head office in Montreal had decided upon a general policy of retrenchment. Salaries would be reduced for a few employees and some men would be "let go."

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<sup>68</sup> *Manitoba Free Press*, 23 February 1883.

<sup>69</sup> *Engineers' Journal*, April 1883, p. 191.

<sup>70</sup> *Manitoba Free Press*, 3 March 1883.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 March 1883.

<sup>72</sup> *Engineers' Journal*, April 1883, p. 191.

Moreover, and more significantly, the bonuses granted in April 1882 would be cut by one-half or more, depending on the job.<sup>73</sup> Egan explained that business was slack, and that "we are cutting our costs according to our cloth. In every one of the departments high salaries have been paid while the work of construction was going on, but since it has been stopped it has been found necessary to reduce them."<sup>74</sup> He might have added, however, had he wished, that the CPR was in the midst of a serious financial crisis, and was trying to get the federal government to bail it out.<sup>75</sup> The company had its back to the wall. It was a bad time to challenge General Manager Van Horne.

But, nonetheless, the CPR's engineers were in a mood to do just that. They probably shared the feelings of Westerners in general, a discontent begun by the collapse of the land boom, and heightened by a failure of the wheat crop and the belief that western Canada was being exploited by the East.<sup>76</sup> Many locomotive engineers had speculated in land during the boom, and had probably had their fingers burned when it collapsed.<sup>77</sup>

(In any case, the members of Division 76 met immediately to discuss the pay reduction, especially the cut in bonuses, and the

<sup>73</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 7 December 1883.

<sup>74</sup> Winnipeg Daily Times, 6 December 1883.

<sup>75</sup> Berton, Last Spike, pp. 250-251.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 254; Toronto Globe, 13 December 1883.

<sup>77</sup> Engineers' Journal, February 1882, p. 67.

next day sent a delegation to Egan with a new "schedule of wages wanted." The schedule's preamble accused the CPR of "breaking the contract made with the men" in 1882. It did not, however, ask for restoration of the bonuses, but instead demanded an increase in mileage rates, apparently to compensate for the loss in bonuses. Road engineers were to be paid \$4 per hundred miles or less a day with overtime of thirty-five cents for anything over twelve hours a day, and switch engineers were to receive \$110 a month with thirty cents an hour overtime.<sup>78</sup>

Egan took the position that the men were asking for an actual increase in wages, and told the delegation that it would be unfair to the men in other departments to grant the engineers a raise, while all other wages were being reduced. He explained, moreover, that the reduction of bonuses had been ordered by the General Manager in Montreal, and that he had not the authority to reverse it. He offered, however, to forward the schedule to Montreal. In answer to a question from a delegate, he replied that it might be ten days before a reply was received. The discussion became heated at this point. Another delegate told Egan that the company had twenty-four hours to make a reply, otherwise the management would have to deal with Grand Chief Arthur. Egan replied that since they wanted an immediate answer, the answer was no. There was no point in bringing Arthur into the dispute, he concluded, showing the delegation the door; the company "would only deal with the men in their employment."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 12 December 1883.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Anticipating trouble, Egan decided to meet it head on. He ordered Master Mechanic W.T. Reid to prepare an agreement for all the men to sign:

We hereby agree to accept employment from the Canadian Pacific Railway Company at the rate of wages offered by the company in our present capacities.<sup>80</sup>

Men refusing to sign could not return to work. The agreement was telegraphed to all division points along the road with instructions similar to those given to Reid.

The climax came on the morning of 11 December when the engineers and firemen appeared for work and were each handed the following notice, signed by Master Mechanic Reid:

Sir: -- I wish to inform you that the reduction which has taken place, namely, half the bonus disallowed, will be adhered to, and no concession made.

I therefore ask you to be kind enough to call at my office ~~at once~~, and say if you are satisfied with the present reduced rate. If not, time check will be issued.<sup>81</sup>

Reid further insisted that no engineer or fireman could take charge of an engine before signing the agreement. The men all along the line refused, and the consequence was a complete cessation of traffic.

Egan countered by ordering an immediate shutdown of the company's shops and roundhouses at all major points. The *Manitoba Free Press* estimated that 3,500 men would be put out of work by the combined

<sup>80</sup> Toronto Daily Mail, 12 December 1883.

<sup>81</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 12 December 1883.



strike and lockout.<sup>82</sup> Egan justified this complete shutdown by pointing out that the suspension of train service meant that there would be little work for the yard and maintenance staff, and, moreover, that it was necessary in order to protect company property. When he was asked if this did not mean unnecessary hardship for loyal employees, he placed the blame squarely on the striking engineers — selfish men who were making good wages in hard times and "who cared little for the fate of their fellow-employees...."<sup>83</sup>

The striking engineers cared little for such arguments and were resolved to stand firm. The strikers at Port Arthur wired the strike committee at Winnipeg:

Engineers here are indignant at Mr. J.M. Egan's action and can hold the fort until the grass grows green, and are satisfied with the Winnipeg Committee. Stick to the schedule presented and make no concessions....<sup>84</sup>

Once the strike had begun, the strikers at Winnipeg made public a list of grievances against the CPR. It was clear that the reduction in bonuses was merely the last straw. The list included failure to erect cheap housing which had been promised for married men; failure to provide adequate rest facilities for men out on the line, with the result that men were forced to sleep in their engines; the "exorbitant" cost of living at the end of the track from Medicine Hat to the Rockies; the refusal to issue passes for men on the line to visit

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<sup>82</sup> ibid.

<sup>83</sup> ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Winnipeg Daily Times, 13 December 1883.

Winnipeg; and, finally, a general dissatisfaction with the 1882 schedule, which had only received the "quasi-consent" of the men.<sup>85</sup>

On 12 December, Egan declared his intention to keep one train per day running between Winnipeg and St. Paul.<sup>86</sup> The CPR's managerial staff had already begun to operate trains, and on 11 December, Egan himself had acted as fireman on a train between Rat Portage and Winnipeg, with Reid as his engineer.<sup>87</sup> Egan announced that he was trying to get replacement engineers, and was in touch with retired engineers in Manitoba and with non-Brotherhood engineers in eastern Canada and the United States.<sup>88</sup>

The strike must be broken, he and Van Horne maintained, because it involved much more than just a question of wages: the real wishes of the leaders of the strike were to wrest control of the railroad's operations from management. The ultimatum, Egan declared, "was not the work of a day, but of months..."<sup>89</sup> To support his contention that wages were not the real issue, he made public the earnings of the members of the strike committee, which showed these men to be averaging from \$131 to \$190 per month. This was, Egan declared, "very good pay, in these hard times..."<sup>90</sup> The strikers were forced to admit that

<sup>85</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 12 December 1883.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 13 December 1883.

<sup>87</sup> Brandon Daily Mail, 12 December 1883.

<sup>88</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 13 December 1883.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 12 December 1883; see also Toronto Globe, 13 December 1883.

<sup>90</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 12 December 1883.

these figures were accurate, but cited the long hours and difficult working conditions necessary to earn these wages.<sup>91</sup> Egan, however, was partly correct. It was clear that the wage issue was merely the occasion for the strike, not its root cause, which was fundamental dissatisfaction with the company and with working conditions in general.<sup>92</sup> The BLE very rarely attracted radicals to its ranks. Nineteenth-century business managers like Van Horne and Egan, however, were only too willing to suspect unionists of plotting to destroy fundamental property rights.

On 12 December, Egan met two members of the Strike committee to no effect,<sup>93</sup> and there were now fears that the strike might "be maintained for almost any length of time" because of the wealth of the strikers' parent organization.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, on 13 December, Van Horne declared in Montreal that "no compromise will be made with the striking engineers as their services can be dispensed with without any inconvenience whatever."<sup>95</sup> Egan echoed this claim, although the fact that he was still operating an engine along with other CPR supervisors somewhat weakened his argument. Another meeting

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 13 December 1883.

<sup>92</sup> See Toronto Globe, 13 December 1883.

<sup>93</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 13 December 1883.

<sup>94</sup> Winnipeg Daily Times, 12 December 1883.

<sup>95</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 14 December 1883.

took place between the superintendent and the strikers on Friday the fourteenth, still with no result.<sup>96</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether the strikers at this point had much sympathy from the community at large. Certainly there was some sympathy, from those who felt that the men should not have been asked to sign the agreement accepting the bonus reduction until Grand Chief Arthur had been heard from.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, there were many in the West who had reason to dislike the CPR.<sup>98</sup> But the Winnipeg press generally was hostile to the strikers, who eventually accused the city's newspapers of "gross misrepresentation of the motives and actions of the Brotherhood."<sup>99</sup> On Sunday, 16 December, a representative of the city's clergy was heard from, when Reverend A.A. Cameron preached a sermon against the strikers in a Winnipeg Baptist church, taking as his text Nehemiah IV:15, "Everyone to his work." The engineers, he declared, had great powers and great responsibilities: "They were kings in a way; and the iron horse was their black throne." "Was it right," he asked, "that they should make the whole world suffer just because they desired an increase in wages?" And what would the consequences be, he wondered, "if God should cease working...?"<sup>100</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Winnipeg Daily Times, 14 December 1883.

<sup>98</sup> Toronto Globe, 13 December 1883.

<sup>99</sup> Winnipeg Daily Times, 21 December 1883.

<sup>100</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 17 December 1883.

But it was not the CPR nor public opinion which finally defeated the strikers, but Grand Chief P.M. Arthur. On Monday, 17 December, the Winnipeg press published the report of an interview with Arthur in Cleveland, Ohio, in which the Grand Chief commented on the strike:

... in so far as this office is concerned, no effort, whatever, has been made in behalf of the men, for the simple reason that the laws of the Brotherhood have not been complied with by them. ... Although I have received telegrams asking me to come to Winnipeg, and stating that everything had stopped, I have not received any detailed advices of their action, nor even of their grievances. The mistake is on the part of the men in becoming involved without consulting this office, and we disclaim any responsibility for their action. ... the Brotherhood has taken no action and will take none until it can proceed intelligently and in the proper way.<sup>101</sup>

Arthur's repudiation of the strikers was the turning point in the strike. The defeat of the strikers was now inevitable, since they now had no hope for financial aid from international headquarters. On Tuesday, 18 December, the company announced that the shops and round-houses would open the next day.<sup>102</sup> The machinists and shopworkers were reported to be jubilant.<sup>103</sup> By the twentieth, a number of engineers on the Eastern Division had returned to work "feeling that in the absence of a regular strike they are not justified in following further the lead of a few indiscreet leaders."<sup>104</sup> Egan was now clearly "master of the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 18 December 1883.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 20 December 1883.

field," as the *Winnipeg Times* reported.<sup>105</sup> Within the next few days, the remainder of the strikers returned to work, signing the agreement to accept the wage reduction.<sup>106</sup> By the twenty-seventh the CPR authorities could announce that, with the exception of a few of the leaders, all the men had accepted the company's conditions and had returned to their former positions.<sup>107</sup>

The Manitoba press breathed a sigh of relief that the province had escaped violence, and congratulated the CPR management on its "firm stand."<sup>108</sup> The strikers, on their part, received little sympathy from anyone, least of all Grand Chief Arthur. As Richardson has pointed out, one of the problems of the BLE in its early days — a problem shared by most national and international unions of the time — was "extending the national union authority over local groups, especially in the area of strike action."<sup>109</sup> Fortunately for the BLE, this problem had become less acute by the eighties. The CPR difficulty was "the only instance of the kind in seven years which we have experienced," Arthur pointed out to the Brotherhood's annual convention in 1884. He had done the only thing possible under the circumstances, he declared, then passed on to other, more important matters.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Winnipeg Daily Times, 19 December 1883.

<sup>106</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 24 December 1883.

<sup>107</sup> Brandon Daily Mail, 27 December 1883.

<sup>108</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 27 December 1883.

<sup>109</sup> Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, p. 129.

<sup>110</sup> Engineers' Journal, November 1884, p. 658.

At no point during the strike does it appear that the CPR management, the public, or the press made any attempt to condemn the strikers as pawns of a 'foreign' organization, the BLE, despite the fact that the strikers were disrupting a great national enterprise. Perhaps this was because the CPR had yet to assume this exalted status in the eyes of Canadians, especially western Canadians. Certainly the Americans W.C. Van Horne and J.M. Egan were in no position, as yet, to use patriotism as a weapon against the strikers. Van Horne's 'Chinese wall' opposition to all things American was to come later.<sup>111</sup> Not for him in 1883 were David Pottinger's fulminations against an "irresponsible body situated in a foreign country...."<sup>112</sup> For Van Horne, this sort of thing would come a decade later, when the CPR would face the combined strength of its conductors and trainmen, and lose.<sup>113</sup>

#### The Grand Trunk and the BLE and BLF in the Eighties

This activity in eastern and western Canada in the early eighties did not mean that the BLE was inactive in its old stronghold in Ontario and Quebec. In 1884 the GTR too was to feel the strength of the Brotherhood. The company had felt the Brotherhood's strength before, and the experience had been a chastening one. But now, in 1884, the company was faced with something it had not faced in 1876, the BLF, with members in ten lodges on its main line from Rivière du Loup to Point

<sup>111</sup> Berton, Last Spike, p. 97.

<sup>112</sup> Pottinger to J.H. Moore, op. cit., p. 791.

<sup>113</sup> See Railway Conductor, April 1892, p. 154.

Edward. Moreover, the company had already faced the organized firemen, in 1882, when it had granted increased wages to a BLF delegation.<sup>114</sup>

With the return of hard times in 1884 the company first reduced staff, and then proposed a ten percent reduction in wages for all of its employees.<sup>115</sup> There was talk of a general strike with the BLE leading it.<sup>116</sup> Neither the engineers nor the firemen, however, were in any mood for a strike, and the BLF, in any case, had not yet revoked the anti-strike clause in its constitution. Despite this, an Engineers' Grievance Committee opened negotiations with the Grand Trunk management, acting for both the company's engineers and firemen.<sup>117</sup> The consequence was an agreement for a five percent reduction for engineers and firemen to last for six months. A few days later, the company extended this agreement to the remainder of its employees, including members of the Order of Railway Conductors, which had also been pressing management for a smaller reduction.<sup>118</sup>

The reduction lasted, not for six months, but for two full years.<sup>119</sup> The members of the BLE and the BLF made no attempt,

<sup>114</sup> Firemen's Magazine, June 1882, p. 277.

<sup>115</sup> U.S. Consular Reports, 1885, p. 14.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Firemen's Magazine, July 1884, p. 426.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.; The Palladium of Labor (Hamilton, Ontario), 24 May 1884.

<sup>119</sup> Engineers' Journal, June 1886, p. 392.



apparently, to protest. Neither did the Order of Railway Conductors. The Brotherhoods certainly did not support a strike of Grand Trunk workmen at the company's Point St. Charles shop in Montreal against a further ten percent reduction in May 1885.<sup>120</sup> Many of these strikers probably were members, however, of the Knights of Labor, who were active in the Montreal region, and who formed a Local Assembly specifically for the Point St. Charles railway employees before the year was over.<sup>121</sup> It is not clear why the Brotherhoods were so acquiescent. It is possible, however, that they received little encouragement to act against the Grand Trunk Railway from the Grand Officers, who were usually sympathetic to the difficulties of railway companies during hard times. A restoration of the full wage scale in 1886 might be seen to have proven the wisdom of this policy.

The Grand Trunk, however, had not restored the wage cut to reward faithful service. Instead, as President Tyler explained, the company was motivated by an awareness of the growing strength of organized labour.<sup>122</sup> By 1886, the growth of the BLE and the BLF in Canada and the United States had made them two of the strongest labour organizations on the continent. Moreover, this new strength was accompanied by new confidence. In 1886 the BLF revoked the anti-strike clause in its constitution and once more became a protective labour organization.

<sup>120</sup> Palladium of Labor, 9 May 1885.

<sup>121</sup> Journal of United Labor (Washington, D.C.), 10 October 1885.

<sup>122</sup> Currie, Grand Trunk, pp. 344-345.

### Canadian Representation in the BLE and BLF

In the 1880's, the BLE continued the practice of the 1870's of giving token representation in its Grand Division to its Canadian membership, usually a secondary, unsalaried position such as Second Grand Engineer. This token recognition reflected the small size of the Canadian membership, about six percent of the whole, but it also reflected the fact that a 'Canadian' officer would have relatively little to do. By the eighteen-nineties, however, this situation began to change, as we shall see, as the necessity of influencing Canadian legislation pertaining to the welfare of railway employees became more apparent.<sup>123</sup>

Canadian representation in the BLF Grand Lodge was similarly nominal in the eighties, and also reflected the small Canadian membership, about seven percent of the whole, or about 1,300 members of about 18,600 in 1890.<sup>124</sup> The Canadian officer in the BLF Grand Lodge was an even more minor official than in the BLE Grand Division, usually either a member of the Board of Grand Trustees or the Executive Committee. Here again, however, a change would come at the turn of the century.

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<sup>123</sup>See Engineers' Journal, February 1892, p. 130.

<sup>124</sup>BLF Proceedings, 1890, p. 271.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AMERICANIZATION OF THE RUNNING TRADES IN CANADA: CONDUCTORS AND BRAKEMEN

The primary goal of the BLE and BLF in the eighties in Canada was to consolidate a bridgehead. American brotherhoods for conductors and brakemen, on the other hand, had the somewhat different task of entering Canada for the first time.

#### Organizing Canadian Conductors

Conductors on Canadian railroads seem to have formed their first association — a purely Canadian one — in the early 1870's. In October of 1873, the *Ontario Workman* of Toronto reported that the "Railroad Conductors' Life Insurance Association of the Dominion of Canada" had "been in existence for something over a year...."<sup>1</sup> The Association claimed members on six different railways, including the Grand Trunk and the Great Western.<sup>2</sup> The name of the organization and the scanty information that has survived suggest that at the beginning at least — it was almost purely fraternal and beneficial in nature, with no 'protective' features of any sort.<sup>3</sup> It continued to exist in

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<sup>1</sup>Ontario Workman (Toronto), 16 October 1873.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 21 August 1873.

<sup>3</sup>'Protective' features: features designed to protect union members in disputes with management, usually constitutional

some form until at least the time of the Grand Trunk strike in 1876-77. Moreover, it may have become more militant as time went on. The *Toronto Mail* reported during the Grand Trunk strike that

the Conductors of the road [the Grand Trunk] are said to be, as a body, in sympathy with the engineers. Their Union met on Saturday, it is stated, and passed resolutions declaring that they would not run with incompetent and inexperienced men.<sup>4</sup>

It is more than likely that the Conductors' Association either disappeared shortly thereafter, a victim of the depression, or lingered on to be absorbed in piecemeal fashion in the early eighties by the Order of Railway Conductors or the Conductors' and Brakemen's Benevolent Association of Canada (of which latter organization more will be said presently).

The eighties, for Canadian conductors, were characterized by the successful efforts of the Order of Railway Conductors (ORC), an American organization, to acquire exclusive jurisdiction over them. Although it did not enter Canada until 1880, the ORC was a product of the same business upsurge before 1873 which gave rise to the BLE and the Railroad Conductors' Life Insurance Association of Canada. It had its beginnings in 1868-1869, when a "Conductors' Brotherhood" was formed in the eastern U.S. as the result of the coalescence of several local

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provisions for handling grievances or 'adjusting' wages. A 'protective policy' was one which sanctioned strikes. As Grand Chief Conductor E. E. Clark said at the time of the CPR strike of 1892, "We propose to protect our members so long as we have anything to fight for or so long as we have anything to fight with...." Railway Conductors Monthly, April 1892, p. 152. Hereafter cited as Conductors' Monthly.

<sup>4</sup>Toronto Mail, 1 January 1877.

conductors' associations.<sup>5</sup> Early growth was slow and uncertain, with considerable fluctuation in membership, especially during the depression of 1873-78.<sup>6</sup> In 1879 the association still had less than one thousand members, and its total operating expenses for the year amounted to only \$958.56.<sup>6</sup>

The association showed little interest in international organization in its early years. While it is true that the original circular announcing the founding convention was addressed "To all the Railroad Conductors in the United States and the British Provinces,"<sup>7</sup> it was not until 1877 that the Brotherhood began to lift its eyes from its manifold problems in the U.S., changing its name to the "Conductors' Brotherhood of the United States and Canada."<sup>8</sup> The problem of survival before and during the depression was probably the major reason for the long delay in claiming international status, but perhaps a fear of conflict with the Canadian Association, or perhaps even a certain unimaginativeness, played their part as well.

In any case, the return of prosperity in the late seventies brought new life into the organization, or at least new hope. In 1878 it became "The Order of Railway Conductors,"<sup>9</sup> and in 1879 made

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<sup>5</sup>Robbins, Railway Conductors, pp. 15-16.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>8</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1877, pp. 233, 245.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1878, p. 292.

its first positive move in the direction of international status with the appointment of W.J. Jackman, a member of Buffalo, New York, Division No. 2, to the post of Special Deputy Chief Conductor "to visit Canada for the purpose of organizing a division at St. Thomas."<sup>10</sup>

The Order already had an advance guard in the Dominion. The names of some Canadian conductors were on the membership lists of American divisions at border-crossing points such as Detroit, Buffalo, and St. Albans, Vermont.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the continuous flow of railroaders back and forth across the international border in search of employment guaranteed that there would be ORC members in Canada at points more distant from the border.<sup>12</sup> One example was J.D. Alverson, living in London, Ontario, in 1880, who had been a member of the Grand Division in 1868 when he worked on the Union Pacific. Alverson was to become a charter member of London Division No. 16 of the ORC when it was organized in 1881.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless Special Deputy Jackman moved cautiously to complete his assignment. It was not until mid-August 1880 that he crossed the border to spend two days at St. Thomas, meeting with a

<sup>10</sup> ibid., 1880, p. 389.

<sup>11</sup> ibid., 1873, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> See John Crispo, International Unionism: A Study in Canadian-American Relations (Toronto, 1967), p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1868-1885, p. vi. In 1885 the ORC reprinted its Proceedings for the years 1868 to 1885 in a single volume, paged consecutively. It is that reprint which is cited here for the annual conventions of 1868-1885. The above reference is to the preface to the reprint.

number of conductors on the Great Western and the Canadian Southern rail-  
ways.<sup>14</sup> The Canadian conductors responded favourably and, on 1 October,  
Jackman formally chartered St. Thomas Division No. 13 with fifty-one  
members. He dedicated the new division "to the memory of the founders  
of this Order..., and in the name of the Grand Division of the Order  
of Railway Conductors."<sup>15</sup>

Canadian organization went ahead somewhat more rapidly  
after this, probably because of the efforts of a member of the St.  
Thomas division, Benjamin Arnum. Arnum organized five more divisions  
in central Canada in 1881.<sup>16</sup> By 1885 the *Railway Conductors' Monthly*  
listed eight Canadian divisions. This included No. 47, with head-  
quarters at Winnipeg, but with members scattered from Thunder Bay to  
the Rockies, covering a "vaster area" than any other division in the  
Order.<sup>17</sup> In 1890, there were eighteen Canadian Divisions.<sup>18</sup>

Yet the Order's tardiness in entering Canadian territory  
had indicated a certain lack of interest in international status, and  
this attitude was maintained during the eighties. For the most part,  
neither the officers of the Grand Division nor the Annual Convention

<sup>14</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1880, p. 387.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 1881, p. 431.

<sup>17</sup>Conductors' Monthly, January 1885, pp. 62-66, April  
1885, p. 205, March 1887, p. 153.

<sup>18</sup>United Transportation Union Collection, New York State  
School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Ithaca, New York, "Canadian  
Divisions; Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen," (n.d., n.p.,  
typescript).

paid much attention to Canadian affairs during this period. This is scarcely surprising, since the Canadian membership was a small percentage of the whole. Precise figures are lacking, but in 1884, for example, there were only seven Canadian divisions in a total of ninety-eight.<sup>19</sup> Even the fairly rapid expansion to eighteen Canadian divisions in 1890 was matched by an increase in the total size of the Order to over 250 divisions.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, almost from the beginning, in 1880, the Order found a place for Canadians, as such, among the officers of the Grand Division, although the post was usually a very minor one. Benjamin Arnum of St. Thomas, Ontario, for example, was elected Grand Inside Sentinel in October 1880; probably in recognition of his organizing role in Canada.<sup>21</sup> A Canadian might, of course, play a more active role and achieve higher office, but primarily because of his ability, not his nationality. Samuel H. Defries of Toronto, for example, was Assistant Grand Chief Conductor in 1883-84.<sup>22</sup> He displayed the unusual talents that gave him the post; however, when, in May 1884, he negotiated a satisfactory wage settlement with Joseph Hickson, for Grand Trunk conductors, despite the fact that the ORC, as a non-striking organization, had very little force with which to back its demands.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Conductors' Monthly, January 1884, pp. 53-55.

<sup>20</sup> "Canadian Divisions....," op. cit. See Appendix, Graph 5.

<sup>21</sup> ORC Proceedings 1868-1885, op. cit., p. viii.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. vi.

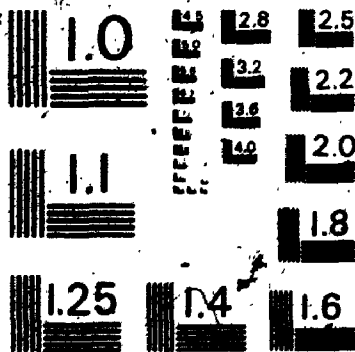
<sup>23</sup> Conductors' Monthly, May 1884, p. 241.



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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS - 1963-A

The ORC's expansion into Canada in 1880 did not mean that the Order automatically acquired jurisdiction over all North American railway conductors.<sup>24</sup> Rival railway unions posed annoying problems for the ORC during this decade, and had more than ordinary significance (in one instance) for the future of trade unionism in Canada. There were two reasons for the appearance of unions 'dual' to the ORC. The first was the Order's complete opposition to strikes until 1890, an opposition that went so far as to encourage members to act as strikebreakers during the lengthy engineers' and firemen's strike on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad in 1880.<sup>25</sup> The reasoning behind this policy was that it would build up such a large fund of goodwill and gratitude with management that concessions would be granted willingly. Some conductors, however, and especially the younger ones, believed this policy to be both impractical and dishonourable, and wanted to belong to a protective organization, one which would sanction strikes if necessary. The result was twofold: a running fight within the Order during the eighties over the inclusion of a 'strike clause' in the constitution; and the appearance, late in the eighties, of a rival conductors' union not opposed to strikes.<sup>26</sup>

This rival union was the *Brotherhood of Railway Conductors* (BRC), formed in 1888 by conductors in the American west and southwest who were dissatisfied with the anti-strike policy of the ORC.

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<sup>24</sup> On the origins of the doctrine of exclusive jurisdiction (and the related heresy of 'dual' unionism) see Lloyd Ulman, The Rise of the National Trade Union (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955), pp. 368, 404-05.

<sup>25</sup> Robbins, Railway Conductors, pp. 109-111.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

The resulting life-and-death struggle between the two organizations ended only when the ORC adopted a protective policy in 1890 and absorbed the BRC a year later.<sup>27</sup> As far as can be determined, the BRC organized no divisions in Canada,<sup>28</sup> despite the claim made by its Grand Chief in 1890 that the order "has fought its way into every state and territory in this country, and into Mexico and Canada as well..."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps, had the BRC retained its independence somewhat longer, this claim to international status might have become reality. But, as it was, the Brotherhood's chief importance for Canadian conductors was an indirect one — to influence strongly the policies of an international organization of which they were already members.

The second reason why dual unionism was a problem for the ORC in the eighties was its inability to formulate an adequate policy for dealing with the question of craft versus industrial unionism (one aspect of the contemporary struggle between the AFofL and the Knights of Labor). Grand Chief Conductor C.S. Wheaton was himself strongly opposed to industrial unionism, an opposition which derived from his belief that an industrial union, the Trainmen's Union, had caused the disastrous strike of 1877.<sup>30</sup> Yet, he was ordinarily unable to take a strong stand on the issue, because the theory of craft exclusiveness

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; Conductors' Monthly, November 1891, p. 560; Engineers' Journal, January 1889, p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> See Engineers' Journal, March 1890, p. 219, for a list of BRC divisions.

<sup>29</sup> Firemen's Magazine, November 1890, p. 989.

<sup>30</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1883, pp. 595-597.

was by no means universally accepted by railroad unionists. The BLF admitted engineers and hostlers into its ranks, and the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen encompassed a growing number of trades. It must be assumed that some members of the ORC Grand Division were equally uncertain as to whether an individual trades union must, necessarily, organize only one trade. Moreover, the Order's general membership might not have consented to such a stand, partly because the all-inclusive Knights of Labor was popular with many railroaders. Grand Chief Conductor Wheaton therefore confined himself to making hostile remarks about the Knights of Labor in the Order's journal, but made no attempt to prevent ORC conductors from becoming Knights.<sup>31</sup>

In 1882, however, Wheaton was faced with an attempt to form an association which ran counter to both the Order's constitutional ban on strikes and his own belief in craft exclusiveness. His reaction was predictable; what was unusual was that the attempt was made in Canada:

In the latter part of the year 1882, several members of Div 13, O.R.C. [St. Thomas, Ontario], talked up, with the other employes of the train service on the G.W. Div. of the G.T.R., the advisability and necessity of a society being organized in Canada, composed of all branches of such service. They, as originators and promoters of such a scheme, held meetings in their hall, to which all brakemen, engineers, firemen and switchmen were invited, resulting in a society being organized in the early part of 1883.<sup>32</sup>

Wheaton learned of this new rival, the United Trainmen's Association of Canada, in March 1883, and reacted immediately. He went to St. Thomas,

<sup>31</sup> Conductors' Monthly, April 1886, pp. 210-214.

<sup>32</sup> Engineers' Journal, August 1888, p. 704.

where he faced down the members of Division 13 in a special meeting, obtained the names of division members who were also members of the Trainmen's Association, and ordered them to withdraw from the Association immediately. If they failed or refused to do so, "he would supply the officials of the road with their names and have them all discharged."<sup>33</sup> This threat apparently put an end to the movement. Whether the threat had any real force is of course another matter.<sup>34</sup>

Wheaton outlined his objections to the Association in a circular to the Order's membership in March 1883. It was clear that he had in mind the Trainmen's Union of 1877, and the disastrous strikes of that year.<sup>35</sup> First, he challenged the contention that "the interests of trainmen can better be subserved by one organization." If the various brotherhoods, he asked, "take charge of and do their legitimate work — as they do — do you think that a promiscuous union could help us any?" More important, however, was the fact that the new Trainmen's Association did not forbid strikes, as did the ORC. Strikes, Wheaton maintained, were never successful, and infringed upon basic human rights and liberties.<sup>36</sup> Thus the successful establishment of a new Trainmen's Association which did not forbid strikes was "sure disaster." Wheaton

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Robbins, Railway Conductors, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1883, pp. 595-597.

<sup>36</sup> See Robbins, Railway Conductors, pp. 107-109.

concluded by imploring Canadian conductors to "weigh well the cost of your experiment before you enter it...."<sup>37</sup>

What should be made clear is that, while data on the United Trainmen's Association of Canada is skimpy, none of this data indicates, or even implies, that the Association was an outgrowth of anti-Americanism or of a dislike of international unionism. St. Thomas, with its rail connections with the United States, was (and still is) too dependent upon American commerce to enjoy the luxury of anti-Americanism. C.S. Wheaton, moreover, did not condemn the Association on these grounds, even though it was a threat to the international status of the Order. Nonetheless, the fact remains — an attempt was made to form a Canadian railwaymen's association, but policy formulated in the United States in response to American conditions guaranteed its failure.

#### Canadian Brakemen Become 'International'

The last of the running trades to be organized on a permanent basis in North America was the brakemen, in the 1880's. One or two abortive attempts had been made in the seventies to unionize this class of railway workers. In 1873 a 'Brakemen's Union of America' appeared briefly in Illinois then disappeared from sight, probably a victim of the depression.<sup>38</sup> In 1876-77 many brakemen were drawn into the Trainmen's Union. But the first firmly-established organization specifically for brakemen of which there is any record is the Brakemen's Benevolent Association of Canada, probably founded in the late seventies

<sup>37</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1883, p. 597.

<sup>38</sup>Ontario Workman, 1 January 1874.

or early eighties. This organization was unusual in one respect: a Canadian union; by 1883, it had begun to expand into the United States, and had thus become (according to the usual definition) 'international'.

The Brakemen's Benevolent Association had its headquarters during much of its existence in Brockville, Ontario and, in its early days at any rate, was conducted in an aggressive, even imaginative fashion. The Association organized a branch "by cypher" in Omaha, Nebraska, in the early eighties, and by late 1883 was reaching out into Manitoba.<sup>39</sup> In 1883 as well, the name was changed to the Conductors and Brakemen's Benevolent Association (CBBA) "in order to retain our old brakemen who got promotions: . . . a great many more conductors are joining than would under the old name."<sup>40</sup> The size of the Association is difficult to determine. The *Engineers' Journal* of February 1886 reported 8,000 members,<sup>41</sup> but this is surely inaccurate by several orders of magnitude. Most probably, the Association had several hundred members in ten or a dozen branches.<sup>42</sup>

In the meantime, American brakemen had organized an association of their own. The Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen (BRRB) was founded in 1883 at Oneonta, New York, by eight brakemen employed by the Delaware and Hudson Railroad. Its purpose was to provide sickness

<sup>39</sup> Winnipeg Daily Times, 10 December 1883.

<sup>40</sup> ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Engineers' Journal, February 1886, p. 92.

<sup>42</sup> Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen, Proceedings of the Annual Convention, 1886, p. 19, 1887, p. 19. Hereafter cited as BRR Proceedings.

and disability benefits for its members and, at first, was intended to be a branch of the Capital City Aid Association of Albany, New York, a mutual benefit society.<sup>43</sup> After a disagreement with Albany, however, the Onconta group sent an emissary to Eugene V. Debs, Grand Secretary and Treasurer of the B.F. Debs drew up a constitution for a totally new brakemen's organization, designed its stationary and printed forms, and arranged for credit with merchants with which the BLF did business.<sup>44</sup> The Onconta group thereupon became 'Eugene V. Debs' Lodge Number One, Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen. On Debs' advice, the new organization decided to emphasize mutual aid. Although he later became America's most prominent socialist, Debs in the early eighties was going through a conservative phase, and the BLF, which he, as Grand Secretary and Treasurer, really controlled, was 'ignoring' strikes in reaction to the near-disaster of 1877. Thus, emulating the BLF, the new BRRB also ignored strikes at first. No provisions were made in the 1883 constitution for any of the normal labour-management functions of a labour union. Even two years later, in spite of the difficulties which some members had experienced during "the late unpleasantness on the Gould system," the annual convention overwhelmingly disapproved of converting the Brotherhood into a "striking organization."<sup>45</sup> Despite this, however, growth was rapid right from the beginning. The first annual convention in 1884

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<sup>43</sup>Railroad Trainman, November 1887, p. 490.

<sup>44</sup>Ginger, Debs, p. 52.

<sup>45</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1885, p. 30.



was attended by delegates from thirty-nine lodges representing 900 members. In 1885 there were 160 lodges with 4,500 members.<sup>46</sup>

Given this rate of growth, it was logical to expect expansion into the adjacent provinces of central Canada at an early date and, by 1885, the Brotherhood had begun to style itself as an international organization.<sup>47</sup> When the Brotherhood's first Canadian lodge was established in November 1885, however, it was at a point distant from the American border, at Moncton, New Brunswick, and on a railway having no direct connection with American lines, the Intercolonial. Unlike the other three railway brotherhoods, therefore, the BRRB bypassed central Canada, and organized the Atlantic Provinces first. There were two reasons for this atypical behaviour. First, a plan to extend into central Canada as soon as possible was delayed until 1886 by an attempt (which will be discussed shortly) to absorb as a unit the CBBA, whose base was primarily in central Canada. Secondly (and here the evidence is somewhat circumstantial), employee unrest on the Intercolonial provided the Brotherhood with an opportunity that could not be ignored. In other words, in contrast with the BLE's experience in organizing the Intercolonial, it seems likely that the establishment of the BRRB on that line was the direct consequence of a real desire there for a brakemen's union.

In the fall of 1885 the Intercolonial's management attempted to improve the general efficiency of the railway's work force

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<sup>46</sup> Walter F. McCaleb, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen: With Special Reference to the Life of Alexander F. Whitney (New York, 1936), p. 224; BRT Proceedings, 1885, pp. 16-19.

<sup>47</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1885, p. 32.

by transferring old hands to new duties and putting workers in the Mechanical Department on a piece-work system which bore some resemblance to the contract labour system so unpopular among workmen in central Canada.<sup>48</sup> Both moves were much criticized in the press. The *Moncton Transcript*, a Liberal paper, declared that some of the alleged transfers were in fact lay-offs, and that the piece-work system was intended to squeeze more work out of the men for less pay.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, a letter to the editor of the *Transcript* recalled the firing three years earlier of engineers who tried to join the BLE.<sup>50</sup>

As an opposition paper, of course, the *Transcript* could be expected to detect dissatisfaction with government policies given the slightest excuse. Nonetheless, there were signs that dissatisfaction among railway workers might be fairly widespread. On 25 November, for example, the *Moncton Times* reported the formation of an organization called the 'Canadian Railroad Agents and Telegraphers Insurance Association', at Jacquet River, a small town on the Intercolonial about mid-way between Campbellton and Bathurst in New Brunswick.<sup>51</sup> A few days earlier, the *Saint John Daily Sun*, like the *Times* a Tory paper, apparently found

<sup>48</sup> *Moncton Daily Times*, 20 October 1885; Journal of United Labor, April 1884, p. 683.

<sup>49</sup> *Moncton Daily Transcript*, 26 October, 1 November 1885.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 November 1885.

<sup>51</sup> *Moncton Daily Times*, 25 November 1885.

it advisable to print a column defending the Intercolonial's own Insurance Association, which it declared to be "excellent."<sup>52</sup>

Brakemen on the Intercolonial probably shared the feelings of uncertainty and dissatisfaction of the rest of the railway's work force, but, unlike most of the railway's employees, could do something about the problem. Before their eyes, after all, was the example of fellow workers who were members of associations influential enough to appeal directly to Ottawa, and be heard. Thus, in response to what can only have been a direct appeal, Grand Organizer and Instructor L.C. Foster of the BRRB visited Moncton and, on 29 November 1885, organized 'Morpine Star' Lodge Number 168 with twenty members.<sup>53</sup> The Brotherhood apparently met the requirements of Intercolonial brakemen, for in August 1886, Foster returned to the Maritimes to organize Lodge Number 234 at Truro, Nova Scotia.<sup>54</sup>

Negotiations between the Brotherhood and the CBBA had probably begun sometime in 1885. Terms for the 'amalgamation' were finally agreed upon late in the year which would admit CBBA lodges and their members into the American order at no cost.<sup>55</sup> It seems likely as well that an understanding was reached whereby the Grand Secretary and

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<sup>52</sup> Saint John Daily Sun, 21 November 1885.

<sup>53</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1886, p. 19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

Treasurer of the CBBA, Charles W. Flanders, would become an officer in the Grand Lodge of the BRRB. The 'transfer' was set for January 1886.<sup>56</sup>

At the last minute, however, something went wrong, and the transfer never took place. As a consequence, the BRRB undertook the organization of lodges in the former territory of the CBBA as time permitted and on a piecemeal basis. In late June, Grand Master Wilkinson organized a lodge in Winnipeg, and between July and September, L.C. Foster formed lodges in Hamilton, Point Edward, and London, Ontario.<sup>57</sup>

The failure to amalgamate the two brakemen's associations as planned was never explained by Grand Master Wilkinson. What may have happened is this. By 1885, the CBBA had begun to fall upon hard times. The headquarters had been transferred from Brockville to Hamilton, with the election of a new Grand Secretary and Treasurer, C.W. Flanders, a man with less ability than his predecessor. The decision to join the American organization either was controversial, or the terms offered by the BRRB were unsatisfactory to some of the membership. The result was a loss of cohesion and the disintegration of the organization in late 1885.<sup>58</sup>

The BRRB's organization of the Dominion proceeded at a good pace once the problems with the CBBA had been surmounted. Flanders joined the BRRB, and was elected to the Board of Grand Trustees "as a

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 6, 19.

<sup>58</sup> This is suggested in a somewhat garbled account by a former member of the CBBA written a decade later. Winnipeg Voice, 31 August 1895.

compliment to the Canadian Brothers."<sup>59</sup>

From six Canadian lodges and

120 members in 1886 the Brotherhood expanded to twenty-nine lodges and 932 members in 1890.<sup>60</sup> American growth was also rapid, however, and by 1890, the organization had over 13,000 members in the United States.<sup>61</sup> As a result, Canadians remained a distinct minority within the Brotherhood, making up only 6.6 percent of the total membership of the Brotherhood. Moreover, Canadian members could not even claim numerical superiority to members from some of the individual American states. For example, Canada's twenty-nine lodges and 932 members in 1890 was easily surpassed by Pennsylvania's forty lodges and 1,486 members.<sup>62</sup> It is very likely, of course, that some Canadians belonged to American lodges near the international border, for example at Grand Forks or Minot in North Dakota, on the Manitoba Railway.<sup>63</sup> But they were probably balanced off by Americans who belonged to Canadian lodges near the border.

Except for the initial problems connected with the breakup of the CBBA, the Brotherhood's expansion into Canada was relatively uneventful. An Ottawa member has told of the founding of his lodge:

<sup>59</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1886, pp. 57-59; Railroad Trainman, June 1890, pp. 351-355.

<sup>60</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1886, pp. 6, 19, 1890, p. 32.

<sup>61</sup> For a comparison of the growth of the Brotherhood in Canada and the United States see Appendix, Graph 3.

<sup>62</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1890, "Report of the Grand Secretary and Treasurer," p. 19.

<sup>63</sup> Railroad Trainman, August 1888, p. 366.

Our first meeting held for the purpose of securing names for the charter was held underneath the shadow of a towering lumber pile, down by the banks of the murmuring Ottawa. There, on a summer afternoon, with the sun beating down upon us, and the Ottawa flowing calmly and peacefully on, was born Subilee Lodge, No. 129. No sound of drum, no blast of trumpet, no discharging of cannon heralded the advent of this interesting infant to the capital of our fair Dominion. . . . Since then we have hired a large and commodious hall. . . .<sup>64</sup>

Before long, praise for the Canadian brothers was gracing the pages of the Brotherhood's journal, and bad poetry sang of "Our Boys in Canada:"

Away up in the Northern Dominion,  
 Where the wintry winds do blow,  
 Dwell a worthy set of railroad men  
 As anyone would wish to know.  
 They are brave and friendly  
 To all whether near or far.<sup>65</sup>

And so on for numerous verses.

The organizing drive of the eighties did not by any means complete the organization of Canadian brakemen into the Brotherhood. It seems likely, in fact, that the Brotherhood in 1890 still represented only a fraction of the brakemen on Canadian railways. At the level of the subordinate lodge, this situation can be seen in the growth of Lodge Number 47 at St. Thomas, Ontario. Organized in July 1887, Number 47 had seventy-one members in October 1888, and 120 members in April 1891.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Mumt to Editor, Ibid., June 1888, p. 263.

<sup>65</sup> Louise B. Gaffney, New Haven, Connecticut, "Our Boys in Canada," Ibid., March 1888, p. 113.

<sup>66</sup> Railroad Trainman, July 1887, p. 330, October 1888, p. 458, April 1891, p. 244.

Yet, even as late as 1892, a correspondent to the *Trainmen's Journal* complained that one-half of the brakemen in St. Thomas were still unorganized by the Brotherhood.<sup>67</sup>

By this time, the Brotherhood was no longer merely a mutual benefit society. From the beginning, some members had disagreed with the decision to ignore strikes and, as tension continued to build up in the mid-eighties between management and employees on American railroads, their influence within the Brotherhood steadily increased.

In 1886, moreover, the Brotherhood's parent body, the BLE, once more became a protective organization. The 1887 convention thus empowered the Grand Master to negotiate settlements with management by any necessary means, including strikes, and the 1888 convention enacted rules concerning the establishment and conduct of grievance committees.<sup>68</sup>

The Brotherhood had now become a full-fledged protective labour organization, and this coming-of-age was acknowledged in a letter inviting the Brotherhood to affiliate with the newly-formed American Federation of Labor. The Brotherhood deferred a decision on this matter, however, placing the letter "on file."<sup>69</sup>

The evolution from an insurance society to a labour union was accompanied by a widening of jurisdiction. Originally founded as an association purely for brakemen, in 1888 the Brotherhood began to accept as a member any railroad worker who had "one year's experience as a

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1892, p. 598.

<sup>68</sup> McCaleb, *Railroad Trainmen*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>69</sup> *BRT Proceedings*, 1887, pp. 28, 59.

railroad brakeman...," regardless of his present position.<sup>70</sup> This qualification was wide enough to admit men to membership who had long since ceased being brakemen and were now working in any of a variety of other jobs connected with the operation of a railroad, for example, conductors, baggagemen, and yardmen. In 1889, the order's name was changed to the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT) to reflect this *de facto* extension of jurisdiction.<sup>71</sup>

In keeping with this aggressive and all-inclusive policy, an effort was made in these early years to accommodate French-speaking members. In 1885, the *Moncton Daily Times* had reported that "nearly all the employes of the I.C.R. from Campbellton to Quebec are French or descendants of French."<sup>72</sup> In 1889, the Brotherhood's annual convention apparently took note of this fact, and resolved that

a French translation of our Constitution and Ritual shall be furnished such lodges as need the same, at a cost to them not to exceed the ruling price of the English version.<sup>73</sup>

This became Rule 19 in the 1889 Constitution. In 1890 it appeared as Rule 26. But in 1891 the rule disappeared from the Constitution and subsequent editions apparently appeared in English only. It was not until 1913, when French-Canadian delegates complained about this

<sup>70</sup> Railroad Trainman, November 1887, p. 509.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., November 1889, p. 555.

<sup>72</sup> Moncton Daily Times, 6 November 1885.

<sup>73</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1889, p. 68.



oversight to the convention, that a French Constitution and Ritual were once again authorized.<sup>74</sup>

It is thus clear that, unlike some English Canadians at the time, the Americans who made up the majority of the Brotherhood had no animosity toward French Canada. The special needs of French-Canadian members, however, were accommodated only in the early years when the Brotherhood was seeking to establish itself in Canada, and later when French Canadians complained of neglect.

The Brotherhood had somewhat more difficulty in these early years in adapting itself to the presence in the Grand Lodge of its Canadian representative, C.W. Flanders, than it did to French Canadians. As a member of the Board of Trustees, Flanders almost automatically became involved in the oft-times bitter internal politics of the Brotherhood. The Grand Lodge in the 1880's functioned in a hot-house atmosphere of rapid growth and constant wrangling over the problems of running an increasingly complex organization. Between 1883 and 1897, six Grand Masters and three Grand Secretary and Treasurers were casualties of executive in-fighting.<sup>75</sup> As a relatively minor official, however, Flanders might have avoided being drawn very deeply into this morass, had he not shown an unusual talent for getting into trouble, a knack which may help to explain why the CBBA did not transfer in 1886, as expected. Within one year of his election as a Grand Trustee in 1886, he managed to earn the wrath of the second most powerful official

<sup>74</sup> ibid.; 1913, pp. 98-99.

<sup>75</sup> McCaleb, Railroad Trainmen, pp. 261, 263.

of the Brotherhood, the mercurial Edward F. O'Shea, Grand Secretary and Treasurer of the Brotherhood and Editor of the Brotherhood's journal. At the annual convention in October 1887, O'Shea preferred formal charges against Flanders for violation of obligation, "injuring the good name of a Brother..." and (perhaps most important) "writing letters calculated to create disturbance and dissension in the ranks of the Brotherhood."<sup>76</sup> O'Shea also charged, moreover, that Flanders had neglected his duty as Grand Trustee by failing to visit the head office at Galesburg, Illinois, to examine the books, and had given no reason for his absence. Of all these charges, Flanders could only defend himself against the last, claiming he had been unable to get transportation to Galesburg.<sup>77</sup>

O'Shea's charges were referred to the Convention's Grievance Committee which sustained the charges, Flanders "pleading guilty to all of them," and recommended that he be expelled from the Brotherhood.<sup>78</sup> The Committee of the Whole, however, rejected this recommendation and suggested merely that Flanders be reprimanded in open session of the Grand Lodge. This was done, and, as the Convention's *Proceedings* put it,

Bro. Flanders responded in a fitting manner and assured the convention that he had learned a valuable lesson, and henceforth he would be found

<sup>76</sup> *BRT Proceedings*, 1887, p. 50.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

counselling everything that would be of advantage and interest to the entire Brotherhood.<sup>79</sup>

As far as O'Shea was concerned, however, the issue was not closed. Flanders was not expelled, O'Shea continued to believe, because the convention was unwilling to offend the Canadian delegates, and because Flanders had acquired some powerful friends, including P.H. Morrissey, who was to become Grand Master in 1895.<sup>80</sup>

Flanders behaved himself for several years after this reprimand, and, in 1888, became Secretary of the Board of Trustees, one of the senior positions on the five-man board. Moreover, in 1890, his old enemy, O'Shea, resigned under a cloud. O'Shea was charged with converting Brotherhood funds, but was really a victim of a power struggle within the Grand Lodge which led ultimately to the downfall of Grand Master Wilkinson in 1895. O'Shea died shortly thereafter.<sup>81</sup>

There the matter might have remained, had Flanders not returned to his old habits. This time, he dragged down the entire Board of Trustees. In March 1891, the new Grand Secretary and Treasurer, W.A. Sheahan, notified Grand Master Wilkinson that Flanders and the other members of the Board had

failed to make a proper examination of their books and had neglected to place the Editor and Manager of our *Journal* under bond and ... had prepared a

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Railroad Trainman, June 1890, pp. 351-355.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

circular or report to be circulated among the Subordinate Lodges of our Brotherhood.<sup>82</sup>

Grand Master Wilkinson thereupon removed the entire Board from office and installed a new one, stating that he was sure that he would be sustained by the Grand Lodge at the next annual convention. This time, nothing could save Flanders and his fellow Board members, since the Convention, in effect, had to choose between the Board and the Grand Master.<sup>83</sup>

Wilkinson's constitutional authority for replacing the Board was not entirely clear-cut. On the one hand, he had the right to remove or suspend "any Grand or Subordinate Lodge officer, for sufficient cause," including (presumably) the Grand Trustees. On the other hand, this removal was "subject to the approval of the Board of Grand Trustees" themselves. The execution, in other words, required the consent of the condemned men.<sup>84</sup> The Grand Lodge, while sustaining Wilkinson in 1890, took note of this constitutional problem, and created an entirely new body, the Grand Executive Board, whose sole duty would be to investigate charges against officers of the Brotherhood.<sup>85</sup> In this rather peculiar way, the expansion into Canada left a permanent mark upon the BRT and its Grand Lodge.

<sup>82</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1891, "Report of Grand Master," p. 12.

<sup>83</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1891, p. 20.

<sup>84</sup> Constitution and General Rules of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, 1890, Article VI, Section 1, "Duties of Grand Master."

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 1891, Sections 4, 8, 13. (The revision included the elimination of 'Articles' from the Constitution.)

Flanders' replacement on the Board of Trustees was also a Canadian, chosen for the post because of his nationality. This was Samuel C. Young, a twenty-six year old conductor from Fort William, who had been born in Hamilton, Canada West, and had moved west during the land boom of the early eighties.<sup>86</sup> Young's election to the Grand Lodge was clear proof that Canada had come to enjoy during the eighties some sort of special status in the Brotherhood, a status which was minor enough but which was greater than, for example, that of the state of Pennsylvania. This status, however, was purely customary, and not constitutional, nor was it to change very much until after 1900.

#### The Victory of Continentalism in the Running Trades

By the end of the eighties, then, all four railway Brotherhoods, the BEE, the BLF, the ORC, and the BRT, had become firmly established in Canada, achieving a position of dominance in their respective trades in the Dominion which was never to be seriously threatened by any other labour organization. Within just one decade, therefore, the train crews on Canadian railways had come to identify themselves almost exclusively with labour organizations which, although nominally international, were in reality American-controlled.

It should be remembered, however, that this was the decade (especially its later years) which saw the full-blown emergence of two rival approaches within Canada to the country's economic problems, which, for the sake of brevity if not complete accuracy, may be called continentalism and nationalist imperialism. In the railway running

<sup>86</sup> Railroad Trainman, December 1891, p. 879.

trades, continentalism won out during this decade, hands down. Canadian trainmen willingly elected to join organizations which they and most other Canadians knew to be American-dominated. Certainly they were not coerced: the Brotherhoods were not 'closed shop' organizations; Canadians might have refused to join had they wished.

It is not likely, however, that they joined the Brotherhood because of some commitment or conversion to continentalist theories, whatever their joining might have meant in practice. One should not be misled by the rhetoric at union gatherings and in the monthly magazines about unity transcending national boundaries. (The BLF, said the *Firemen's Magazine* in 1885, "knows no sections. ... A Brotherhood fireman in Halifax, Winnipeg, New York, Augusta, El Paso, New Orleans or San Francisco is bound to the order by the same fraternal ties.")<sup>87</sup> Canadian railroaders echoed this rhetoric.<sup>88</sup> Yet whether they always liked 'Yankees', or wished to eliminate the international border is another matter.

If anything, Canadians joined the railway Brotherhoods for the same reasons that Americans did: because they needed cheap insurance; because they enjoyed the social aspects of membership — the annual balls, the rituals and ceremonials, and so on; because they were interested in moral improvement and character development;<sup>89</sup> and

<sup>87</sup> *Firemen's Magazine*, August 1885, p. 474.

<sup>88</sup> See *Conductor's Monthly*, November 1889, p. 507.

<sup>89</sup> The Brotherhoods continued to stress self-improvement throughout the nineteenth century. See *Engineers' Journal*, November 1873, p. 524; *Railroad Trainman*, June 1887, p. 280.

because the Brotherhoods could promise, and deliver, assistance in disputes with management. After all, the chief function of the Brotherhoods was to cater to *these* needs, not to promote the absorption of Canada into the American union.

On their part, the American membership of the Brotherhoods usually devoted very little special attention to Canadian members as such in the eighties except, as noted, for providing for token representation of the small Canadian membership on the executive of the Grand Lodge or Grand Division. Special Canadian business took up little time at the annual conventions, and was infrequently mentioned in the brotherhood journals. Canadian correspondents to the journals occasionally complained of this neglect but, in truth, probably had themselves to blame. As editors of the various journals pointed out, Canadian members were usually too quiet and well-behaved to attract much attention.<sup>90</sup> The *Firemen's Magazine* summed it up in the mid-nineties:

So little attention has been given Canadian members and Lodges in the magazine that it would appear that they have been neglected, but such is not the case. The fact of the matter is, they don't need any attention. Rival organizations may come and go, panics may run over the country like cyclones, so-called labor orators may froth at the mouth in their effort to injure the Brotherhood, but our Canadian members buckle their armor a little tighter, and stand as a stone wall.<sup>91</sup>

And why indeed should Canadian railroaders oppose international unionism at this time, when such opposition came rarely from

<sup>90</sup> See *Firemen's Magazine*, July 1883, pp. 305-306; September 1884, p. 541; *Railroad Trainman*, June 1887, p. 280.

<sup>91</sup> *Firemen's Magazine*, September 1895, p. 821.

the rest of Canadian society? Such growls as Pottinger emitted when the BLE threatened to invade the Maritimes were few in the eighties, and were more than offset by the approval of such avowedly staunch British subjects as John A. Macdonald. Canadian public men were usually more than willing to appear on the platform at brotherhood gatherings as friends of the workingman, internationally organized or otherwise. And the management of Canadian railways often appeared on the platform as well, usually to give fatherly approval to the brotherhood in question "so long as its objects and aims were legitimate and for the moral, physical and mental development of those enrolled."<sup>92</sup>

Of course, approval of the Brotherhoods in Canada could easily become disapproval when they failed to behave in a "legitimate" manner and went on strike. At such times the property-owning segment of Canadian society sometimes did speak of 'foreign interference', as did the press of Ontario and Quebec as early as 1876 during the troubles of that year.<sup>93</sup> The sincerity of such language was questionable, of course, and such sincerity as there was probably owed much to the normal North American propensity to blame local problems on outside agitators.<sup>94</sup> The very next year, for example, the Massachusetts Railroad Commission levelled a charge of outside interference against P.M. Arthur ("an alien

<sup>92</sup> Robert Larmour, Assistant Superintendent GTR, referring to the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen, quoted in London Advertiser, 16 July 1888.

<sup>93</sup> Ayer, "Grand Trunk Strike," p. 106.

<sup>94</sup> Outside agitation was Goldwin Smith's explanation for the extensive violence during the great strikes of 1877. Goldwin Smith, "The Labour War in the United States," Contemporary Review, Vol. 30 (1877), pp. 529-541.



to our laws") for coming from Ohio to interfere in the internal affairs of the State of Massachusetts during a strike on the Boston and Maine Railroad.<sup>95</sup> Around the turn of the century, a genuine Canadian nationalism (whatever its roots and motives) would become something for international unions to contend with. But that ~~it had much strength~~ before the 1890's is doubtful, at least in the realm of labour relations.

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<sup>95</sup>Engineers' Journal, March 1877, pp. 167-168.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CANADIAN PACIFIC STRIKE OF 1892 AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The early 1890's marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of the brotherhoods in Canada. They were now established on all the major Canadian railroads, from coast to coast, as the only unions in their respective trades. At the local level, their task now consisted of spreading the gospel of brotherhood among the many Canadian railroaders who had not yet become members — a task which was by no means completed by the end of the nineties. As late as 1898, for example, the BLF could still claim only sixty-two percent of Canadian locomotive firemen as members.<sup>1</sup> At the national level, a major goal of the brotherhoods in the nineties was to gain unconditional recognition as the spokesman for their members in disputes with the managements of Canadian railways. A successful strike in 1892 against the CPR by the ORC and the BRT was a major step towards the achievement of this goal, because the strike was fought specifically over the issue of union recognition. Victory over the largest and wealthiest railway corporation in the Dominion and its strong-minded president, W.C. Van Horne, not only confirmed the brotherhoods as bargaining agents for their members on the CPR but on other Canadian railways such as the Grand Trunk as well.

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<sup>1</sup>"Memento" of Sixth Biennial Convention, BLF, Toronto, September 1898, n.p. Published as a supplement to the Firemen's Magazine, September 1898.

The Brotherhoods Co-operate

A significant feature of the CPR strike was the close co-operation which prevailed between the four brotherhoods. This co-operation was not something new, nor was it confined to the Canadian wings of the brotherhoods, but was the result of close to a decade of experimentation with collective action, both on individual railway systems across North America, and at the highest executive level of the brotherhoods. Interest in co-operation had begun in the mid-eighties, at the same time as the BLF, the BRT, and the Conductors were reconsidering their anti-strike policies. Labour federation was in the air in the mid-eighties. Samuel Gompers of the Cigar Makers was putting together the American Federation of Labor, and Canadian unionists were completing their plans for a Dominion Trades and Labor Congress. Moreover, the AFofL's rival federation, the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor, was reaching its peak. The brotherhoods, however, took no part in the organization of these large federations and, indeed, did not affiliate with them in later years. The brotherhoods were afraid that co-operation with the less skilled, or with workers in other industries, would weaken their strong position in their own industry.<sup>2</sup> There was also more than a trace of snobbery in their attitude towards the "lower grades of labor."<sup>3</sup> This was, however, no barrier to co-operation among

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<sup>2</sup> Robbins, Railway Conductors, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Terence V. Powderly, The Path I Trod (New York, 1940), p. 164. At the local level, in Canada at any rate, individual lodges and divisions of the brotherhoods often affiliated with municipal trades councils. In a railroad town like St. Thomas, Ontario, indeed, the brotherhoods often formed the core of the council. And, as a consequence of their membership in these local councils, brotherhood men were sometimes delegates to the Dominion FLC's annual convention.

themselves, and they began to move in this direction in the mid-eighties. The principal advocate of 'federated action', as this movement was often called, was Eugene Debs of the BLF. It was his belief, from about 1885, that close co-operation between the brotherhoods would provide such an irresistible force that no employer could stand against it.<sup>4</sup>

This theory seemed to be confirmed between 1886 and 1888 when several advantageous agreements were negotiated jointly by the BLE and BLF without bringing about strikes, but this string of successes was ended by a long and bitter strike on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad in 1888. The loss of this strike convinced Grand Chief Arthur of the BLE that his earlier conservative attitude toward strikes was justified. The BLE engaged in no further strikes of any note in the period before 1914. Debs, however, drew another lesson from the Burlington strike: that a stronger combination was needed to face employers — that the strike might have been won with such a combination.<sup>5</sup> The outcome of Debs' agitation was the formation of the Supreme Council of the United Orders of Railway Employees in June, 1889.<sup>6</sup> At first composed of the Firemen, Trainmen, and the Switchmen, the Supreme Council soon took in the schismatic Brotherhood of Railway Conductors, and even the autocratic Engineers seemed to be bending in the direction

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<sup>4</sup> Donald L. McMurry, "Federation of the Railroad Brotherhoods, 1889-1894," Industrial and Labor Relations Review, VII (October 1953); pp. 73-76.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Ginger, Debs, p. 80.

of federation. In its first year, the Federation seemed to function as intended, strikes being averted on several American lines by united action.

In Canada, the Supreme Council used its muscle in February 1891 to extract a settlement from the CPR on behalf of the road's conductors and trainmen on its eastern divisions from Fort William to the Atlantic. For three months, a joint committee of conductors and trainmen had been negotiating with the CPR management in Montreal for an increase in wages and an adjustment of certain grievances, but had been unable to gain any satisfactory concessions. Finally, Grand Chief Wilkinson of the BRT brought the officers of the Supreme Council into the negotiations, and this show of strength apparently convinced the CPR management of the need to make concessions.<sup>7</sup> The *Firemen's Magazine* declared that "the concessions made by the company were such as will materially increase the pay of the employes in the train service and all hands were pleased with the outcome of the meeting" with the company's officials.<sup>8</sup> But perhaps the company felt that it had got off lightly. Eugene Debs, as the BLK representative on the Supreme Council, had recommended that the "rights of the employes" be vindicated "by a resort to a strike."<sup>9</sup> But, strike or not, the merits of the Federation seemed to have been fully demonstrated by the settlement.

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<sup>7</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 21 March 1892; Firemen's Magazine, March 1891, p. 248.

<sup>8</sup> Firemen's Magazine, March 1891, p. 248.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., May 1892, p. 439.

Yet it proved impossible, before long, to prevent organizations with accustomed separate identities from breaking step. The Trainmen fought with the Switchmen over job jurisdiction, and the BRC was successful in keeping the rival ORC out of the Federation. The BLE and the Order of Railroad Telegraphers refused to join. Finally, in June 1892, the now weakened organization, with only the Firemen and Switchmen still members, formally dissolved itself.<sup>10</sup>

For Debs, the lesson to be drawn from this disappointing failure was obvious — unity, not federation, was the answer — and he went on to plan the formation of what ultimately became the American Railway Union. The other leaders of the brotherhoods, and most of the members, however, were not inclined towards such a sweeping break with the past. Still convinced of the value of co-operative action, however, they developed a more limited form of federation, the 'Cedar Rapids Plan', a plan which provided for General Federated Committees to handle grievances and negotiate agreements on individual railway systems (such as the CPR for example). This plan for 'system federation' was to provide the basis for most co-operative action among the various brotherhoods for the next decade.<sup>11</sup>

System federation made a good deal of sense, since it corresponded with what had become the everyday practice of labour management negotiations between the brotherhoods and management in the 1890's. In March 1892, even before the collapse of the Supreme Council

<sup>10</sup> McMurry, "Federation," p. 86.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

In June, the BRT, which had been expelled from the Supreme Council a year earlier, and the ORC, which had never been a member,<sup>12</sup> began to negotiate jointly with the CPR for a new schedule for conductors, brakemen and baggagemen on the road's Western and Pacific Divisions. Their aim was the revision of an unsatisfactory payment system based upon a wage schedule established in 1888.<sup>13</sup> The company had not increased wages to meet its employees' demands after 1888, but had introduced a system of monthly bonuses instead. Not only did the bonuses forestall demands for higher wages, but they also rewarded faithful service and hard work. Conductors, for example, earned a twelve dollar monthly bonus if they made 2600 miles, or were ready for service for the full month and were not used. But no sooner had CPR employees become accustomed to thinking that this bonus was part of their regular pay (since the requirements were fairly easy to meet), than the company reduced the bonus by one-half, and began to use the withdrawal of all or part of the remaining bonus as a disciplinary measure for failing to be available at all times for work, or for minor breaches of company regulations, for example. Believing that CPR employees were being treated unfairly, joint committees of the BRT and the ORC on the CPR Western and Pacific Divisions presented their divisional superintendents with requests for new schedules in late 1891. A major demand of the committees was the elimination of the bonuses and an increase in the hourly rates.<sup>14</sup> The initial cause of the difficulties on the CPR

<sup>12</sup> ibid., p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 18 March 1892.

<sup>14</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1893, p. 20.

in 1892, the bonus system, was therefore the same as in 1883, when the engineers had gone on strike.

The first clash between the brotherhoods and the company took place on the Western Division, which took in the CPR lines from Fort William, Ontario, to Donald, British Columbia. When the Western Division joint committee met at Winnipeg and requested an "interview" with Divisional Superintendent William Whyte (J.M. Egan's successor) to discuss a new schedule, Whyte rebuked them for failing to give the company time for due consideration, and refused to give them their interview. He told the committee members to return to work until they were recalled. They were reluctant to leave Winnipeg, however, without presenting their case in person, and made this clear to Whyte. At this point, the individual members of the committee (some of whom were long-service employees with the CPR) were presented with notices from their respective supervisors to report for duty immediately or consider themselves fired. The committee thereupon telegraphed their international headquarters for assistance, and Grand Master S.E. Wilkinson of the BRT, and Grand Chief E.E. Clark of the ORE, went to Winnipeg to effect a settlement. They, together with the committee, were given the interview with Whyte which the committee alone had been denied. 15.

In the interview, Whyte explained that only President Van Horné could grant some of the committee's requests which, moreover, would require close study before an answer could be given; Whyte added that he was going to Head Office in Montreal shortly on other business



and would take up the matter with Van Horne while he was there. He promised to recall the committee as soon as he returned. When he was asked if the members of the committee had in fact been fired for refusing to return to work, he replied that they had not been. The notices had been sent out, he explained, because "the company was in need of men and they therefore requested the men to return to work, but they had not been dismissed for not doing so." The grand officers decided to accept this explanation without argument and advised the committee members to return to their work and wait for Whyte's return from Montreal.<sup>16</sup> The grand officers, however, were by no means convinced that the CPR intended to play fair, and made suitable preparations. Grand Chief Clark wrote later:

Brother Wilkinson and I instructed [the committee] to secure a vote of the men upon the question of sustaining and supporting the committee and the grand officers in case such tactics were again resorted to by the company. The vote was practically unanimous in favor of resorting to a strike if necessary to resist such methods.<sup>17</sup>

On about the first of March, Whyte recalled the committee to Winnipeg. He had brought a new schedule from Montreal. The committee, however, was not disposed to accept the company's proposals, which involved reductions in wages for some categories of jobs — for example, a ten dollar per month reduction for conductors and brakemen on construction trains.<sup>18</sup> On 4 March, negotiations apparently broke down completely, and

<sup>16</sup> ibid., May 1892, p. 317.

<sup>17</sup> Conductors' Monthly, April 1892, p. 151.

<sup>18</sup> Railroad Trainman, May 1892, p. 317.

the committee wired American headquarters for assistance.<sup>19</sup> This threat apparently induced Whyte to resume negotiations with a new offer, since the alternatives were either a strike or once again recognizing the right of the grand officers to negotiate for the CPR's employees. The latter alternative was probably especially unpalatable for Whyte, who apparently had received instructions while in Montreal to give no recognition at all to the brotherhoods, but to maintain the fiction that the CPR was merely dealing with an *ad hoc* committee of its own employees.<sup>20</sup> His new offer was acceptable to the men, and they wired the grand chiefs to ignore their request for help, since assistance was no longer required. A final agreement was reached on about 7 March requiring only the approval of President Van Horne.<sup>21</sup>

But Van Horne over-ruled Whyte and refused to give his approval, and it is fairly clear that, at this point, he had decided upon a final showdown with the brotherhoods. Vice-President Shaughnessey indicated as much a week later.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the incipient breakup of the

<sup>19</sup> It was perhaps at this point that Whyte, according to Clark, told the committee that "he was the hammer and the men the nails and that he proposed to do the driving...." Winnipeg Tribune, 21 March 1892. Whyte later denied that he had said that he "would be the driver." Ibid., 22 March 1892. Yet it is obvious that Whyte was no 'pushover' and that Van Horne might have been well advised to accept the agreement that Whyte made on 7 March: it probably could not have been bettered by Van Horne himself.

<sup>20</sup> Railroad Trainman, April 1892, p. 240.

<sup>21</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1893, "Grand Master's Report," p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> On 15 March CPR Vice-President Shaughnessey revealed that "the defiant attitude of the trainmen's committee... led the company nearly a week ago to prepare for an emergency...." Manitoba Free Press, 15 March 1892. A "week ago" was 8 March, the day after the committee had reached its agreement with Superintendent Whyte.

Supreme Council (the organization which had forced the CPR to back down the year before) persuaded Van Horne that he could now act with relative impunity against the brotherhoods. More probably, he had simply had as much as he could stand of the brotherhoods' repeated attempts to tell him how to run his business. Certainly, as we shall see, some of his and his subordinates' subsequent statements tend to support this latter interpretation. On Sunday, 13 March, in accordance with the instructions from Montreal, Whyte presented a new and final offer to the committee, an offer which contained most of the features which the committee had found unacceptable on 4 March, and demanded that they accept it then and there. He explained that the company was taking this action because the committee had not been negotiating in good faith, but had been unreasonably trying to force the company "to accede to their request by threats, etc." Moreover, Whyte continued,

The company has evidence of a conspiracy and ... the committee were responsible for it, for on their coming together in January they came with the votes of their several lodges to strike if a settlement could not be made, and it became necessary to resort such means [*sic*] to effect one.<sup>23</sup>

He then asked the committee, "In case a strike is ordered, will you withdraw from your organization and prove loyal to the company?" At the same time, he warned the men that, if a strike was ordered, President Van Horne

intended to fight it to the bitter end, if he had to spend every available dollar the company possessed, and if he was successful in defeating the

<sup>23</sup> Railroad Trainmen, May 1892, p. 317. This statement was of course inaccurate in that the strike vote was not taken until after the January meeting.

strike, "labor organizations on the Canadian Pacific system would be buried so deep that they would never again be resurrected."<sup>24</sup>

When the committee asked for time to consider the question, Whyte declared "you must answer now, yes, or no." The members of the committee were then interrogated one at a time. Several were discharged immediately and others were told that they must give an answer before going to work on Monday.<sup>25</sup>

It is quite clear that the CPR management had no intentions of negotiating any further with the committee and had, in fact, expected its last offer to be refused, because on the same day that Whyte was presenting this offer to the committee, Sunday, 13 March, superintendents along the line began interviewing conductors and brakemen and presenting them with an ultimatum: accept the company's offer, and declare willingness to stand by the company in case of strike, or be discharged. These interviews continued on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and apparently all but one or two of those interviewed refused the company's terms and were let go — some thirty train crews or about one hundred men in all.<sup>26</sup>

The negotiating committee had apparently learned of Van Horne's decision to challenge the brotherhoods before 12 March, and had again wired international headquarters for assistance. Wilkinson, of the BRT, arrived in Winnipeg on the 12th, and A.B. Garretson, Grand Second Conductor of the ORC, arrived on the 14th. (Grand Chief Conductor

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.; Manitoba Free Press, 15 March 1892.

<sup>26</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 15, 17 March 1892.

Clark was suffering from the grippe.) The two grand lodge officers met with Whyte on the 14th, but were told that Whyte had "orders" not to discuss the matter with outsiders, only with CPR employees. Whyte declared, moreover, that he could do nothing more himself, and that the brotherhoods' representatives would have to consult "a higher authority." He was then requested to ask President Van Horne for transportation to Montreal for the grand lodge officers and the committee, and for assurance that the president would grant them an interview when they arrived. Whyte was given until 6 p.m. for an answer to this request, otherwise "he would be informed as to the intentions of the employees." Whyte gave no answer, and the brotherhoods began to make preparations for a strike.<sup>27</sup>

A major difficulty in calling the strike lay in the fact that the CPR controlled the telegraph lines in western Canada. The committee had learned "from reliable sources that orders has [*sic*] been issued to suppress all messages relating to the trouble," and that coded messages to some lodges had not been delivered. The committee therefore had to resort to messengers, and as a result the strike could not be called before Wednesday, 16 March.<sup>28</sup> The messengers carried the following written instructions to all members and divisions, signed by the two grand lodge officers and the committee chairman:

The Committee of the Order and Trainmen having decided that a strike is necessary to protect the discharged members of the organizations, and their action having received the sanction of the Grand

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<sup>27</sup> Railroad Trainman, May 1892, p. 318.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Chief and the Grand Master, the strike is, hereby declared in effect at midnight (24 o'clock) on Wednesday, the sixteenth, on the Western Division of the C.P.R.R. You will take charge of the men at all terminal stations and see that no men are influenced to listen to representations from officers of the Company until orders to return to the service over our signature, and the message will contain the following formality, "The Smoke has Cleared," and no other will be genuine. Allow all trains to proceed to terminal stations and passengers on the Division to proceed to final terminal. Allow mail car to run on regular schedule, and if necessary detail usual crew to handle train at Company's expense, but under no circumstances allow our men to handle any car but the postal car. The bearer of this goes to the Eastern Division to take the vote; as soon as received they will be called out to your aid.<sup>29</sup>

On the afternoon of 16 March, Garretson and Wilkinson gave Whyte his last chance to avoid a strike, in the form of a written ultimatum which declared that the men would strike at midnight "unless all discharged employes on the Western Division are reinstated to their former positions without prejudice and the requests that were made by a committee of your employes granted before 24 o'clock, midnight...."<sup>30</sup> Whyte made no effort to reply to the ultimatum, and the strike was on, as scheduled. Fears were expressed that the conflict would "become as severe and desperate as the fight of the engineers and firemen in 1883."<sup>31</sup>

### The Strike

It is not completely clear how many CPR employees went out on strike on 16 March. The *Winnipeg Tribune* had estimated on 15 March

<sup>29</sup> ibid.

<sup>30</sup> ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 17 March 1892.

that there were between four hundred and five hundred trainmen on the Western Division, exclusive of firemen and engineers. Some of these trainmen were probably not union members and continued in service, although pressure from their fellow workers most likely made sure that many non-brotherhood employees went on strike to show their solidarity. In Winnipeg, in fact, a number of non-unionized CPR switchmen struck as well, purely as a gesture of sympathy with the trainmen.<sup>32</sup>

Once the strike was under way, both parties to the dispute devoted the next several days to strengthening their positions: the strikers began polling members of their unions on other CPR divisions with a view towards widening the scope of the strike; the company began to recruit strike-breakers and make arrangements for police protection of CPR property. More on these developments shortly, for at the same time, the company and the strikers indulged in a fierce public argument — a propagandā duel over the causes of the strike in which, for the most part, the CPR took the offensive, and which had had its beginnings several days before the actual outbreak of hostilities.

The argument centred about two major issues. The first was the bread-and-butter issue of wages and hours. According to the strikers, a number of important matters divided the company and the strikers, including the following: main line employees did not want their present wages reduced; freight conductors wanted a raise; work train crews wanted their former schedule of wages restored; and conductors and brakemen wanted to be paid (as engineers and firemen were) for 'detention time', i.e. time spent on the road when not actually

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

operating a train.<sup>33</sup> In short, the strikers were anxious to show that their grievances were numerous and genuine. The CPR, on the other hand, declared that there were only two relatively minor points in dispute preventing a settlement; the first, detention time, merely meant that engineers and firemen were paid to keep up steam in their locomotives when detained on the road, while conductors and brakemen could relax in the comfort of their caboose; the second disputed point was a matter of ten cents difference in the wages of freight conductors.<sup>34</sup> In other words, according to the CPR, the strikers had no real grievances, and the decision to strike was irresponsible. Said Vice-President Shaughnessey, "the most annoying feature of the affair is that men who were earning very high wages and were entirely satisfied and utterly opposed to a strike were induced by a few leaders" to go out.<sup>35</sup>

The second major issue was the dismissal of brotherhood men for refusing to declare their loyalty to the company in case of a strike. Here the CPR presented a loosely arranged and sometimes emotional argument to defend the dismissals, the principal ingredients of which were charges of 'conspiracy' and 'foreign influence'.

Whyte had been the first CPR official to level the charge of conspiracy, at his confrontation with the joint committee on 13 March. The charge was subsequently repeated by Van Horne, Shaughnessey, and other officials and friends of the CPR. Said Shaughnessey to the press

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 15 March 1892.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Montreal Gazette, 18 March 1892.



on 15 March: "On finding evidence of a conspiracy forming to precipitate a strike, it was decided to dismiss all who were not willing to stand by the company...."<sup>36</sup> A few days later, Van Horne gave an expanded version, in a circular posted in all CPR stations:

Saturday last [March 12] the company became satisfied that a strike was being forced by the leaders, and that most of the trainmen had unfortunately committed themselves by signing, several weeks ago, an agreement to go out if the committee failed to arrive at an agreement with the company. So that a strike was sure to come, although a very large majority of the men on the division were strongly opposed to it. When they demurred they were shown their pledge signed before the committee waited on Mr. Whyte.

In order to forestall action that would forever prevent a great many very excellent men from re-entering the company's service, it was decided to give them an opportunity to decide between the company and the committee, and such as refused to stand by the company were relieved from duty.<sup>37</sup>

There was an obvious element of misrepresentation and insincerity in these charges, of course, in that CPR officials used the strike vote taken in January as the excuse for their actions of mid-March. They must have known about the strike vote long before negotiations were broken off with the strikers. It is quite clear, in fact, that the 'conspiracy' was merely a convenient *casus belli* for the CPR management. It was fairly common knowledge that the brotherhoods' constitutions required a majority vote for a strike to be called — that, in other words, a strike could not be called by the brotherhoods' leaders without approval from the rank-and-file. When Shaughnessey was asked

<sup>36</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 15 March 1892.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Ottawa Daily Citizen, 19 March 1892.

on 18 March by a reporter if he knew about these constitutional provisions, he evaded the question: "We know well enough what brought the strike about, but we cannot tell you for a few days yet."<sup>38</sup> A.B.

Garretson thus had considerable justification for accusing the company of "bad faith."<sup>39</sup>

Yet, paradoxically enough, and from another point of view, Van Horne and Shaughnessey were probably quite sincere in their talk of conspiracy. After all, any concerted attempt to disrupt company business, or even contingency plans for such an attempt, could be defined as conspiracy, even though Canadian trades unions had long been exempted from legal provisions which defined such actions as a criminal offence.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, in the late nineteenth century, many employers still expected their 'servants' to be 'faithful' in the Biblical sense. Faithful employees trusted their employers and did not conspire against them. For employees to call upon intermediaries (such as the international officers of the brotherhoods) in a dispute with their employers thus displayed a lack of confidence in their employers' good intentions which was inconceivable for all but an irresponsible minority.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Toronto Globe, 19 March 1892.

<sup>39</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 17 March 1892.

<sup>40</sup> As a Winnipeg lawyer put it during the CPR telegraphers' strike in 1896: "Any company like the CPR would consider a striker's action in coming out grave misconduct ... although it might not be legally so." Quoted in Ibid., 7 October 1896.

<sup>41</sup> See Montreal Gazette, 21 March 1892; Michael Bliss, A Living Profit: Studies in the Social History of Canadian Business, 1883-1911 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 74, 81-85.

As the *Winnipeg Tribune* pointed out, however, this attitude promised a bitter and protracted strike on the CPR, "as the officials decline to treat with the men clothed with authority to call off a strike and arrange a basis of compromise."<sup>42</sup> Moreover, given the fact that railroads elsewhere in North America recognized the brotherhoods as bargaining agents, the CPR's paternalistic outlook seemed a bit out of date, especially to Garretson of the ORC, who declared that "the manner of doing business pursued by the company is only a relict [*sic*] of the old feudal system, moss grown and worm eaten, and the time has come when it should fail."<sup>43</sup>

The CPR's actions, moreover, left the company open to the charge that it was against labour unions as such and was trying to 'break' the brotherhoods. Wilkinson claimed on 17 March, for example, that the men had been "locked-out" for belonging to the brotherhoods.<sup>44</sup> This was probably true, but CPR officials were reluctant to admit it publicly. Company officials declared on several occasions that the CPR had no intention of denying its employees the right to join any association they wished.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, however, it was clear that the CPR management was determined to reserve for itself the right to define the nature and role of these associations, and to severely restrict their

<sup>42</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 16 March 1892.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; 17 March 1892.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> See Ibid., 16, 17, March 1892.

activities if they threatened the right of management to run the company as it wished. Said Shaughnessey on the day the strike began:

... the company had no quarrel with any organization. Their employees' brotherhood of trainmen was purely a benevolent association and countenanced no labor movements, hence they were not interfered with in any way by the Canadian Pacific directorate. The recent trouble was disposed of by simply putting a sort of test act to the men, and dismissing those who would not promise to stand by the company.<sup>46</sup>

By itself the CPR's conspiracy charge was likely to have little positive impact on public opinion, especially in the light of the company's uncertain popularity in western Canada. The CPR therefore attempted to supplement it by making use of the Canadian nationalism (or anti-Americanism) which had shown its effectiveness in re-electing the Conservative Party in the 1891 federal election. The presence in Winnipeg of grand lodge officers from the United States provided an obvious cue and, from the beginning of the trouble, CPR officials placed much of the blame for the strike on the nefarious influence of "outsiders" and "foreign emissaries."<sup>47</sup> On 18 March, Superintendent Whyte declared that "it is a matter of regret that any of the employees and the American representatives should have brought about the strike at a time when it is likely to be productive of injury to the country."<sup>48</sup> Shaughnessey was more succinct the next day: "I believe the men were unwilling as a body to strike and they were forced into it by orders of the labor agitators

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 16 March 1892.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 15 March 1892.

<sup>48</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 18 March 1892.

in the States."<sup>49</sup> CPR officials continued to refer to the influence of 'foreigners' throughout the strike.

The appeal to patriotism was, as it had been in the 1891 election, evidence of weakness, not of strength.<sup>50</sup> The strikers apparently realized this, and Garretson and Wilkinson facetiously began referring to themselves as "foreign emissaries" and "foreign ambassadors."<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Van Horne and Shaughnessey, with their American backgrounds, were vulnerable to the same charge themselves. Shaughnessey was especially vulnerable because he took his oath of allegiance as a British subject during the strike, on 18 March. He protested, probably in vain, that

the strike had nothing to do with it. I practically became a British subject when I first joined the Canadian Pacific. I have simply put that into effect by taking the oath of naturalization....<sup>52</sup>

That the appeal to patriotism was part of the same conceptual framework as the belief that the strike was the result of a conspiracy was shown in an editorial in the *Montreal Gazette* on 21 March:

At the dictation of outsiders, men who neither work on the road nor live in the country, the employes who have quit there [*sic*] posts, and bound themselves by an agreement which made a compromise impracticable and talk of mutual concessions useless. ... Travellers are inconvenienced; traffic is

<sup>49</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 19 March 1892.

<sup>50</sup> See Peter B. Waite, Canada 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny (Toronto, 1971), p. 225.

<sup>51</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 17 March 1892; Manitoba Free Press, 18 March 1892.

<sup>52</sup> Toronto Globe, 24 March 1892.

hindered or suspended; general trade throughout a large section of country is curtailed or paralysed — because certain of the road's employe's [sic] prefer the dictation of non-resident aliens to care of their own interests and the mutual consideration that should exist between employe and employer.<sup>53</sup>

The effect upon public opinion of the propoganda duel between the company and the strikers is difficult to assess. Public opinion was probably influenced just as strongly by other considerations. Businessmen and those who identified themselves with business interests naturally tended to side with the company, and this tendency became more pronounced as time went on and the strike began to affect business adversely.<sup>54</sup> The 'laboring classes' were quite naturally inclined to side with the strikers.<sup>55</sup> As for the uncommitted, their attitudes were most likely to be influenced by the presence or absence of violence. Reflecting the divided and uncertain state of public opinion, Canadian newspapers tended to be neutral throughout the strike. The *Montreal Gazette* and the *Manitoba Free Press* were among the few newspapers which supported the company unswervingly all the way. But the *Free Press* was known to be controlled in some way by the CPR — "controlled, body and

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<sup>53</sup> Portions of this editorial were reprinted in the Winnipeg Tribune on 21 March, and in the Manitoba Free Press on 22 March, without the errors in the original. The Gazette was a strong supporter of the CPR throughout the strike in a way which suggests a community of interest.

<sup>54</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 21 March 1892; Vancouver Daily World, 21 March 1892.

<sup>55</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 21 March 1892.

bones," claimed its rival the *Tribune*.<sup>56</sup> And the *Gazette* seems to have identified itself with the Montréal business community, of which the CPR was an integral part. Yet, regardless of whether the propaganda dispute had any affect on public opinion, it showed one thing very clearly: that the strike was at base a clash of conflicting ideologies — a dispute involving widely differing views about the rights and duties of employers and employees.

In any case, an impartial assessment of the immediate cause of the strike leads to the conclusion that, with their members being dismissed on a systematic basis, the brotherhoods had no choice but to strike. To do otherwise would mean either abandoning any pretence to being protective labour organizations, or being driven off the CPR. The prime responsibility for the strike, therefore, lay with the CPR, because of its decision to test the loyalty of its employees, even though the decision to strike was made by the brotherhoods. The question of wages and hours was important mainly because the broken-off negotiations had centred on this question. The settlement of the strike thus depended only secondarily on whether the CPR would agree to a schedule pleasing to its employees.<sup>57</sup> Of primary importance was whether the CPR would reinstate those 'disloyal' employees who had chosen to support their unions.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1892. See also Ramsay Cook, The Politics of John W. Dafoe and the Free Press (Toronto, 1963), p. 15.

<sup>57</sup> This does not mean, of course, that a strike might not ultimately have taken place over these issues.

<sup>58</sup> See Railroad Trainman, May 1892, p. 319. This point was emphasized repeatedly by the strike leaders.

At the beginning of the difficulties, CPR management was adamant on this latter point. Said Shaughnessey on 15 March, "It is the policy of the company to do everything within reason to avoid strikes, but if one occurs, those joining in it are not employed again."<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, then, the strike was fought over union recognition. As Wilkinson pointed out, the final disputed point was the company's refusal to recognize the brotherhoods' right to represent CPR employees, not just in this case, but in every case involving the discharge of union members or other disciplinary measures.<sup>60</sup> In view of subsequent events, the head office decision to overrule Whyte (and later on Superintendent Harry Abbott on the Pacific Division) and challenge the brotherhoods on this question was most unwise, and showed that President Van Horne may well have begun to lose touch with everyday affairs on the road he had done so much to build in the first place. In the meantime, CPR local officials were wide open to ridicule as mere puppets. Said A.B. Garretson of Whyte:

There is an apology to be offered for him in his position and [*sic*] that he only takes the part of Punch and Judy in the show — the string is pulled, the figures move. "The skin is the skin of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob." Mr. Whyte, no doubt, draws a good salary, but he certainly should take a good one, indeed, to console him for the untenable position he now occupies.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 15 March 1892.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 18 March 1892. The Biblical reference is to Genesis xxvii:22.



Shortly after the beginning of the strike on 16 March, rumours began to spread that the firemen and engineers would also go out, in sympathy with the conductors and trainmen.<sup>62</sup> As far as the firemen were concerned, the rumours were well founded. On receiving a request for assistance from Clark and Wilkinson, Grand Master Sargent of the BLF ordered the BLF Joint Board of Adjustment for the CPR to be convened immediately, "since there is a principle involved that interests all organizations."<sup>63</sup> The Board was instructed to

enter protest in behalf of Trainmen; and if unheeded, make it a grievance of our organization and proceed to action, in conjunction with Conductors and Trainmen.<sup>64</sup>

Grand Chief Arthur of the BLE, on the other hand, while sympathetic to the strikers, was determined not to break off relations with the CPR, since this would be an unconstitutional violation of a previous agreement.<sup>65</sup>

What probably gave rise to the rumours that the engineers would strike were reports that some locomotive engineers were refusing to take out trains manned by incompetent replacement train crews.<sup>66</sup> These engineers were probably motivated to a considerable extent by a legitimate concern for safety, especially in the weather conditions likely to be

<sup>62</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 18 March 1892.

<sup>63</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1892, p. 77.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Engineers' Journal, May 1892, p. 461.

<sup>66</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 18 March 1892.

encountered on the prairies in mid-March. A snow storm on 18 March, for example, forced the CPR to cancel regularly scheduled trains on a number of branch lines in southern Manitoba for a day or two.<sup>67</sup> Yet it is likely that some engineers showed an abnormal concern for safety in order to give what aid they could to the strikers.

But the CPR engineers knew that they must do more than this: a defeat for the strikers could seriously undermine the position of the BLE on the CPR — a position that had been laboriously rebuilt after the fiasco of 1883.<sup>68</sup> And there was a more immediate danger: should the firemen go on strike, the engineers would find themselves the only non-striking trainmen. As the *Winnipeg Tribune* put it, they would be "between the devil and deep water."<sup>69</sup> The BLE Board of Adjustment on the CPR therefore decided to intervene in the dispute and offered to mediate between the company and the strikers.

A BLE committee met with Garretson, Wilkinson, and the strike committee on 19 March.<sup>70</sup> Garretson outlined the strikers' terms: first, "unconditional surrender" of the company so far as the dismissed employees were concerned, including non-brotherhood men who had been dismissed for refusing to take the place of strikers; second, "submission

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 19 March 1892.

<sup>68</sup> Engineers' Journal, May 1892, pp. 460-461.

<sup>69</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 21 March 1892.

<sup>70</sup> Only one member of the engineers' committee, Ash Kennedy, appears to have been actively involved in the strike of 1883. See Manitoba Free Press, 13 December 1883; BRT Proceedings, 1893, "Grand Master's Report," p. 11.

of the disputed points of the schedule to a board of arbitration."<sup>71</sup> The engineers' committee referred these terms to Whyte; who wired them to Van Horne. Van Horne's reply thanked the engineers, but "declined" the terms and declared that "the longer the trouble continued, the larger would be the number who would not be returned to work."<sup>72</sup> At this point, CPR officials were still confident that they would replace the strikers with new men, and that the strike would not spread to other divisions.<sup>73</sup> This confidence must have been somewhat shaken, however, when on 20 March, at 24 o'clock (midnight), the conductors and brakemen on the CPR's Pacific Division went on strike.

As on the Western Division, the split on the Pacific Division between the company and the brotherhoods was precipitated by CPR headquarters in Montreal. An agreement was reached in Vancouver, before the middle of March, between the brotherhoods' joint committee and Pacific Division Superintendent Harry Abbott. This agreement did not include a decision on the most troublesome point, detention time, since the joint committee "agreed to leave the matter in the hands of the Company pending a settlement of the dispute on the Western Division."<sup>74</sup> The agreement was wired to Montreal for approval, which was given. The wire approving the schedule, however, also contained the following stipulation:

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<sup>71</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1893, pp. 21-22.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>73</sup>Winnipeg Tribune, 19 March 1892.

<sup>74</sup>Vancouver Daily World, 15 March 1892.

"that the employees agree to continue faithful to the company without regard to any combination against it."<sup>75</sup> This wire was apparently sent on 13 March, the same day the company began administering its 'loyalty oath' on the Western Division.<sup>76</sup>

Company headquarters in Montreal sent detailed instructions to Superintendent Abbott as to the correct way to ensure that there were "no disloyal men in [the company's] service:"

Commencing with passenger conductors at all points as near simultaneously as possible require them to say at once whether or not they are satisfied with the company's service and will continue to faithfully perform their duty without regard to any combination against the company. If not, dismiss them and pay them off instantly. Then offer their places to the most eligible freight conductors or baggagemen, requiring same pledge from them; then at once follow with freight conductors, dismissing all who refuse to take places of passengers conductors, who may be dismissed as well as all who are unwilling to pledge themselves to stand by the company, filling their places in turn with the most eligible brakemen....

Each man should be taken separately, and should be required to decide on the spot. Commence with married men and those most likely to yield. Important also that questions should be put to them considerately and so as to give no unnecessary offence.<sup>77</sup>

The instructions envisaged the possibility of a "general refusal on the part of the trainmen" to take the pledge, but suggested that there should be no difficulty in keeping passenger trains and perishable freights

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 21 March 1892.

<sup>76</sup> Firemens' Magazine, May 1892, p. 440.

<sup>77</sup> Vancouver Daily World, 15 March 1892.

moving if this happened.<sup>78</sup> The immediate result of the pledge was the dismissal of a number of men.<sup>79</sup> With this incentive, the brotherhoods immediately began to conduct a strike vote on the Pacific Division.

These developments, however, did not immediately result in the breaking off of negotiations between Abbott and the local brotherhood committee. The Vancouver *Daily World* reported after the strike was over that CPR officials in Vancouver had been most unhappy about the interference from "overzealous officials east of the mountains."<sup>80</sup> In fact, after the strike began on the Western Division on 16 March, Abbott apparently decided to pay no more attention to his orders from Montreal, and told the brotherhood committee that the men already dismissed would be reinstated.<sup>81</sup> By this time, however, Abbott had lost control of the situation. The strike vote on the Pacific Division was completed on 19 March, and it showed the necessary three-quarters vote required for a strike. That day, Abbott received a letter breaking off negotiations because "management was compelling their trainmen in part of the system to withdraw from their organizations or to be dismissed."<sup>82</sup> Abbott denied that he was requiring his men to quit the brotherhoods, but

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 24 March 1892.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 21 March 1892; Victoria Daily Colonist, 20 March 1892.

<sup>82</sup> Vancouver Daily World, 21 March 1892. The "part of the system" referred to was probably the Western Division of the CPR.

on 20 March, the grand officers in Winnipeg received the results of the strike vote and immediately ordered a strike.<sup>83</sup> An ultimatum was presented to Abbott, apparently as a purely *pro forma* gesture, and the strike began at midnight.<sup>84</sup>

The next day, 21 March, the first contingent of strike-breakers from eastern Canada began to arrive in Winnipeg. At the beginning of the difficulty, Vice-President Shaughnessey had announced his determination "to keep all important trains moving whatever happens."<sup>85</sup> It took time, however, to recruit new employees, and meanwhile, as in 1885, company officials were pressed into service, primarily at the most skilled levels, that of conductors on the main line.<sup>86</sup> Undoubtedly, some strike-breakers were recruited in the west — for example, former railroaders now farming, who were glad to earn a few dollars before spring planting began. Yet there were apparently not enough of these men available, and the CPR hired many of its new men far from the scene of battle, in Montreal; where considerable unemployment provided a large pool of labour.<sup>87</sup> French-Canadian labourers, moreover, were less likely to be seduced by the propaganda of the English-speaking strikers: "Quite a number" of those recruited were "French," according to the *Free Press*.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Firemens' Magazine, May 1892, p. 440.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.; Vancouver Daily World, 21 March 1892.

<sup>85</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 15 March 1892.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 15, 18 March 1892.

<sup>87</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 23 March 1892.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 22 March 1892.

At the same time CPR management apparently realized that many of these hastily raised levies might be of inferior quality and began to recruit railroaders working on various railroads in the Maritime Provinces. The strike was over, however, before any of these men could go to work.<sup>89</sup>

The CPR apparently made no attempt to hire replacements from the adjacent American states of Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington, nor do any contemporary sources suggest this as a possibility, nor indicate why it was not considered. From the point of view of the CPR, of course, this would have been most unwise, given its claim that alien interference was causing all the trouble. Moreover, at this particular moment, there was a bill before the House of Commons in Ottawa, designed to severely restrict the importation of 'alien labour' from the U.S.<sup>90</sup> In any case, the first lot of strike-breakers from the east, about seventy-five in all, arrived in Winnipeg on 21 March, and went to work immediately.<sup>91</sup>

The lot of a strike-breaker is often not an easy one. At Winnipeg, the strikers paid little attention to company officials working around the trains in the CPR yard, but the new men were "hooted and jeered, and in some cases ... pelted with decayed apples and other

<sup>89</sup> Railroad Trainman, June 1892, p. 453.

<sup>90</sup> This was a private member's bill introduced by George Taylor, member for Leeds South. It failed to gain the support of either the Government or the Opposition, but ultimately formed the basis for the Alien Labour Act of 1897. House of Commons, Debates, 1892, pp. 295-310, 2457.

<sup>91</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 22 March 1892.

garbage."<sup>92</sup> From the beginning, the CPR found it difficult to retain its new men, especially those from Montreal who had not been told they had been hired as strike-breakers.<sup>93</sup> A report from Rat Portage stated that

not a crew arrives here that has not to be fought over and guarded and cared for until they depart on an outgoing train amid the hooting and jeers of the crowd, or are led off in triumph by the strikers.<sup>94</sup>

When some of the strike-breakers arrived in Winnipeg from Montreal, they promptly proceeded to union headquarters at Leland House and offered to sell out for cash. They were turned down scornfully by the strikers. Said E.E. Clark:

~~Sweet~~ scented specimens they were. There wasn't a ~~trainman~~ or one who knew the slightest thing about a train in the whole lot. I told their spokesman that I wouldn't give him fifty cents apiece for them.<sup>95</sup>

Some of these men, it later turned out, had had no intention of working once they arrived in Winnipeg, but had signed up with the CPR to get free transportation west.<sup>96</sup> CPR officials continued to reassure the

<sup>92</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 21 March 1892.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 23 March 1892.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 23 March 1892.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.



public, however, that the company would have no trouble getting enough men to replace the strikers.<sup>97</sup>

Mere numbers of replacements, however, were not the problem. The maintenance of efficient train service depended on qualified, experienced men. Such men were hard to come by. At Vancouver, a replacement brakeman lost two fingers coupling the engine to the first car. He was a former dockworker. Vancouver alderman J.J. Gavin, retired from the CPR some time since, went out on the line as a conductor.<sup>98</sup> As the Vancouver *World* pointed out on 21 March, the running of trains through the mountains of British Columbia with inexperienced crews was "entirely out of the question." This was recognized by locomotive engineers who, while having no quarrel with the company, were more likely than not to refuse to go out on the main line with green crews.<sup>99</sup>

At any rate, the only reports of violence during the strike were the direct consequence of the inexperience of replacement trainmen at Rat Portage, Ontario. The 21 March edition of the *Winnipeg Tribune* headed its daily column on the strike with the single large word "Shooting!" Printed verbatim below was the report of CPR "representative" McKenzie at Rat Portage. Trains were being "cut," reported McKenzie: one train was cut in thirteen places, "some drawheads stove in, new trainmen shot at, and the head brakeman had rocks thrown at him." McKenzie had gone out on the main line for one stranded train, he said, and was forced to

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 22 March 1892.

<sup>98</sup> Vancouver Daily News-Advertiser, 23 March 1892.

<sup>99</sup> Vancouver Daily World, 21 March 1892.

bring it into the yard a few cars at a time. At one point, he ran out of links and pins, necessitating an extra trip. The *Tribune* reported that Superintendent Whyte was consulting with Lieutenant Governor Schultz of Manitoba, "with a view to securing authority for sending a detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Rifle corps to the scene."<sup>100</sup> The violence at Rat Portage was reported in daily newspapers across Canada. What many Canadians feared most from any strike in the late nineteenth century — widespread violence — seemed about to break out.

The next day, however, Mayor Young of Rat Portage issued a categorical denial that there had been any violence in his city. A special on-the-spot report in the *Tribune* backed up his claim. "The shooting referred to was done by a C.P.R. special policeman," said the report, "to frighten away some small boys who were having a little fun throwing snowballs."<sup>101</sup> There was not a sign of disorder at Rat Portage and, at a strikers' meeting, Reverends Jamieson and Fortin had "each complimented the trainmen on their intelligence and good behaviour since the trouble started."<sup>102</sup> An editorial in the *Tribune* provided an explanation for the reports of violence in the northern Ontario centre: "inexperienced men. Signal torpedoes on the track, which were a normal safety measure after nightfall, were misinterpreted as gunfire by new men, who declared, "That is the work of the strikers, and is commenced

<sup>100</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 21 March 1892.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 22 March 1892.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

every evening after dark." The breaking of trains was caused by inexperienced men on the "sag" (a dip in the track) just outside of town.<sup>103</sup>

Right from the beginning of the strike, the CPR had prepared for the possibility of widespread violence. In every major centre serviced by the CPR which was threatened by the strike, the company had loyal employees and men especially hired for the occasion sworn in as auxilliary police by more-than-willing police magistrates. In Winnipeg on 17 March, a magistrate called at the company's shops to swear in a number of special constables.<sup>104</sup> In Toronto, a few days later, Police Magistrate Denison performed a similar service, swearing in fifty men at a crack, each equipped with a revolver or other firearm and "several hundred rounds of ball cartridges, batons, handcuffs, and other accessories." These men were to accompany four trains headed west loaded with settlers and their belongings.<sup>105</sup> Even as early as 15 March, the company had special police sworn in at Vancouver.<sup>106</sup>

The number of special constables employed by the CPR across Canada probably out-numbered the strikers, even at the peak of the strike. The largest body of special police was recruited in Montreal, where between one hundred and one hundred and fifty special constables were sworn in on the 22nd to be despatched west as soon as possible.

<sup>103</sup> ibid.

<sup>104</sup> ibid., 18 March 1892.

<sup>105</sup> Toronto Globe, 23 March 1892.

<sup>106</sup> Vancouver Daily World, 15 March 1892.

In addition, the Mayor of Montreal and the Police Commissioner agreed to a request by Vice-President Shaughnessey for the services of thirty regular Montreal policemen, plus some officers, each provided with a revolver and baton. The Mayor said that he could see "no reason why the request should not be complied with."<sup>107</sup> To top off its Montreal contingent, the CPR hired forty-five men from the Canadian Secret Service Detective Agency. These men were described by a reporter as "a hardy lot of men, having been selected for their fighting qualities more than for good looks."<sup>108</sup> ~~This contingent from the east was added~~ to in Ottawa, when one hundred more men were sworn in, and guaranteed "special pay if engaged in hostilities." This body of men was led by ex-detective Harry Montgomery, and Inspector O'Leary "of the Dominion Police."<sup>109</sup> Finally, the CPR drew upon the considerable resources of the civil power to augment its own protective forces. In the Northwest territories, the NWMP sent detachments to all CPR divisional points west of the Manitoba border.<sup>110</sup> And on 23 March, Whyte's request for military aid to quell the Rat Portage disturbances was answered when Major General Herbert, Commander of the Canadian Militia, authorized the despatch "of troops from this military district to points in Ontario, as far east as Port Arthur."<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Toronto Globe, 23 March 1892.

<sup>108</sup> Montreal Gazette, 23 March 1892.

<sup>109</sup> Ottawa Daily Citizen, 23 March 1892.

<sup>110</sup> "Report of the Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police 1892," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1892, No. 15, p. 108; Calgary Daily Herald, 23 March 1892.

<sup>111</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 23 March 1892.

The strike ended before all the special police and militia could be deployed in the field. Had the difficulties been prolonged, however, the small army which the CPR mobilized for western service would have been exceeded in numbers only by the contingents sent over the still unfinished line to defeat Riel in 1885. If the strike had been continued for very long, it is likely that the CPR would have had between five hundred and one thousand men under arms in defence of its property, quite apart from the normal police protection to be found in any Canadian community.

This massive display of authority marshalled by, and on behalf of, the CPR quite naturally drew the criticism of the strikers and their supporters. A news report from Toronto after the strike ended declared that

Labour men throughout the city are very wild about the appointment of special constables. They contend that the constables were unfit for the work, and would have caused a riot the moment they reached their destinations.<sup>112</sup>

Leaders of the strikers were anxious to refute charges of misbehaviour by the strikers, for example at Rat Portage, because they knew that government intervention to restore order would almost certainly mean defeat, as it had on similar occasions in the past.<sup>113</sup> That the large numbers of special police had been completely unnecessary, however, was attested to by NWMP Superintendent E.W. Jarvis, commanding "A" Division, Maple Creek, Northwest Territories, who reported that

<sup>112</sup>Toronto Daily Mail, 24 March 1892.

<sup>113</sup>Conductors' Monthly, April 1892, p. 153.

There was a good deal of intimidation and a few overt acts against the railway company, but no serious violence was attempted. There is no doubt that the presence of our men had a salutary effect; though at the same time I must say that I have seldom seen so orderly a body of men, and so well organized, as the strikers were.<sup>114</sup>

The city police sent west from Montreal said much the same thing on their return.<sup>115</sup>

This lack of violence may explain why the CPR never again employed such a large force to protect its property in the period before World War One. Special constables were often employed in subsequent strikes, and agency detectives were hired, but never in the numbers of 1892. But why did the CPR think that so many special police were needed in 1892? Perhaps it was partly the memory of the engineers' strike of 1883. As the *Manitoba Free Press* recalled,

Probably no excitement in this city, outside of the rebellion of '85, created such consternation as when the fact was heralded throughout the city and country that upwards of 3,000 men employed on the C.P.R. had been locked out by the company. Throughout the days and a good part of the nights for about a week, these thousands of men ... paraded the streets and acted in open rebellion to the authority of the railway company.<sup>116</sup>

Yet this is not a complete explanation, since many of the 'specials' were hired by local CPR superintendents, at places like Vancouver and Toronto, where there were no memories of the 1883 strike. For this

<sup>114</sup>"Report of the Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police 1892," op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>115</sup>Montreal Gazette, 25 March 1892.

<sup>116</sup>Manitoba Free Press, 19 March 1892.

reason, a better explanation for the panicky reaction of the CPR officials in 1892 may be the collective memory of more than two decades of industrial warfare in North America.

Thursday 17 March was the first full day of the strike. Within a short time its effects were being felt throughout the west. Grain dealers began to complain about the interruption of business almost immediately, as the company devoted much of its remaining manpower to keeping passenger trains running.<sup>117</sup> The company stopped loading grain on the 18th, and seventy-five carloads of freight were held up at Portage la Prairie, waiting for shipment.<sup>118</sup> Whyte, however, remained publicly confident that he could keep things moving. "The strike has not yet disturbed my sleep," he declared on 18 March, "nor destroyed my appetite." Since not much grain was being shipped this time of year, he went on, farmers should not "suffer materially."<sup>119</sup> The strikers, added Shaughnessey on the 19th, had chosen a poor time to strike, when the railway's business was normally slack.<sup>120</sup>

By Monday 21 March, however, business in Winnipeg was reported to be "paralyzed."<sup>121</sup> Freight was still not moving well, and wholesale merchants were faced with warehouses filled with delayed

<sup>117</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 17 March 1892.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 18 March 1892.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 19 March 1892.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 21 March 1892.

shipments for outside points.<sup>122</sup> Agricultural implement salesmen were complaining that if the strike

lasts a week longer the acreage put under crop in Manitoba and the North-West this season will be considerably less than it otherwise would have been, as the farmers require seeding machinery and cannot get it.<sup>123</sup>

In Vancouver, trains were running late, and telegraph communication with the east had broken down.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps most serious from the CPR's point of view, however, was the loss of freight business to rival lines, especially the Grand Trunk and the Northern Pacific, which were taking advantage of the strike to lure away regular CPR customers.<sup>125</sup> Once lost, such business might be difficult to recover.

But the end of the strike with a victory for the strikers was not the result of events or conditions west of Fort William. It was the result of something which company officials had repeatedly denied to be possible: the spread of the strike to the eastern lines of the road. This, as we have seen, had been the aim of strike leaders from the beginning of the strike on the Western Division, when they sent a representative from Winnipeg to conduct a strike vote on the Eastern Division which extended from Fort William to Chalk River, Ontario.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 22 March 1892.

<sup>123</sup> Calgary Daily Herald, 23 March 1892.

<sup>124</sup> Vancouver Daily News-Advertiser, 23 March 1892.

<sup>125</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 22 March 1892.

<sup>126</sup> Conductors' Monthly, April 1892, p. 151.



The men on the Eastern Division seem to have had no prior grievance against the company, and there is no way of knowing how they might have voted had not the company begun employing the loyalty oath on this division as well.<sup>127</sup> Some men were dismissed, and the men voted to go out. On 22 March, CPR officials awakened to find a further 752 miles of track tied up.<sup>128</sup> Even worse, strike leaders were confidently talking of tying up the entire CPR system, from Atlantic to Pacific, and the men on the southern Ontario lines of the CPR were reported ready to go out when ordered.<sup>129</sup>

Under these circumstances the company began to give way. Early on 22 March an unnamed CPR official intimated that the company's rule against rehiring strikers might be reinterpreted — "that it was not too late for the old employees to receive their places again..."<sup>130</sup> The engineers' committee renewed their efforts to settle the strike, spending the early morning hours of 22 March consulting alternately with Whyte and with Clark and Wilkinson. Agreement was reached at 5 a.m. and wired to President Van Horne for his decision.<sup>131</sup> If accepted, the agreement amounted to a complete capitulation by the company. There were four terms. First, "All men who have been discharged and those

<sup>127</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 21, 22 March 1892.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 22 March 1892.

<sup>129</sup> Toronto Daily Mail, 22 March 1892.

<sup>130</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 22 March 1892.

<sup>131</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1893, p. 22.

who have gone out on strike, also any employe who has been discharged for refusing to take the place of a striker, or who has voted to strike, to be reinstated without prejudice." Second, any striker on a division of the CPR who had assaulted a CPR official was to be dismissed, but the final decision as to his dismissal was to rest with the engineers' committee. Third, the engineers' committee was to act as a committee of arbitration on the disputed points in the schedule, and its decision was to be binding on both parties. Fourth, the rates for the Western Division were to apply to the Pacific Division as well.<sup>132</sup>

Van Horne had started the trouble, now he could see that it was time to end it. A stubborn, determined man, he was also a first-rate poker player, and he could see now that his opponents had not been bluffing — it was time to throw in his hand and cut his losses. It had become clear that it might be very difficult, and thus very expensive, to drive the brotherhoods off the CPR: like all North American railway managers Van Horne knew how costly it had been to force the Engineers' and Firemen's organizations off the CB&Q in 1888. Far better to lose a little face, to pay slightly higher wages to CPR train crews, and to get the road back in full operation again. At 11:15 a.m. he wired back his acceptance of the terms. Whyte placed the facilities of the company's telegraph service at the strikers' disposal, and a pre-arranged signal was sent out: "The smoke has cleared."<sup>133</sup> The strike was over.

<sup>132</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1893, "Grand Master's Report," p. 11.

<sup>133</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1893, p. 22.

### Victory and Its Fruits

The engineers' committee wasted little time in producing a new schedule. They submitted their recommendations on 25 March,<sup>134</sup> and they were accepted by Superintendent Whyte, acting for the company, and by Clark, Wilkinson and the chairmen of the BRT and ORC committees on the Western Division. The new schedule involved raises for all conductors and brakemen which, by the standards of the time, were quite reasonable. Freight conductors' wages, for example, were raised from \$2.65 per hundred miles (a standard day's run) to \$3.00. Moreover, the contentious issue of detention time was decided in favour of the men: train crews were to be paid from the time the train was ordered out until the end of the trip, regardless of delays, and overtime rates (at straight time) were to be paid for any day's service exceeding eleven hours. This new schedule would stand until the first of April 1893 when, presumably, it would be renegotiated.<sup>135</sup>

The conductors and trainmen were, of course, elated at their victory. Wilkinson, for example, denied that he had any "wish to crow over a matter of this kind" but was nonetheless pleased at the victory over "the strongest railway company on this continent," and over President Van Horne who "has never before known defeat in a matter of this kind."<sup>136</sup> Others showed less restraint. A correspondent to the *Railroad Trainman* wrote of the strikers:

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<sup>134</sup>The BLE Monthly Journal later referred to these "recommendations" as an "ultimatum." Engineers' Journal, May 1892, p. 461.

<sup>135</sup>For the complete schedule, see the Railroad Trainman, May 1892, pp. 320-321. It was summarized in the Winnipeg Tribune, 26 March 1892.

<sup>136</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1893, "Grand Master's Report," pp. 9-10.

Well done, my heroes. You have beaten the wealthiest corporation in Canada. You have whipped the strongest enemy that ever faced the great Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. You have met and vanquished one of the most formidable enemies of organized labor that could be found in all British America. This monster has dared to insult you, Brothers. You have risen in your might and repelled the insult. You have compelled the great Canadian enemy of organized labor to swallow the bitter pill of humiliation, and you have done it gracefully. He is crushed.<sup>137</sup>

On their part, CPR officials tried to put as good a face upon the settlement as possible, especially upon the clause permitting the engineers' committee to dictate the final terms of the schedule. Shaughnessy denied that "the paw of velvet" offered by the engineers "concealed the paw of steel." The engineers' offer, he declared, was an indication of "their friendship towards the road." Moreover, "they are our own employees and can be trusted to secure the best interests of the road."<sup>138</sup> Nonetheless, the decision of the company to leave the settlement of a strike to a committee of its own employees, themselves members of a labour organization, was, "as the *Montreal Witness* said, "absolutely unique."<sup>139</sup> It was more than adequate evidence of the Canadian Pacific's management's eagerness to extricate itself from the consequences of its decision to drive the ORC and the BRT off the CPR.

Two further actions by the CPR management illustrated the extent of the strikers' victory. The first was the immediate

<sup>137</sup> Railroad Trainman, May 1892, p. 365.

<sup>138</sup> Toronto Globe, 24 March 1892; Winnipeg Tribune, 24 March 1892.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Vancouver Daily News-Advertiser, 25 March 1892.

dismissal of all strike-breakers.<sup>140</sup> As the CPR telegraphers' strike of 1896 was to show, this was by no means standard practice in the 1890's, even after a 'successful' strike, since employers liked to reward with steady jobs those who could be trusted to stay with the company during a strike. The second action was the strict adherence by the CPR management to their agreement to reinstate without prejudices any CPR employee who had struck, had been discharged for refusing to replace a striker, or who had voted to strike, regardless of his union affiliation. In early April 1892, the secretary of North Bay Division of the ORC reported to Cedar Rapids headquarters that a minor CPR official, a Chief Dispatcher named Bond, had been dismissed by his superintendent for refusing to run a train during the strike. Vice-President Shaughnessey was immediately informed that the ORC "expected full compliance with the spirit and letter" of the agreement, and Bond was reinstated.<sup>141</sup>

The strike victory also apparently had the effect of making the CPR more compliant in the long run as well. In January of 1893, well in advance of the expiration of the 1892 agreement, the BRT-ORC joint committee had no difficulty negotiating a new four-year agreement with the CPR which included wage increases and improvement in detention time allowances.<sup>142</sup> When this agreement expired in 1897, it was renegotiated fairly easily, and again included improved terms for

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<sup>140</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 24 March 1892.

<sup>141</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1893, p. 24.

<sup>142</sup> Railroad Trainman, May 1893, p. 417.

most conductors and trainmen.<sup>143</sup> During most of this period between 1892 and 1897, the CPR was feeling the effects of depressed business conditions, and this was reflected in decreased earnings and in an increase in the operating ratio.<sup>144</sup> That the BRT and the ORC were able to obtain wage increases under these circumstances is an indication of the respect which the management had for the strength which they had shown during the 1892 strike. This respect extended to the other operating brotherhoods. In early 1893, the CPR accepted a contract with its firemen and engineers which was similar in essentials to the one just negotiated by the conductors and trainmen.<sup>145</sup> At the same time, other classes of CPR employees were not automatically accorded the same respect. In years to come the telegraphers and trackmen (among others), found it necessary to use the same procedure as the operating brotherhoods did to gain the CPR's respect, that is, win a strike for recognition. Van Horne and his successor Shaughnessey had not suffered a change of heart about labour unions in 1892.

#### An Additional Dividend on the Grand Trunk

An immediate consequence of the CPR victory was to save the BRT and ORC from what might have been a rather inglorious capitulation on the Grand Trunk. Negotiations with the Grand Trunk's management in 1892 were taking place at the same time as those with the CPR.

<sup>143</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1899, p. 18.

<sup>144</sup> Harold A. Innis, A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Toronto, 1971), pp. 244-247.

<sup>145</sup> Railroad Trainman, May 1893, p. 417.

The joint committee's demands fell into two major categories: first, an increase of pay, with eight hours to be considered a day's work; second, an end to the classification system whereby pay rates depended upon length of service and experience — the committee felt that all men doing the same job should receive the same pay.<sup>146</sup> The company's offer involved a smaller increase of wages than the committee demanded, and a rearrangement of 'runs' in order to shorten the working day. No mention was made of the classification system.<sup>147</sup> The company explained that it was unable to meet the committee's wage demand, even though the company's wages were below the normal rate paid elsewhere, because these demands would cost the company almost a quarter of a million dollars a year. In fact, if their other employees asked for a similar increase, this would amount to a wage increase of a million and a half a year. An expenditure of this size would make it impossible to build a much-needed rolling mill or complete a double tracking programme, claimed the Grand Trunk management.<sup>148</sup>

Negotiations broke down completely on the 14th of March, and the committee called in officers from brotherhood headquarters in the United States. These men arrived in Montreal on 17 March, but Grand Trunk officials refused to meet them, or recognize their right to negotiate for the company's employees. The BRT and ORC committees were then instructed by the grand officers to conduct a strike vote.

<sup>146</sup> Toronto Globe, 16 March 1892.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 18, 19 March 1892.

The result was a rebuff for the negotiating committee: BRT members on the Grand Trunk voted for the strike, but ORC members did not.<sup>149</sup> The conductors' decision to "trust the company" seems to have originated with the older, better-paid conductors; the younger members apparently voted to strike but were outnumbered.<sup>150</sup> Vice-Grand Master P.H. Morrissey, who was acting for the BRT in the affair, considered this to be "a serious mistake, as I believe our organizations would have received recognition without ever engaging in an issue [i.e. a strike] if the Conductors had shown a greater degree of firmness."<sup>151</sup>

Where the affair might have gone on from here, with the brotherhood's negotiators in effect repudiated by the membership, is impossible to determine. For, in the meantime, the CPR strike had ended with a victory for the brotherhoods. With this in mind, and hearing that a strike vote was in progress on the GRT, Grand Trunk head office became alarmed, and instructed officials at divisional points to make a new and better offer to the railroad's conductors and trainmen. The grand officers of the brotherhoods, somewhat relieved at this turn of events, advised the men to accept this new offer.<sup>152</sup>

This settlement was obviously not ideal from the point of view of the BRT and ORC, since the issue of union recognition had

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<sup>149</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1893, "Grand Master's Report," p. 34.

<sup>150</sup> Toronto Daily Mail, 21 March 1892.

<sup>151</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1893, "Grand Master's Report," p. 34.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.



not been cleared up. And, as A.W. Currie has shown, it gave Grand Trunk president Tyler the opportunity to present the affair as a victory for the company. According to Tyler,

Sergeant, the chief executive in Canada, refused to have anything to do with union representatives, who came in from the United States. When the "walking delegates" returned home, Sergeant accepted the men's demands to the extent of \$2000 and ... harmony between management and men was at once restored.<sup>153</sup>

Yet, in the light of subsequent events, this 'victory' amounted to very little. The shadow of the defeat of the CPR hung over everything. In late 1892, a very meek Sergeant met with the BLF Joint Protective Board and agreed, first, to a two-year contract which would cost the company \$65,000 a year, and second, to the abolition of the classification system for firemen.<sup>154</sup> By 1896 the Grand Trunk was meeting routinely with the general grievance committee of the BRT and ORC — one such meeting was described as "harmonious" by a BRT member.<sup>155</sup> And in August 1897, Grand Trunk officials did not object when A.B. Garretson assisted the joint committee in making what Clark of the ORC called "a generally satisfactory adjustment of the many matters then in hand..."<sup>156</sup>

#### Conclusion: The CPR Strike and the Depression of Nineties

An important consequence of the victory over the CPR in 1892, therefore, was to make the managers of Canadian railways reluctant to

<sup>153</sup> Currie, Grand Trunk, p. 345.

<sup>154</sup> Firemen's Magazine, January 1893, p. 92.

<sup>155</sup> Railroad Trainman, January 1897, p. 71.

<sup>156</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1899, p. 13.

reduce the wages of their operating employees during the depression which began in 1893. This was just as true of the penurious Grand Trunk as it was of the more affluent CPR. The *Railway Conductor* noted in July 1894 that Grand Trunk officials were afraid to cut wages "because of the present strength of the labor unions," and commented that this was "evidence that ... the good effects of the victory won by the conductors and brakemen on the Canadian Pacific have not as yet worn away."<sup>157</sup> The experience of the brotherhoods in Canada thus was in sharp contrast with their experience in the United States during the nineties. A series of strikes by the brotherhoods in the United States between 1891 and the onset of the depression met with very indifferent success. The Lehigh Valley strike of 1893, which involved all four of the brotherhoods plus the telegraphers, was probably the bitterest of these strikes, being marked by violence and disorder, and was only a partial success at best.<sup>158</sup> After the onset of the depression, the brotherhoods found themselves faced by wage reductions which they were unable to prevent on a number of American roads. The initial enthusiasm of American railroaders for Debs' American Railway Union stemmed in large part from these wage reductions. To be sure, the fact that many American railways were bankrupt (in contrast with Canadian railways) was an important reason for the difficulties of the brotherhoods in the United States after 1893. Yet cutting wages had long been a standard method

<sup>157</sup> *Conductors' Monthly*, July 1894, p. 357.

<sup>158</sup> Robbins, *Railway Conductors*, p. 176; Archibald M. McIsaac, *The Order of Railroad Telegraphers* (Princeton, 1933), p. 9.

of dealing with depressions in Canada, as in the United States, and had been used by the Grand Trunk in the mid-eighties, as we have seen.

The ability of the brotherhoods to prevent wage reductions in the nineties, therefore, probably did much to secure and stabilize their position on Canadian railways and establish the brotherhood model of unionization as the most desirable type in the minds of Canadian railroaders. This probably helped to spare Canada from the disturbances which accompanied the formation of the American Railway Union in 1893 and the Pullman boycott in 1894.

## CHAPTER VI

### PULLMAN AND AFTER: STRIKES AND PROBLEMS OF LEADERSHIP, 1893 - 1901

There were no official brotherhood strikes in Canada for almost twenty years after the CPR strike of 1892. During the depression of the nineties, and for several years after, however, the brotherhoods repeatedly became involved in strikes undertaken by other railway unions — the American Railway Union, the Telegraphers, the Machinists and the Trackmen. These strikes presented the leaders of the brotherhoods with the most pressing labour-management problems which they had to face during this period, given the general receptiveness of the managers of Canadian railways to their requests at contract renewal time. The degree and type of involvement in these strikes varied a good deal, but the most common source of entanglement was the sympathy of the brotherhoods' rank-and-file for their striking fellow employees. When this sympathy was pronounced enough, the leaders of the brotherhoods could not avoid official intervention of some sort, if only to prevent the worse dangers of 'unofficial' intervention in the form of spontaneous sympathy strikes by the rank-and-file. The results of official intervention were not always satisfactory. Yet, in contrast with their experience in the United States during this period, the brotherhoods had little to complain of in Canada, especially since the most damaging strike of the period, the American Railway Union's Pullman boycott of 1894, left their Canadian

wings almost untouched and strong enough to cope with the problems raised by the subsequent strikes of the period.

The American Railway Union and the Pullman Strike in Canada

As we saw in the previous chapter, the collapse of the Supreme Council of the United Order of Railway Employees in early June, 1892, convinced Eugene Debs of the BLF that unity, not federation, was what was required if railway workers were to avoid the inter-union rivalry that had destroyed the Supreme Council, and which continued to weaken railway labour in confrontations with management. The scheme which Debs and other like-minded reformers evolved was for an industrial union of all railroad workers. All trades in the railway service would be united under a single executive: "One roof to shelter all...."<sup>1</sup> In late June 1893, the birth of the American Railway Union (ARU) was publicly announced, and the first Local Union was chartered in August.<sup>2</sup>

The response to the new union exceeded all Debs' expectations. By 15 November 87 local unions had been chartered; by January 1894, there were well over 100.<sup>3</sup> The new organization had been formed at precisely the right time to expand rapidly, at the beginning of one of the most severe depressions in American history. Railway companies were especially hard hit by the depression, and by June 1894, more than 400,000 miles and one-quarter of the capitalization of American

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<sup>1</sup>American Railway Union, "Manifesto," in William Kirk, National Labor Federations in the United States (Baltimore, 1906), p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>McMurry, "Federation," p. 91; Ginger, Debs, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup>Ginger, Debs, p. 115; Railway Times, 1 January 1894. The Railway Times was the official journal of the ARU.

railways were bankrupt and in the hands of receivers, including such giants as the Erie, the Northern Pacific, and the Union Pacific.<sup>4</sup> In an attempt to cut operating costs, railway companies across the United States began reducing wages. The least skilled workers were the hardest hit, and these rushed in large numbers to join the ARU, whose dues had been intentionally kept low, but brakemen, firemen, conductors, and even engineers also joined the new union.<sup>5</sup> This growth was given further impetus when the ARU fought, and won, a strike against James J. Hill's Great Northern Railway in April 1894.

The first Canadian Local Union of the ARU, No. 100, was formed in Winnipeg some time in late 1893. It is likely that No. 100 was constructed on the ruins of a defunct Knights of Labor Assembly, since one of its founding members, William Small, was a former member of a Knights Assembly on the CPR.<sup>6</sup> The KofL had collapsed in Winnipeg by early 1892, leaving a vacuum for the ARU to fill.<sup>7</sup> The organization of new locals of the ARU went on much more slowly in Canada than in the U.S., especially before the Union's victory over the Great Northern. At the end of March 1894, there were only four ARU Local Unions in Canada, all on the CPR's Western Division, at Winnipeg, Rat Portage,

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<sup>4</sup> Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion 1890-1900 (New York, 1959), pp. 141-142.

<sup>5</sup> Ginger, Debs, p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> Winnipeg Peoples Voice, 31 August 1894.

<sup>7</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 27 February 1892.

Medicine Hat and Swift Current.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the Northern Pacific lines alone in the U.S. had 22 ARU locals before the end of 1892, and the Southern Pacific had over 40.<sup>9</sup> The Great Northern victory inspired a brief spurt of organizing activity in Canada, even though the strike does not seem to have extended into the Dominion or involved Great Northern employees in Winnipeg.<sup>10</sup> Seven new Canadian locals were chartered by 1 June, including a second local at Winnipeg for Northern Pacific employees.<sup>11</sup> There were thus, at this time, 11 ARU locals in Canada, all in the west, as against 344 locals in the U.S.<sup>12</sup> The organizing drive in Canada was completed by 1 September with six more locals, including three in British Columbia, and another in Winnipeg, giving a final total of 17 ARU locals in Canada, as against 496 in the United States.<sup>13</sup> There is a possibility, of course, that some additional Canadian locals went unreported in the ARU's journal, *The Railway Times* (the source of this data) because of difficulties which the Union's headquarters had in keeping up with the headlong growth of the order.<sup>14</sup> For

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<sup>8</sup>Railway Times, 1 January 1894, 1 March 1894, 2 April 1894.

<sup>9</sup>Ginger, Debs, p. 115.

<sup>10</sup>See Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 17 April 1894.

<sup>11</sup>Railway Times, 1 May 1894, 1 June 1894.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 1 June 1894.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 1 September 1894.

<sup>14</sup>See Ginger, Debs, p. 115.

example, switchmen were later reported to have formed an ARU local in Toronto.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, however, some of the 17 officially chartered Canadian locals may have had little more than a 'paper' existence. Winnipeg's third ARU local, No. 372, for example, apparently never affiliated with the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, although the other two did.

The story of the struggle which brought the ARU to disaster, the Pullman boycott of mid-summer 1894, has been too often told to need recounting here in any detail.<sup>16</sup> Briefly, the ARU came to the aid of members who were striking the Pullman Palace Car Company by ordering a boycott of Pullman cars leased to American railway companies. The boycott spread throughout the American west, and then into the east and down into the south. The General Managers' Association, a combination of 24 railroads with terminals in Chicago (the centre of the strike activity), decided to help the Pullman Company. Of some interest to Canadian railroaders was the Association's selection for its 'strike manager': John M. Egan, the victor in the CPR engineers' strike of 1883.<sup>17</sup> Egan had left the CPR in 1886, and by 1894 had become President of the Chicago and Great Western Railway. His sudden resignation from this position in April 1894, after a tiff with the Board of Directors,

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<sup>15</sup>Railroad Trainman, March 1896, p. 198.

<sup>16</sup>See Ginger, Debs, pp. 123-167; Almont Lindsey, The Pullman Strike (Chicago, 1942).

<sup>17</sup>Lindsey, Pullman, p. 138.



made him available during the Pullman strike.<sup>18</sup> Egan gained the sympathetic ear of U.S. Attorney General Richard Olney, who persuaded President Cleveland to send federal troops into Chicago "to protect Federal property," and "prevent obstruction of the U.S. mails."<sup>19</sup> The result of federal intervention was several days of ferocious mob violence, a number of deaths, and millions of dollars worth of property damage. A Canadian witness described the scene:

... great fires were raging all round the city in the railway terminal yards, situated in the outskirts. I was at that time located in the Grand Central Station on Twelfth Street, and from the top of the high tower one night I counted a dozen such conflagrations, extending from the lake shore on the north clear round the city to the lake shore on the south at South Chicago. At the same time, in the very heart of the city, an immense lumber yard along the river was in flames.... Great flakes of flame would break off at the top, leap up and bury themselves in the black pall, while whole pieces of boards and even planks would be carried away blazing by the swirling eddy of out-rushing over-heated air, thus starting fresh fires in every direction. It seemd to me, that night, that Chicago was certainly doomed to be a second time destroyed by fire.<sup>20</sup>

As this description suggests, the 'Debs Rebellion' (as it was sometimes called) was of great interest to Canadians. It was fully covered by Canadian newspapers, often in considerable detail. Canadians were concerned lest the strike spread across the border to Canadian lines, especially since a subsidiary of the Grand Trunk railway,

<sup>18</sup> Henry J. Morgan (ed.), Dominion Annual Register, 1886 (Montreal, 1886), p. 315; Manitoba Free Press, 21 April 1894.

<sup>19</sup> Ginger, Debs, p. 150.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Larmour, Canada's Century: A Review of Labor Conditions To-Day (Toronto, 1907), p. 19.

the Chicago and Grand Trunk, had a Chicago terminal and was struck along with other American railroads. Moreover, several American railroads operated in Canadian territory: the Wabash and Michigan Central in Ontario, and the Northern Pacific and Great Northern in Manitoba.

Of some comfort to Canadians, however, was the fact that the Grand Trunk in Canada built and operated its own Pullman cars and paid a royalty for the name only. The CPR did not use Pullmans at all, but used Wagner Palace Cars instead.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the ARU was noticeably weak in central Canada, that part of the Dominion most intimately interconnected with the railway system of the U.S. ARU organizers sent into Ontario and Quebec to bring Canadians into the strike were coolly received by the leaders of organized labour, who were sympathetic with the Pullman strikers, but did not want to become involved in the strike themselves. Montreal labour leaders were very anxious to have the strike restricted to the U.S., and despatched a representative, William Keys, to Detroit to persuade the strikers to keep Canada out of things.<sup>22</sup> Canadian officers of the four operating brotherhoods worked strenuously to the same end, in both Ontario and Quebec.<sup>23</sup> Their fears that the strike would spread into central Canada may have been well founded, yet, when the strike reached the border it spread no further. The strike on the Chicago and Grand Trunk, for example, spread rapidly from its centres in Chicago and Battle Creek, Michigan, involving large numbers of

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<sup>21</sup> Toronto Globe, 29 June 1894.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 5 July 1894.

<sup>23</sup> Railroad Trainman, June 1897, p. 532.

locomotive firemen as well as non-operating employees. It reached Port Huron, Michigan, on the night of 3 July, but stopped dead at the entrance to the tunnel under the St. Clair River.<sup>24</sup>

It was in western Canada that the ARU had a certain amount of real strength, and it was here that the strike crossed the Canadian border, on the Manitoba lines of the Northern Pacific. On 1 July, ARU Local No. 243 at Winnipeg went on strike in compliance with instructions from ARU President Debs to close down all traffic on the Northern Pacific.<sup>25</sup> Up until this time the issue had not been joined in Canada because the NPR had not attempted to operate any Pullman cars on its lines from Winnipeg to Grand Forks and St. Paul.<sup>26</sup> There were about 40 strikers in all at Winnipeg, mostly shop hands, locomotive firemen and engineers, and brakemen (nearly all the locomotive firemen on the NPR were reported to be members of the ARU).<sup>27</sup> It is likely that some of the strikers belonged to both the brotherhoods and the ARU: only the BLE had a constitutional provision denying its members the right to join another labour organization.<sup>28</sup> Yet members of the BLE, ORC and BRT who struck without authorization faced the possibility of expulsion from their unions for violation of contract.

<sup>24</sup> Toronto Globe, 5 July 1894; Sarnia Observer, 13 July 1894.

<sup>25</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 2 July 1894; Winnipeg Peoples Voice, 7 July 1894.

<sup>26</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 30 June 1894.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2 July 1894.

<sup>28</sup> See Engineers' Journal, November 1905, p. 997.

The NPR strikers in Winnipeg had no real grievance with the company. As one striker had pointed out earlier, "The quarrel has nothing to do with us, but we have to stick together to get our rights."<sup>29</sup> Thus, shortly after the beginning of the strike, the strike committee offered the local NPR superintendent the services of ARU members to guard company property in Winnipeg during the strike.<sup>30</sup> After several days of intermittent service, NPR officials in Winnipeg decided to run no further trains until the main line in the U.S. was operating again. "It is simply a game of wait," said Superintendent Vanderslice.<sup>31</sup> Local labour was sympathetic to the strikers. On 6 July, the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council held a large open meeting in support of the ARU.<sup>32</sup> The local lodge of the BLF passed a resolution in the strikers' favour.<sup>33</sup> But this was the extent of the strike in Winnipeg, as the strikers and their friends, like other Canadians, watched the dramatic events unfolding south of the border. The *Free Press* reported that the local strikers were "behaving themselves generally more as interested spectators in an affair which did not personally affect them, than as people closely concerned in a strike."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 29 June 1894.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 3 July 1894.

<sup>31</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 5 July 1894.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 6 July 1894.

<sup>33</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 6 July 1894.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 9 July 1894.

On Tuesday, 10 July, Egan in Chicago informed the press that "the strike was broken Monday. All roads moved trains to-day, and to-morrow a general resumption of business will take place."<sup>35</sup> This was apparently what Superintendent Vanderslice was waiting for, and the first train since 5 July left the NPR depot in Winnipeg with a scab fireman and brakeman, amid a few catcalls from a ~~small crowd~~. Aboard were two "forlorn" passengers and a special constable.<sup>36</sup> The next day Northern Pacific trains were running more or less regularly, with replacement train crews or union men who had broken ranks.<sup>37</sup> Vanderslice issued a bulletin the same day offering to take back striking shop workers who registered with the company by 15 July.<sup>38</sup> The great Pullman strike had been lost on the Northern Pacific, as it had been lost everywhere else. But it was not until late August that this was officially recognized by the ARU membership on the Northern Pacific in a face-saving resolution:

That the men report for work as individuals and not as members of the A.R.U., upon their respective divisions, and hold their membership in the union; that they be not considered as scabs, but that the strike will not be declared off.<sup>39</sup>

By late October, 1894, the Winnipeg local of the ARU on the Northern Pacific, No. 243, had apparently dissolved, and was no longer listed in the 'Union Cards' column of the local labour paper, the *Peoples Voice*.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Ginger, *Debs*, p. 162.

<sup>36</sup> *Manitoba Free Press*, 10 July 1894.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 July 1894.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 July 1894.

<sup>39</sup> *Winnipeg Peoples Voice*, 25 August 1894.

The ARU in Canada apparently died as quietly as it had lived. Most of the 15 or so locals on the CPR apparently never accomplished anything for their members, disappearing without a trace and contributing only another mite to the tradition of labour radicalism in western Canada. If the presence of the ARU on the CPR had reflected real dissatisfaction with company policies and indicated the existence of a potentially explosive situation, it was an explosion that never went off. Partly this was because the CPR did not use Pullman cars, and was not dragged into the original boycott. But, paradoxically, the explosion south of the border also may have been partly responsible for the lack of trouble on the CPR. One effect of the Pullman strike in the U.S., reported the *Free Press*, was that "Canadian Pacific trains for the west are the heaviest yet known."<sup>40</sup> The re-hiring of men laid off earlier in the year, and the higher wages resulting from regular work, probably dampened the enthusiasm of CPR employees for radical action in the summer of 1894. At the same time, however, the success of the 1892 CPR strike probably contributed to the initial weakness of the ARU in Canada by convincing many Canadian railway employees of the effectiveness of conventional unionism — not only for train crews, but for telegraphers, trackmen and so on. Canadian trackmen, for example, formed a union of their own, the United Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen, in 1892, directly inspired by the success of the CPR strikers.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 13 July 1894.

<sup>41</sup> Railroad Trainman, June 1897, p. 552; D.W. Hertel, History of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees; Its Birth and Growth 1887-1955 (Washington, D.C., 1955), p. 30.

Certainly, the brotherhoods themselves held onto their members much more successfully in Canada than in the United States during the depression of the nineties. Three of the four brotherhoods suffered a drastic drop in their memberships in the U.S. in 1894, and this decline was not arrested until 1896 or 1897. The BLE had approximately 49,000 American members in 1893. By 1897, membership had dropped to 30,000. It was not until 1904 that the 1893 level was again reached. The BLF dropped from 27,000 to 21,000 between 1893 and 1896. The BRT dropped from over 26,000 to less than 19,000 in the same years. The ORC was the least affected during this time, losing only about 1,000 members, but then this order was the smallest, slowest-growing and the most conservative of the brotherhoods in the first place. During these same years in Canada, the brotherhoods suffered from little more than slightly arrested growth. The BLE lost about 50 Canadian members between 1895 and 1896. The BLF had 1,499 members in 1893, and 1,459 in 1896; this was back up to about 1,500 in 1897. The BRT had 1,741 Canadian members in 1893, and 1,715 in 1895; by 1896 this was back up to about 1,750. Unfortunately no figures appear to have survived for the ORC, but there is no reason to assume a deviation from this pattern.<sup>42</sup>

The reason for this divergence between Canadian and U.S. growth patterns was almost certainly the failure of the ARU and the Pullman strike to make a significant impact in Canada. The slight drop-off in membership in Canada is what one would expect during a depression, and is comparable to what happened to the brotherhoods during the severe

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<sup>42</sup>These figures were obtained from the journals and proceedings of the four brotherhoods for the period in question. See Appendix, especially Graph 2.

slump of the mid-eighties (which scarcely affected the brotherhoods' growth at all). Depressions are testing times for unions, and in Canada the brotherhoods passed the test with ease in the mid-nineties.

Winnipeg Local Union No. 100 of the ARU continued to exist for several years after the debacle of 1894. This probably owed much to the support of the *Peoples Voice*, and to the calibre of the local leadership. The first president of No. 100, William Small, became president of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council in early 1895, and in December, Charles Hislop, No. 100's Secretary-Treasurer, was elected to the Winnipeg City Council as a labourite.<sup>43</sup> On 24 April 1897, No. 100 made its last appearance in the 'Union Cards' column of the *Peoples Voice* just two months before the "remaining skeleton" of the ARU was itself dissolved by Eugene Debs and replaced by the "Social Democracy of America," which was not a labour union in the sense that the ARU had been.<sup>44</sup> Yet the collapse of the ARU in Winnipeg, like the collapse of the Knights of Labor earlier left a vacuum. It was filled in part a year or so later with the formation of the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, an organization for yardmen, bridgemen, and trackmen.<sup>45</sup> Utterly insignificant at first, this organization was to gain national notoriety after 1900 as a branch of an international union of the same name, based upon the ARU model of industrial unionism:

<sup>43</sup> Winnipeg Peoples Voice, 23 February 1895, 31 December, 1895.

<sup>44</sup> Ginger, Debs, p. 211.

<sup>45</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 4 October 1899; Vancouver Western Socialist, 17 January 1903.



The Telegraphers' Strike of 1896

Meanwhile, in 1896, another successful strike had been waged against the CPR, this time by the Order of Railroad Telegraphers (ORT). The operating brotherhoods were drawn into the conflict as mediators, and were largely responsible for the final settlement.

The ORT was a somewhat weaker organization than the brotherhoods (despite the skilled nature of the trade of telegraphy) partly because of the difficulty of organizing a class of employees strung out in individual isolation along many miles of track. Only the contact provided by the telegraph key made organization possible at all.<sup>46</sup> The Order had adopted a protective policy in 1891, and had begun co-operating with the operating brotherhoods in 1893, taking part in the Cedar Rapids Plan of federation.<sup>47</sup> This co-operation continued until some time after the turn of the century, during which time the Order's prestige was, in the words of its historian, "materially enhanced by the close relationship which was maintained with the older and more influential train and engine service Brotherhoods."<sup>48</sup> The success of the 1896 strike on the CPR did much to stimulate and strengthen the ORT.<sup>49</sup> For the operating brotherhoods, however, the episode was a trying experience — a threat, for a time, to their position and status on the CPR.

<sup>46</sup> McIsaac, Railroad Telegraphers, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

The difficulties on the CPR in 1896 began when an ORT committee, assisted by Second Grand Chief Telegrapher T.M. Pierson, visited Montreal and requested an audience with CPR Vice-President Shaughnessey on 23 September. The committee had a number of matters to discuss with Shaughnessey: low wages, long hours, a heavy workload, and discrimination and favouritism by local superintendents. Moreover, rumours were current that the CPR was trying to persuade its telegraphers not to join the ORT, and the committee wanted this point clarified.<sup>50</sup> Shaughnessey, however, refused to meet the committee, claiming that the company's telegraphers had not followed the correct procedure in presenting their grievances and demands. He declared that the telegraphers in each CPR division and subdivision should have met with their individual superintendents first (which had not been done) and, only then, failing to gain satisfaction, should have appealed to Montreal. The committee countered with the assertion that certain of their grievances could not be handled by individual superintendents, but only by the CPR head office in Montreal. On 25 September, Shaughnessey broke off communication, refusing to have anything more to do with the committee.<sup>51</sup>

The correct procedure for Pierson to have followed at this point would have been to call in Grand Chief Telegrapher W.V. Powell. Powell would then recommend a further course of action, and could

<sup>50</sup> Winnipeg Peoples Voice, 3 October 1896, 24 October 1896; Firemen's Magazine, November 1896, p. 359.

<sup>51</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report," pp. 31-32.

authorize a strike if necessary. At the same time, Powell would keep the other railway brotherhoods informed of the situation on the CPR.<sup>52</sup> Pierson, however, short-circuited this procedure, and took action entirely on his own initiative. On 28 September, without informing Powell or obtaining any formal authorization, he declared a strike on the CPR. At the same time, he sent telegrams to the grand chiefs of the other brotherhoods, informing them that a strike had been called.<sup>53</sup> Powell was caught completely unawares. He had not realized that there was any difficulty on the CPR, and was taking a short vacation in Arkansas. The grand chiefs of the other brotherhoods were equally surprised.<sup>54</sup> Pierson's reasons for bypassing correct procedure were never explained. But he probably believed that immediate action was required to counter Shaughnessey's refusal to meet the ORC committee. This could be seen as an "overt act" and as a denial of the ORT's right to act as a bargaining agent with the CPR telegraphers.<sup>55</sup>

The immediate result of Pierson's precipitous action was confusion at the executive levels of both the ORT and the other four brotherhoods. Powell could not be reached immediately when the other chiefs tried to determine whether the strike was 'legal' or not, since he was on his way to Montreal, and they were not able, as a result, to

<sup>52</sup> McIsaac, Railroad Telegraphers, pp. 116-117.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 14; BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report," p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report," p. 28.

<sup>55</sup> McIsaac, Railroad Telegraphers, p. 14.

inform their members on the CPR as to the correct course of action to follow regarding the strike.<sup>56</sup> Powell reached Montreal on 3 October, and realized that he was faced with a *fait accompli*. The strikers, he discovered, were under the impression that the strike was a legal one. As he explained later, his only possible course of action therefore was to declare the strike legal and "do everything he possibly could to restore the men to their positions and save the organization...." He immediately informed the other grand chiefs of his decision.<sup>57</sup>

It was clear at this point that the operating brotherhoods faced a major crisis. At a number of points along the CPR main line, brotherhood meetings passed resolutions of sympathy with the strikers, and in at least one instance a vote was taken supporting a sympathy strike.<sup>58</sup> The sympathy of the trainmen and enginemen for the strikers soon became common knowledge and led to persistent rumours in the press that the strike would widen to include these classes of CPR employees as well. To some extent, of course, the chances of this happening were exaggerated by a press only too willing to exploit the sensational, and in some cases the rumours were spread by the strikers themselves in order to increase the pressure on the company.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, a sympathy strike would have been 'illegal' for the brotherhoods, since

<sup>56</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report," p. 28.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 28; Toronto Globe, 30 September 1896; Victoria Daily Colonist, 1 October 1896.

<sup>59</sup> See Toronto Globe, 1 October 1896.

they all had long-term contracts with the CPR which they could not break without violating their own constitutions and by-laws.<sup>60</sup> Yet, for all this, should the strike continue for very long, and should the company appear to be winning, it might be difficult for brotherhood officials to restrain their rank-and-file. The resulting general and uncoordinated strike would almost certainly be a disaster, as the Pullman strike of 1894 had been.<sup>61</sup>

Yet, despite the possibilities of disaster on the CPR, the brotherhoods' grand chiefs seemed to be incapable of acting quickly or decisively. P.M. Arthur, of the BLE wired Pierson, after receiving his telegram of 28 September, to emphasize "the necessity of exhausting all honorable efforts before any decisive action was taken...."<sup>62</sup> And when Arthur received a request from an engineers' committee on the Eastern Division of the CPR to be permitted to go to Montreal to act as mediators, he replied No, and added rather obscurely, "unless we are sent for by our own men."<sup>63</sup> In the meantime, Grand Master P.M. Morrissey of the BRT had been in communication with the grand chiefs of the ORC and BLF "as to the advisability of going to Montreal and using our influence to relieve the situation and assist the operators...." The three men, however, merely agreed to meet in Chicago on 5 October and talk the situation over.<sup>64</sup> By this time the strike had been on over a week.

<sup>60</sup>The Toronto Globe, 1 October 1896, pointed this out.

<sup>61</sup>See Ibid., 30 September 1896.

<sup>62</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report," p. 36.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

Apparently the suddenness of the outbreak caught the CPR management as much by surprise as it did the executives of the brotherhoods. For the company, however, the surprise was compounded by the fact that a union which had only been organized on the road a year or two could call out, and keep out, almost all the telegraphers on the system. Reported the *Winnipeg Tribune*:

It is said that the size and completeness of the strike has completely flustered the officials who have been accustomed to look down on the operators as the least formidable and poorly organized of all branches of the service.<sup>65</sup>

The morale and solidarity of the strikers was strengthened by reports such as this, and by the knowledge that they had selected an excellent time to strike, when the CPR was busy moving wheat along its main line to Fort William before the close of navigation on the Great Lakes.<sup>66</sup> It appears that the CPR was able, throughout the strike, to maintain much of its regularly scheduled passenger service. But, without telegraphers, it was unable to maintain the largely unscheduled freight service which was still, a week after the beginning of the strike, "badly disorganized."<sup>67</sup> Moreover, this was a busy time for many American roads as well, making replacement telegraphers difficult to obtain.<sup>68</sup> The telegraphers were therefore in a position to hurt the CPR, and this

<sup>65</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 29 September 1896.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Toronto Globe, 3 October 1896.

<sup>68</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 29 September 1896.

knowledge lifted their spirits and kept the strike alive. Equally important for morale, moreover, was the knowledge that the CPR had been beaten before, in 1892. In that strike, said the *Winnipeg Tribune*, "the trainmen won practically all the points contended for..., and this tends to stiffen the backs of those who are out."<sup>69</sup>

In spite of everything in their favour, however, many of the strikers were convinced that they could not win without outside help. As the strike went into its second week, strikers at a number of points along the line began to seek "the good offices of the other organizations of railroad men to secure arbitration of their grievances."<sup>70</sup> Sympathy for the strikers was especially strong among brotherhood men on the Western Division, as was the desire to avoid striking themselves. On about 2 October, the chairmen of the brotherhood boards of adjustment on the division decided to bypass their inert grand chiefs and take matters into their own hands.<sup>71</sup> On Saturday 3 October, an *ad hoc* mediation committee consisting of the four chairmen left Winnipeg for Montreal. The brotherhoods' grand chiefs were apparently not notified until a day or two later. The grand chiefs, perhaps with relief, decided to give their blessing to the Western Division committee and not travel to Montreal themselves unless the committee failed.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Toronto Globe, 3 October 1896.

<sup>71</sup> Firemen's Magazine, February 1896, p. 125.

<sup>72</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report,"

The mediation committee arrived in Montreal on 5 October. Its first task was to persuade the ORT officials to place their case in the committee's hands. This the telegraphers did, "unconditionally."<sup>73</sup> The committee then obtained an interview with Shaughnessey; the CPR, after all, 'recognized' the unions they represented. Discussions then followed which the committee's report later described as "animated and pointed."<sup>74</sup> The CPR's management was probably by this time (6 October) only too eager for a settlement of the strike: the first week of the strike had cost the company \$79,000 in reduced earnings.<sup>75</sup> Yet Shaughnessey was not the sort of man to give in without considerable hard bargaining. He began the discussion with the committee by pointing out that the telegraphers had violated customary rules of procedure (which the brotherhoods themselves followed) by presenting their grievances directly to the management in Montreal rather than to their divisional superintendents. He challenged the committee to present solid proof that this unusual procedure had been made necessary by "unfair or unwarranted treatment" by the divisional superintendents, and he declared emphatically that "as far as the company was concerned, there was nothing which [the committee] could arbitrate between the company and the men on strike, and did not see how [the committee] could

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>75</sup> Toronto Globe, 7 October 1896..



uphold the Telegraphers, knowing that their mode of procedure had been irregular and opposed to all precedent."<sup>76</sup>

The committee replied that one of the principal grievances of the strikers was that certain telegraphers had been discriminated against by their divisional superintendents when they had asked for leave of absence to act in their official capacity as ORT committee men to adjust grievances. At this hint that CPR officials might be anti-union, Shaughnessey backtracked. He described the difficulties involved in giving leaves of absence to key personnel, but assured the mediation committee "that he would be pleased to accord to the operators and others every possible opportunity to perform committee work, and that all the consideration given to other organizations would be accorded to them."<sup>77</sup> This was clearly a breakthrough, since it meant recognition for the ORT by the CPR, something which the strikers now claimed was the most important issue at stake.<sup>78</sup>

The committee therefore now asked Shaughnessey for a formal proposition to end the strike. His proposal, however, fell short of what the committee knew the strikers would accept:

That if the men report at once to their Superintendents, they will be taken back to work without prejudice in filling vacancies. The men employed in the last week, and given permanent situations,

<sup>76</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report," p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Toronto Globe, 5 October 1896.

shall be retained in service. That any employe guilty of criminal misconduct or grave breach of discipline shall not be re-employed.<sup>79</sup>

Obviously, such a proposition provided little protection for the strikers, since strike-breakers could be given preference over the strikers. Yet Shaughnessey refused to reconsider, and the discussions adjourned for the afternoon.

That evening Shaughnessey went back over to the offensive. When presented with an alternative proposal, he asked the committee "point blank" whether they were bargaining in good faith, or were merely trying to stir up trouble between the company and its employees. Moreover, the committee later reported,

He wanted us, in defining our position, to say whether he was to understand that at any future time, as in the present case, where demands were made by one organization, that the members of the other organizations were going to say to the company, regardless of the justice or injustice of their demands, that the company must accede to their demands, or bear the consequence of a united struggle with all the organizations on our lines.<sup>80</sup>

Faced with this challenge to their integrity, the committee members hastened to assure Shaughnessey that their organizations had no desire to break their agreements with the company, and that their intentions were "perfectly honorable:" their "only aim was to bring about an amicable and speedy termination of the strike." They were clearly much

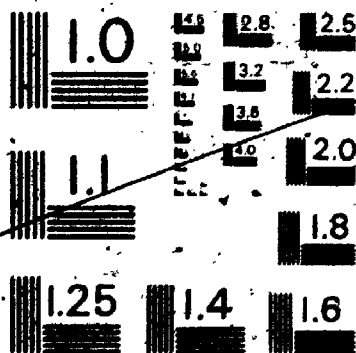
<sup>79</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report," p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

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shaken by Shaughnessey's question which had placed them, as the report later put it, in a very delicate position.<sup>81</sup>

But this was only a final parting shot from the CPR Vice-President, and, after some further discussion, he finally agreed to a proposition which was acceptable to the mediation committee:

All employes now engaged in a strike on the Canadian Pacific Railway may report at once to their respective Superintendents, who will reinstate them without prejudice to the position they occupied before the strike occurred, except such as have been guilty of such grave misconduct as to cause General Superintendents to refuse to accept them. New men employed during the past week will be utilized as far as possible in filling extra positions created by the fall business. All other employes who refused to take places of strikers, but were guilty of no other offence, and were dismissed, will be reinstated without prejudice.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to this written proposal, Shaughnessey made several verbal promises which guaranteed the rights of ORT committee men, and in which he agreed to meet personally with any ORT committee which failed to achieve satisfaction from a divisional superintendent. It was also understood that the telegraphers would receive a schedule of hours and wages on each division similar to those negotiated by the other brotherhoods.<sup>83</sup> These proposals were referred to the ORT committee men, who accepted them, and the strike was "declared off" at 3:30 a.m., 7 October. A message was sent out along the line: "We have received recognition.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.; also Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 7 October 1896.

and the schedule..... We have won, hands down. Notify all concerned."<sup>84</sup>  
 IORT officials could not conceal their satisfaction. Assistant Grand  
 Chief Dolphin in Winnipeg, for example, exulted that the strike settle-  
 ment meant "No more half pay or india rubber hours."<sup>85</sup> Forgotten entirely  
 for the moment was the irregular fashion in which the strike had been  
 called in the first place.

But the brotherhoods could not forget for very long. The  
 confusion which surrounded the beginning of the strike was the subject of  
 a special meeting of the executive officers of the five organizations  
 involved on 20 November, 1896, at Chicago. Grand Chief Powell was  
 subjected to considerable criticism at the meeting because the strike  
 had been called without informing the other four brotherhoods. As  
 P.M. Arthur put it,

The organization that declares a strike without  
 first consulting with the other organizations has  
 no right to call upon them. If I am consulted with  
 before the trouble begins, I shall do my part. But  
 if I am ignored I will never give any support.<sup>86</sup>

Powell's defence rested upon two points. First, he had  
 not known that a strike was going to be called and could not have been  
 expected to know. Second, the failure earlier of CPR employees in the  
 various brotherhoods to federate under the terms of the Cedar Rapids  
 Plan of system federation seriously hindered communications between

<sup>84</sup> Victoria Daily Colonist, 8 October 1896.

<sup>85</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 8 October 1896.

<sup>86</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Master's Report," p. 36.

them at the beginning of the difficulties.<sup>87</sup> Powell's second point was well taken, and illustrated a serious weakness in the Cedar Rapids Plan: if the Plan was not adopted on a particular railway system, no other machinery existed to fill the gap. In an attempt to fill the gap, therefore, the meeting passed a resolution which stated, in substance, that no organization on a non-federated system could "solicit or expect" support in a dispute with a railway company unless it had first notified the other organizations of its intentions, and had given the other organizations an opportunity to talk the matter over.<sup>88</sup>

Just how this regulation might have prevented the CPR difficulties was apparently not dealt with by the meeting. Obviously, little could be done should subordinate officers or the rank-and-file decide to take matters into their own hands. The CPR strike had an element of spontaneity with which the brotherhoods' leaders were unable to cope, but it was won, one suspects, largely because of this spontaneity, as manifested in the enthusiasm of the rank-and-file which kept the strike going while the grand officers dithered. The strike thus illustrated a fundamental problem of conservative union leadership, as Grand Master Morrissey pointed out in his report on the affair:

It is an easy matter when men are excited to precipitate a strike which is liable to become widespread and involve men and interests which, at its inception, were never contemplated. This has been the bane of labor organizations in the past and there is ample evidence before us that such a policy

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. System federation was never achieved on the CPR before World War One.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

has brought destruction to more than one organization, which, had it acted otherwise, might have been a credit to itself and of lasting benefit to mankind.<sup>89</sup>

In any case, the telegraphers themselves were much concerned about the irregular way in which the strike had been initiated. It was clear to them that the success of the strike must not be allowed to obscure the fact that Pierson had acted contrary to the Order's constitution. At the annual convention in 1897, therefore, Pierson was temporarily suspended from office, as a disciplinary measure, to prevent his action from establishing a legal precedent.<sup>90</sup>

#### Arbitration on the Grand Trunk, 1898

Intervention in labour disputes by the brotherhoods extended in another direction in late 1898: "Once again the ORT benefitted from its connections with the older and stronger brotherhoods in the running trades. On 23 December 1898, after extended and fruitless negotiations, the Grand Trunk and the ORT agreed to submit their differences to arbitration by a three-man board. The chairman of the board was Chief Justice W.R. Meredith of Ontario, and the company selected as its representative B.B. Osler, Q.C. For its representative, the ORT called upon Grand Master Frank P. Sargent of the BLF.<sup>91</sup> Sargent was by no means out of place in such company. In the 1870's he had fought Apaches in the southwest as a member of the U.S. Sixth Cavalry,

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> McIsaac, Railroad Telegraphers, p. 118.

<sup>91</sup> Firemen's Magazine, March 1899, p. 326.

and had been wounded in action. He had become Grand Master of the BLF in 1885 after less than five years of membership in the organization. In 1902 he was appointed U.S. Commissioner-General of Immigration by President Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>92</sup> Sargent ably employed the strength and prestige of his position to persuade the other board members to award the telegraphers a "substantial" increase in wages and a reduction in hours of work.<sup>93</sup> According to McIsaac, the acceptance of this award by the company "brought an apparently hopeless situation, from the union's standpoint, to a favourable conclusion."<sup>94</sup>

#### The Machinists' Strike of 1899

In the fall of 1899, a strike for recognition on the CPR by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) did not require formal intervention by the brotherhoods. The IAM was a strong union, and had chosen a good time of the year to strike. It was therefore able to win its strike after 10 days without official assistance from any other union, although there was apparently a good deal of 'unofficial' support for the strikers in the form of overt gestures of sympathy from the brotherhoods' rank-and-file.<sup>95</sup> An interesting feature of the strike from the point of view of the brotherhoods was the attempt of the CPR

<sup>92</sup> Biographical sketch in Railroad Telegrapher, April 1902, p. 338.

<sup>93</sup> Firemen's Magazine, March 1899, p. 326.

<sup>94</sup> McIsaac, Railroad Telegraphers, p. 15.

<sup>95</sup> Industrial Banner, November 1899; Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 4 October 1899.



management to justify its refusal to extend recognition to the machinists at the same time as it recognized the brotherhoods. According to Superintendent Whyte, the members of the brotherhoods

were purely railroad men, men who would find it more difficult to change their place of abode, and who if dismissed for cause would find it difficult to get a job on another road. These men naturally wanted to protect themselves. In the case of the machinists, they are not railroad men and can more readily get employment elsewhere; besides the rules under which they work are not so strict, which is a necessity with railroad men to secure the safety of life and property. A railroad might let out its repairs to a company, but it could not let out contracts for running its trains. These facts showed the difference in the nature of the work and the reason for a union in one case and not in another.<sup>96</sup>

Peter M. Arthur could not have put it better! Whyte's argument, of course, was purely a rationalization for a policy designed to hold back the flood of unionization on the CPR, and this was shown when the CPR capitulated and granted recognition to the IAM just nine days later.<sup>97</sup> Yet the superintendent's ready use of arguments justifying the CPR's recognition of the brotherhoods showed just how far the brotherhoods and the company had come since 1892.

#### The Trackmen's Strike of 1899

In the meantime, however, a trackmen's strike on the Grand Trunk had given further proof that the brotherhoods were in no danger of sliding imperceptively in the direction of a kind of *de facto* American

<sup>96</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 5 October 1899.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 14 October 1899. This settlement apparently received little attention in the newspapers because of the outbreak of the South African war a few days earlier.

Railway Union in which officers of the brotherhoods would automatically combine to apply pressure on management during a strike to bring victory to the strikers. The strike began on 22 May 1899, and was instituted by the United Brotherhood of Railroad Trackmen (UBRT), a union for track maintenance men with its headquarters in Ottawa and most of its members on Canadian railroads. As had already been mentioned, this union was formed in 1892 as a direct consequence of the BRT-ORC strike on the CPR. The purpose of the strike on the Grand Trunk in 1899 was to obtain recognition and higher wages. The wage issue was especially pressing because many trackmen were being paid only ninety-seven cents per day.<sup>98</sup>

The organizers of the strike called upon the other railway unions for assistance almost immediately after the strike began. In fact, the brotherhoods had been informed of the difficulties in advance and had suggested that "the strike was justified."<sup>99</sup> Probably by pure chance, the BLE and the BLF were bargaining at this same time with GRT representatives in Montreal for a new schedule, and the strikers had almost certainly asked them to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the meetings to intercede with management on their behalf.<sup>100</sup> The strikers' request for aid, however, was channelled in another direction as well, towards the federal government. The appeal was made first through James T. Burke, Dominion Legislative Representative for the BLF, who had

<sup>98</sup> Toronto Globe, 23, 29 May 1899.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 30 May 1899.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 26 May 1899.

been appointed to the job in 1898.<sup>101</sup> Burke had the ear of federal MPs and, in addition, had little love for the Grand Trunk, having been dismissed from the company's service in December 1898 after a lengthy dispute which went all the way to binding arbitration.<sup>102</sup> Burke, however, was able to offer little more than advice,<sup>103</sup> and the strikers and their supporters then appealed directly to Prime Minister Laurier. Laurier was very reluctant to enter the dispute,<sup>104</sup> but public sympathy for the strikers, appeals from other labour leaders, and Opposition pressure gradually forced the government to become involved. The Prime Minister began confidential negotiations with Grand Trunk president Charles M. Hays about the 27th of May "with a view of impressing upon [him] the necessity of meeting the demands of the men."<sup>105</sup> On 2 June, however, the BLE and BLF temporarily abandoned their attempts in Montreal to get a new schedule from the Grand Trunk. The strikers felt that this weakened their position and, despairing of government action, appealed to Opposition MP's E.F. Clarke (a veteran of the 1872 typographers' strike), George Taylor, and H.A. Powell. With some relief, Laurier broke off his own desultory negotiations with Hays, to let the Opposition have its chance. The Conservative members visited Hays in Montreal to

<sup>101</sup> James T. Burke, Report of Dominion of Canada Legislative Representative, 1899 (Stratford, Ontario, 1900), p. 7.

<sup>102</sup> Firemen's Magazine, March 1899, p. 343.

<sup>103</sup> Burke, Report, p. 8.

<sup>104</sup> Laurier to J.C. Sutherland, 2 June 1899, LP, Vol. 112.

<sup>105</sup> Laurier to D.J. O'Donoghue, 2 June 1899, LP, Vol. 112.

arrange an end to the strike. This goal appeared to have been accomplished on 4 June, and on 5 June the strikers reported back to work on the understanding that Taylor and Powell would negotiate a schedule shortly with Hays, as the official representatives of the union.<sup>106</sup> Hays, however, reneged on an agreement to reinstate all the strikers, and the strike resumed on 6 June within hours after the men returned to work.<sup>107</sup>

At this point, Laurier was forced to become directly involved again. At the same time, the failure of the Conservatives offered an opportunity to make political capital out of the situation.<sup>108</sup> Yet Liberal mills ground slowly, and an agreement was not reached until 18 June. Hays promised Laurier's personal representative, Liberal whip James Sutherland, that all the strikers would be taken back this time, except those "guilty of acts of violence or of having used menacing language towards the new men or the foremen and others who refused to go out." Hays also agreed to discuss the "whole question" of wages with a five-man committee of the trackmen.<sup>109</sup> He agreed, in other words, to recognize the UBRT.

<sup>106</sup> Toronto Globe, 5 June 1899.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 6 June 1899. Hays' extreme reluctance to re-hire strikers, despite firm commitments, was in evidence again during the machinists' strike of 1905-07, and the BRT-ORC strike of 1910. On the machinists' strike see Industrial Banner, June 1907, August 1907; on the 1910 strike, see below, Chapters X and XI.

<sup>108</sup> See House of Commons, Debates, 1899, pp. 4534-50.

<sup>109</sup> Toronto Globe, 19 June 1899.

A union representative admitted that the settlement was scarcely a victory, but pointed out that it represented a compromise by both sides in the dispute. Moreover, recognition had been promised. This was a genuine achievement, he contended, and he declared with pride that it showed "the strength of our union," since (unlike the ORT strike of 1896) the agreement had been reached "without assistance from any other organizations."<sup>110</sup>

Hays, however, had the last word. On 27 July he announced unilaterally, that the base rate for trackmen on the Grand Trunk's main line had been raised ten cents per day.<sup>111</sup> The UBRT committee had not been consulted about the raise, as Hays had originally promised. He explained to the press that the granting of the raise had made the meeting unnecessary,<sup>112</sup> but it was quite clear to the trackmen's committee that they had been cheated out of the recognition they thought they had won. They complained to Ottawa, and Sutherland once again left for Montreal.<sup>113</sup> In the meantime, the UBRT executive began to poll the union's membership as to further action. Hays, however, had effectively split the union's membership by giving higher wages to some men and not to others, and the strike could not be resumed.<sup>114</sup> The UBRT had lost.

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<sup>110</sup> ibid.

<sup>111</sup> ibid., 29 July 1899.

<sup>112</sup> ibid.

<sup>113</sup> ibid.

<sup>114</sup> ibid., 29, 30 July 1899.

Perhaps by chance, on the same day that the raise for trackmen was announced, 27 July, the Grand Trunk finally reached an agreement with its engineers and firemen. The on-again, off-again negotiations were finally concluded when P.M. Arthur and F.P. Sargent came to Montreal to apply personal pressure upon the company. The grand chiefs declared themselves gratified that the negotiations, which had been underway for "over two months," had resulted in "a satisfactory schedule of wages and regulations..." for BLE and BLF members.<sup>115</sup>

It may have been a pure coincidence that the Grand Trunk made public its decision to ignore the trackmen's committee on the same day that it reached an agreement with the BLE and BLF. One cannot ignore the possibility, however, that Arthur and Sargent took advantage of the Grand Trunk's difficulties with its trackmen to secure better terms for their unions, and once this had been achieved, went home, leaving Hays to deal with the trackmen as he saw fit. P.M. Arthur, in particular, was notorious for his contempt of mere labourers.<sup>116</sup>

If the UBRT's executive drew this conclusion, however, they kept it to themselves. Indeed, they treated James Burke of the BLF most politely when he suggested that the real solution to the UBRT's difficulties was to amalgamate with an American union, the Brotherhood of Railway Trackmen of America.<sup>117</sup> The UBRT executive had been considering amalgamation with the international union for some time, but the strike

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 31 July 1899.

<sup>116</sup> See Powderly, Path, pp. 163-164.

<sup>117</sup> Burke, Report, p. 8.

appears to have convinced the UBRT rank-and-file that the move was both logical and necessary. Thanks to Charles M. Hays, it now seemed clear that Canadian trackmen required American help if they were to win a major strike. A.B. Lowe, the UBRT's Grand Organizer, thus left the UBRT when its executive refused to sanction amalgamation, and led a successful BRTofA raid upon the UBRT's membership which resulted in the disappearance of the Canadian organization by 1901.<sup>118</sup> The correctness of Lowe's approach to the unionization of Canadian trackmen — affiliation with an international union — seemed to be proven when the BRTofA won a strike against the CPR in 1901.

#### The Trackmen's Strike of 1901

Once again the operating brotherhoods became involved in the strike as a consequence of the sympathy of their rank-and-file for the strikers. The strike began on 17 June 1901, and was called because President John T. Wilson of the BRTofA believed that the CPR was attempting to "undermine" the union during contract negotiations by offering wage concessions and improved work rules directly to its trackmen, and by interviewing union members to determine their attitude in the event of a strike.<sup>119</sup> By late June, an increasing volume of resolutions and letters expressing sympathy with the strikers from lodges and divisions of the brotherhoods on the CPB convinced the brotherhoods' general chairmen on the system that they should offer their services to the company and the

<sup>118</sup> Herfel, Maintenance of Way Employes, pp. 32-34; Industrial Banner, April 1901.

<sup>119</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 11, 17 June 1901; John T. Wilson, The Calcium Light Turned On By a Railway Trackman (St. Louis, Mo., 1902), pp. 22-34.

strikers as a conciliation committee.<sup>120</sup> This they did on 4 July, but it was not until 15 July that CPR General Superintendent McNicoll visited Winnipeg for a meeting with the general chairmen. It was clear to the chairmen that McNicoll was primarily concerned with the extent of brotherhood support for the strikers, since his first request to the chairmen was to ask them "to deny the reports that the strikers would receive the support of the other railway organizations...."<sup>121</sup> Charles Pope of the BLE assured McNicoll that the brotherhoods would "remain neutral," and then made a proposal to end the strike: "If the company would sign an agreement with the maintenance-of-way men and reinstate all strikers, we would recommend the [striker's] committee to settle on the [wage] advances made by the company."<sup>122</sup> McNicoll declined, and the chairmen decided to do nothing further at present, since "Mr. Wilson and Mr. McNicoll both seem confident of winning in the present struggle without the assistance of the other organizations...."<sup>123</sup>

The strike dragged on, however, and the company and the union began to change their minds about mediation. On 26 July, McNicoll admitted that the CPR was particularly hard hit in the west, because of the difficulty of getting and keeping replacements among a hostile population.<sup>124</sup> On 31 July, Grand Chief Wilson, together with the Chairman,

<sup>120</sup> Wilson, Light, p. 54; Labour Gazette, July 1901, pp. 3-18; August 1901, p. 125.

<sup>121</sup> Wilson, Light, p. 56; Manitoba Free Press, 30 July 1901.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Labour Gazette, August 1901, p. 124; Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 26 July 1901.



and Secretary of the strike committee, were arrested in Montreal on a charge of criminal libel for calling a strike-breaker a 'scab', and were released on bond.<sup>125</sup> These events seemed to bring about a softening of attitudes on the part of the disputants in the strike, and in late July the general chairmen of the brotherhoods (who had retained an active interest in the affair) renewed their efforts to effect a settlement.<sup>126</sup>

The general chairmen's conciliation committee, however, proceeded in a manner which was considerably less than flattering to the trackmen. The committee largely ignored Grand Chief Wilson and the trackmen's committee during the negotiations and, after reaching an agreement with the CPR management, attempted to impose it upon the BRTofA executive. The terms of the proposed settlement were presented to the trackmen by the conciliation committee on 14 August, and were immediately rejected.<sup>127</sup> It is easy to see why the proposals might be unacceptable, since the proposed schedule applied only to track foremen and to men with one year's standing, with the understanding that the union would not try to organize CPR employees not mentioned in the schedule. As Wilson complained, this left about 1,000 BRTofA members unaccounted for.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, the proposals did not guarantee to reinstate the strikers to their old positions, but only to give them preference for similar

<sup>125</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 1 August 1901.

<sup>126</sup> Wilson, Light, pp. 74-79.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-86.

<sup>128</sup> Toronto Globe, 17 August 1901.

positions if they were available. A. B. Lowe (now an official in the BRT of A) pointed out that the brotherhoods had not dared to submit a similar proposal to the telegraphers in 1896.<sup>129</sup>

It soon became clear, however, that the real reason for the trackmen's rejection of the proposals was the outbreak of a personal feud between Charles Pope, the chairman of the conciliation committee, and Grand Chief Wilson. Wilson was quite understandably perturbed at being excluded from the negotiations which led to the proposals of 14 August, and had come to the conclusion that Pope "was endeavouring to crystallize sentiment in opposition to the best interests of the trackmen," and wanted to aid the CPR officials "in their efforts to break up the maintenance-of-way men's organization on the C.P.Ry."<sup>130</sup> Pope and his committee, on their part, had come to believe that Wilson's stubbornness and desire for personal "glory" were the only stumbling blocks to a settlement.<sup>131</sup> They had, moreover, managed to convince four of the seven members of the trackmen's committee of this.<sup>132</sup> On 15 August, apparently believing they had the trackmen's committee in their pocket, the conciliation committee issued a public statement which declared that

nothing further can be done, unless President Wilson of the B.R.T. of A. will agree to leave the city [Montreal] within twenty-four hours, and not interfere

<sup>129</sup> Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 21 August 1901; Wilson, Light, pp. 89-90.

<sup>130</sup> Wilson, Light, pp. 67, 126-128.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

in any way with either committee and will give authority to the trackmen's committee to declare the strike off, when in their judgment a reasonable and fair basis of settlement can be effected.<sup>133</sup>

Wilson, however, was equal to the occasion, and responded to this challenge to his authority by engineering the expulsion of the leader of the dissidents in the trackmen's committee for "dickering with the Canadian Pacific Railway officials, through the general chairmen of the other Orders...."<sup>134</sup> The thoroughly chastened committee then issued a manifesto which endorsed Wilson completely, and called for unconditional reinstatement of the strikers, a uniform wage increase, and impartial arbitration.<sup>135</sup>

In the meantime, Wilson's supporters in the trackmen's committee had been working to undermine Pope's authority as chairman of the brotherhood conciliation committee. In late August the trackmen finally succeeded in convincing E.E. Eddy, the BRT representative on Pope's committee, that the committee "had been acting in bad faith."<sup>136</sup> Eddy broke with the conciliation committee and, with the approval of the trackmen's committee, called in Grand Master P.M. Morrissey of the BRT to revive the stalled negotiations.<sup>137</sup> With Pope out of the way, Wilson

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 92; Toronto Globe, 17 August 1901.

<sup>134</sup> Wilson, Light, p. 93.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96; Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 21 August 1901.

<sup>136</sup> Wilson, Light, p. 98.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

was persuaded to accept a proposal almost identical to the one he rejected on 14 August. Morrissey was able to convince him that the settlement, while far from perfect, conceded the most important point, union recognition, and that the adjustment of unsatisfactory terms in the settlement could be taken care of in the future.<sup>138</sup> Thus, when asked by a reporter if the settlement was a satisfactory one, Wilson replied, "Yes, if it were not the strike would still be on."<sup>139</sup>

Conclusion

The various Canadian railroad strikes of the nineties showed clearly both the strengths and the weaknesses of the system of unionization in the railway running trades which had developed in Canada in the previous two and a half decades. On the one hand, as we saw in the previous chapter, the railway brotherhoods had become strong enough to defeat the CPR in 1892, to gain recognition on other Canadian railroads, and to prevent wage cuts for their members during the depression of the nineties. Moreover, as we have just seen, they had become strong enough to intervene in disputes between other classes of railroad employees and management to protect their own interests, and strong enough, if they wished, to aid other unions in their quest for recognition. The fact that this power to intervene might sometimes have been misused is, of course, not the point, given the Darwinian atmosphere of the times. Just to survive was an achievement. As the *Toronto Globe* pointed out during the unsuccessful trackmen's strike on the Grand Trunk in 1899,

<sup>138</sup> ibid., p. 102.

<sup>139</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 6 September 1901.

a railway company might acknowledge that a union was beneficial to its employees, but one could not expect the union to be recognized "until it is strong enough to force it."<sup>140</sup>

On the other hand, the strikes of the nineties showed the real weaknesses of a system of organization based upon separate unions for individual classes of railway employees. The lack of co-ordination during the telegraphers' strike, the loss of the Grand Trunk trackmen's strike, and the misunderstandings on the CPR in the summer of 1901, were all a direct consequence of the balkanized system of union organization which resulted from Eugene Debs' failure to promote unified action in the early nineties, either by means of federation, or the American Railway Union.

A second source of weakness, however, could not have been solved by reorganization. The brotherhoods' leaders could never predict with any accuracy either the actions of subordinates or of the rank-and-file during a crisis. The refusal of the Grand Trunk conductors to strike in 1892 was just as unexpected as the decision of the CPR telegraphers to do just the opposite in 1896. Moreover, no leader could be entirely sure that sympathy for striking fellow employees would not result in illegal strikes, and broken contracts. Finally, there was the ever present danger that the rank-and-file might decide to switch to a dual union like the ARU: the contrasting fortunes of the ARU in the United States and Canada showed just how unpredictable this possibility was. After 1901, the increasing willingness of the federal government to intervene

in labour disputes (in a more systematic fashion than in the trackmen's strike of 1899) somewhat lessened the necessity of intervention by the brotherhoods in Canada. There were disturbing signs, however, that dual unionism was on the upsurge in the Dominion.

## CHAPTER VII

### NATIONALISM AND RADICALISM: THE BROTHERHOODS AND DUAL UNIONISM IN CANADA AFTER 1900

Although the brotherhoods were not without rivals in Canada in the nineteenth century, none of these rivals were ever much more than nuisances. Even the American Railway Union, which did so much damage in the United States in the nineties, proved to be weak and ineffective north of the international border. After the turn of the century, however, conditions changed significantly, and dual unionism was, for several years, of major concern to the Canadian wings of the brotherhoods. Two different types of dual unions were involved. The first type was conservative and nationalist in orientation, and was exemplified by the Canadian Order of Railway Men (CORM) of 1901, and the Canadian Order of Railway Trainmen of 1908. The second type attempted, in one way or another, to perpetuate the radical traditions of the American Railway Union, and appeared in Canada in its most threatening form as the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees (UBRE) in 1902 and 1903. The manner in which these two challenges were met by the brotherhoods is the subject of this chapter. As we shall see, the failure of both the CORM and UBRE engendered a new spirit of self-confidence among the brotherhoods as far as dual unionism was concerned, in both Canada and the United States, in the last years of the pre-war period — a self-confidence which even the fearsome-appearing IWW proved unable to shake in 1905 and after.

The Canadian Order of Railway Men

In April 1901, a small group of members of the railway brotherhoods met in North Bay, Ontario, to plan the formation of a purely Canadian union for railway employees in the train and engine service. Their action was quite in keeping with the prevailing national mood. This was a period of growing Canadian nationalism (or national self-confidence, if you will), to be seen elsewhere in the Canadian labour movement, for example, in sufficient Canadian unrest within the Afofl's international affiliates to warrant special attention at the Afofl's 1901 convention.<sup>1</sup> It is not entirely clear, however, why 'secessionism' among Canadian railway employees at this time manifested itself in, of all places, the small, out-of-the-way town of North Bay.<sup>2</sup> Ulterior motives may have been at work in at least one case: one of the secessionists, T.A. McArthur, a conductor, had recently been suspended from office by the ORC.<sup>3</sup>

At any rate, the CPR Trackmen's strike of the summer of 1901, accompanied as it was by charges of interference in Canadian affairs by the 'foreign' international brotherhoods<sup>4</sup> and by dissension among the brotherhoods' Canadian officers, apparently acted as a spur to further action. North Bay was a divisional point on the CPR, and during

<sup>1</sup>Babcock, "Age of L. in Canada," pp. 196-197.

<sup>2</sup>The population of North Bay in 1901 was 2530. Fourth Census of Canada 1901, I, 74.

<sup>3</sup>Winnipeg Voice, 15 November 1901.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 28 June 1901.



the strike there was a good deal of dissatisfaction there with the oft-times ineffectual efforts of the brotherhood conciliation committee to bring about a settlement.<sup>5</sup> By early October 1901, the North Bay secessionists had completed their plans, and issued a "Prospectus of Proposed New Order of Railway Men". This "Prospectus" was widely circulated among Canadian railway workers. The new union was to be called the Canadian Order of Railway Men.<sup>6</sup>

The "Prospectus" and its covering letter described "the reasons and advantages to be gained" from a national railway union. First, such a union would provide "proper and effective legislative representatives" at Ottawa. Second, it would replace incompetent and "tyrannical" American union executives with competent Canadian ones, thereby eliminating strikes on Canadian railroads. The elimination of strikes in this manner was no idle dream, "as we have in Canada some of the best men in the railway service." Third, the unnecessary flow of Canadian funds across the border would be halted: "Official statistics ... show a surplus of over \$40,000.00 to the credit of the Canadian membership in the five class organizations for the year 1900." A Canadian union could thus reduce both the union dues and the cost of brotherhood insurance to Canadian railwaymen. Finally (and perhaps most importantly), a Canadian officer of a purely Canadian organization,

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<sup>5</sup> Toronto Globe, 26 August 1901; Railroad Trainman, November 1901, p. 939.

<sup>6</sup> Both the "Prospectus" and covering letter were printed in full in the Firemen's Magazine, November 1901, pp. 801-807, and the Railroad Trainman, November 1901, pp. 937-939.

would not be "liable to be placed in the humiliating position of being refused an audience" with the government or railway management "on account of being a foreign subject."<sup>7</sup>

Apart from its secessionism, the most striking feature of the CORM was a proposal to bring five classes of Canadian railway employees — engineers, firemen, conductors, brakemen and telegraphers — together into one quasi-industrial union. Each class of employees would elect a chief executive to look after its particular problems, and each class would negotiate schedules and discuss grievances with management separately. The chief executive of each class, however, would become a member of the Grand Division, which would, in turn, handle all "legislative, fraternal and beneficiary matters," and which could, moreover, bring to bear the combined weight of all five classes in the event of difficulties with management.<sup>8</sup> In its structure, therefore, the CORM owed a good deal to earlier industrial-type unions in the railway service in North America, especially the American Railway Union, which had also been organized as a "federation of ... classes, ... separate and yet all united when unity of action is required."<sup>9</sup> A major difference from the ARU, however, was the CORM's concentration upon the elite groups in the railway service. Although provision was made for the addition of other "branches" of the railway service if the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> William Kirk, National Labor Federations, p. 125.

members desired,<sup>10</sup> at no time did the promoters of the CORM suggest that the new union would or should eventually become a mass organization, taking in every Canadian railway employee. This was, of course, in direct contrast with Eugene Debs' belief that even (or especially) the lowest-paid workers should become members of the ARU. Despite its organizational debt to the radical ARU, therefore, the new CORM was essentially conservative and craft-oriented, differing little in this respect from the international brotherhoods which it hoped to take the place of in Canada.

The proposed new organization clearly represented a direct challenge to the brotherhoods. They chose to take this challenge seriously, and it is easy to understand why. The ARU had been dissolved only four years earlier, and that strong challenger to the hegemony of the brotherhoods had been preceded by only a few years by the Knights of Labor, likewise a dangerous rival to the brotherhoods. Moreover, reports were coming in from the American west of a particularly menacing revival of the ARU idea, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees.<sup>11</sup> That there were doctrinal differences between the CORM and those other rivals, past and present, was therefore likely to be overlooked by the brotherhoods. Indeed these differences were not likely to matter if the CORM succeeded in attracting sizeable support from brotherhood members in Canada. Early reports indicated substantial support for the CORM. The *Toronto Globe* reported that "considerable interest is being

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<sup>10</sup> CORM "Prospectus," op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> The Firemen's Magazine, November 1901, pp. 801-802, made a special point of the similarities between the CORM and these other organizations.

taken in the movement by railway employees."<sup>12</sup> The *Winnipeg Voice* said, "a number of railway brotherhoods in Ontario [have] endorsed the new Canadian organization...."<sup>13</sup>

The BLF and the BRT were especially vulnerable to rivals which (like the CORM) promised financial advantages to their members, since firemen, brakemen and yardmen were the lowest paid workers in the train and engine service. The journals of the two organizations thus went to some lengths to refute CORM propaganda. The *Firemen's Magazine* pointed out, first, that the brotherhoods had great financial resources for fighting strikes, and cited the \$1.5 million spent by the BLE and BLF during the Burlington Strike of 1888. A relatively small Canadian organization would lack these resources, and would consequently be at the mercy of management. Second, said the *Magazine*, the CORM's consolidated insurance fund would mean that young, underpaid firemen and brakemen would have to pay higher rates than at present to cover the risks of older, higher-paid engineers and conductors, given the flat-rate system usually employed by labour unions. Third, the *Magazine* maintained that the brotherhoods, far from neglecting the legal and political problems of their Canadian members, spent more money lobbying in Ottawa than in Washington.<sup>14</sup> The *Railroad Trainmen's Journal* covered much the same ground as the *Magazine*, but added that all brotherhood

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<sup>12</sup> *Toronto Globe*, 30 October 1901.

<sup>13</sup> *Winnipeg Voice*, 22 November 1901.

<sup>14</sup> *Firemen's Magazine*, November 1901, pp. 806-807.

members; not just Canadians, paid more into their organizations than they received back; the resulting surplus was used to build up the beneficiary and protective funds of the brotherhoods.<sup>15</sup>

Nor did the journals of the BRT and BLF ignore the CORM's nationalistic attack upon international craft unionism. The *Railroad Trainmen's Journal* declared that the new union was just

another American Railway Union, transplanted to Canada and encouraged by a specious appeal to national feeling that is as false as Judas and altogether uncalled for by the conditions as they exist on the Canadian railways.<sup>16</sup>

The *Firemen's Magazine*, on its part, admitted that Canadian railway officials had often attempted to capitalize on the fact that American representatives of the brotherhoods were "foreign subjects", but contended that this had never been a hindrance to the effectiveness of the brotherhoods in Canada. Moreover, said the *Magazine*, no one in the brotherhoods denied the abilities of Canadians, and the brotherhoods had never attempted to stifle these abilities. If Canadians did not play a more prominent role in the BLF, it was because they had been content to let others "occupy official positions." Indeed, said the editor of the *Magazine*, completely ignoring Canada's separate status within North America,

If there ever has been any doubt as to the competency of Canadian railroad men the writer has never before heard of it. The Canadian railway men have

<sup>15</sup> Railroad Trainman, November 1901, p. 940.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

in the past managed their affairs better than in most sections of the country.<sup>17</sup>

The showdown between the CORM and the brotherhoods came on 20 November 1901, at an organizational meeting called in Ottawa by the CORM's promoters.<sup>18</sup> The brotherhoods sent several official representatives to the meeting. Significantly, all were Canadian. J. Harvey Hall of the ORC led the attack on the CORM. Hall was a man of wide experience in a number of fields and, a few months later, became joint Dominion Legislative Representatives for the brotherhoods. He was supported by James Murdock of the BRT, then Master of London, Ontario, Lodge 415, but later to be Canadian Vice-President of the BRT and ultimately Minister of Labour under Prime Minister Mackenzie King. Other members of the ORC, and two local representatives of the BLA, also took part in the discussion. The brotherhood men succeeded in dominating the meeting's proceedings, and it soon became clear to them that "the statements in regard to the strong feeling that existed in favor of the proposed new order were misleading and incorrect."<sup>19</sup> The turnout at the meeting was small. Murdock later reported an attendance of twenty-five or thirty.<sup>20</sup> At the end of the meeting, the chairman was asked if he and his associates intended to proceed any further with

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<sup>17</sup> Firemen's Magazine, November 1901, pp. 805-806.

<sup>18</sup> The fullest account of this meeting is by James Murdock, in a letter to the Railroad Trainman, January 1902, pp. 42-43. See also Labour Gazette, II (December 1901), 331.

<sup>19</sup> Murdock, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

the CORM. He replied, "No, not at this time; after awhile when the Canadians become educated we may take the matter up." Murdock thereupon reported to BRT headquarters that "Canadian secession" was "dead."<sup>21</sup>

Why was the CORM such an utter failure? To begin with, its claims of lower costs to members were probably less appealing in the generally good times then prevailing than they might have been during a depression. Moreover, it would take more than a slight financial advantage to persuade even a small number of brotherhood men to desert their well-established and financially sound organizations in favour of a new and untested experiment. Secondly, an appeal slanted towards railroad workers of a left-wing or radical persuasion might possibly have enjoyed some measure of success or support, especially in the West, as the HBRE was shortly to show. But labour leftists in Canada were well aware that the CORM stood somewhere to the right in the labour movement. As the *Winnipeg Voice*, a spokesman for the Canadian labour left, asked, why organize only the elite of railroad labour? "If it is to be a union of railway men, include all the railway men," declared the *Voice*.<sup>22</sup> Thirdly, the CORM's brand of nationalism probably had limited appeal to the average Canadian workingman, since it sometimes betrayed a non-working class bias. The CORM's promotional literature habitually called Canadians "British subjects," and a CORM organizer at one point referred to Canada as a "colony" of Great Britain.<sup>23</sup> Such language was

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Winnipeg Voice*, 8 November 1901.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 November 1901.

a pale reflection of the idiom of the British Empire League and the Canadian middle and upper classes, not the labour movement, in Canada or anywhere else,<sup>24</sup> and could do nothing to overcome the tendency of railroaders to think in international terms.<sup>25</sup> Finally, of course, the brotherhoods made sure that the new organization was stifled at birth, and would not survive to cause trouble in the future.

#### The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees

In the meantime, however, (as has already been pointed out) a much more formidable looking threat to the brotherhoods was developing in the American West. This was the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees (UBRE), formed in Oregon in January 1901. Although the UBRE closely resembled the American Railway Union of the nineties and probably gained considerable support from former ARU members as a result, it was in no sense a revival of Debs' organization, but sprang from entirely new roots in the American Northwest at a time when rapid economic growth was causing widespread "unrest, violence, conflict and radicalism" among working men in the region.<sup>26</sup> The driving force behind the UBRE — its Eugene Debs — was George Estes, a telegrapher and station agent on the Southern Pacific Railway in Oregon since 1883.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See Carl Berger, The Sense of Power (Toronto, 1970), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter I, above.

<sup>26</sup> Melvyn Dubofsky, "The Origins of Western Working Class Radicalism, 1890-1905," Labor History, VII (Spring, 1966), p. 135.

<sup>27</sup> George Estes, Railway Employees United; A Story of Railroad Brotherhoods (Portland, Oregon, 1931), p. 22.



In October 1898, Estes joined the Order of Railroad Telegraphers, angered at having been denied a promotion "which he earnestly desired and believed he was entitled to" because of his many years of faithful service. He felt that "repetitions of such cases could only be avoided by a working agreement defining Telegraphers' rights."<sup>28</sup> During the 1890's, the ORT had never been able to claim more than a handful of members on the Southern Pacific, or gain a schedule from management. Estes was elected ORT General Chairman for the railroad in December 1898. He devised a system of organizing telegraphers by mail, and by April 1899, had enlisted all Southern Pacific telegraphers in the Order.<sup>29</sup> The railroad's management was impressed by this evidence of union strength and granted the ORT a schedule in May 1899. Also impressed were Estes' fellow telegraphers:

Bro. Geo. Estes ... has performed almost a miracle in the wonderful rapidity with which he organized the line and created our schedule. ... It is to be regretted that each line of road in America cannot produce an Estes, or even one to several lines of road.<sup>30</sup>

In early 1900 the Southern Pacific established a Relief Department for its employees, a form of accident compensation insurance maintained partly by compulsory employee contributions, and designed to undercut union insurance and limit the liability of the company in the

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Railroad Telegrapher, November 1899, p. 953.

case of on-the-job injuries.<sup>31</sup> Unionized employees on the Southern Pacific objected strenuously. In April 1900, fifty-five delegates, representing all the unions on the railroad, met in San Francisco to protest to company president Collis P. Huntington.<sup>32</sup> Estes was elected chairman of the committee of fifty-five and, using information supplied by the Pacific coast managers of three national insurance companies, faced down Huntington and had the plan withdrawn.<sup>33</sup> These were, Estes wrote much later, "the greatest events of [my] life."<sup>34</sup>

This achievement firmly convinced Estes of the virtues of united action. When the ORT lost strikes shortly thereafter on the Santa Fe and the Southern Railroad, because of lack of support from other unions, he decided that some closer form of federation of railway unionists was required than was supplied by the Cedar Rapids Plan. At the ORT annual convention in the autumn of 1900, he ran for the union's presidency on a unity platform. He failed, however, and as Debs had earlier, abandoned the brotherhoods as a vehicle for labour

<sup>31</sup> Many North American railways had relief departments. A typical employee's contract with a relief department had a clause which operated as a release of all claims against the company for damages arising from an on-the-job injury. In Canada, such release clauses were invalidated by an amendment to the Railway Act in 1904. This amendment was challenged by the Grand Trunk Railway but was upheld by the Privy Council in 1906. Railroad Trainman, December 1906, pp. 1122-1123; W.H. Allport, "American Railway Relief Funds," Journal of Political Economy, XX (1912), 49-78, 101-134.

<sup>32</sup> Kirk, National Labor Federations, p. 123.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.; Estes, Railway Employees United, pp. 72-75.

<sup>34</sup> Estes, Railway Employees United, p. 11.

reform.<sup>35</sup> In January 1901, Estes and seven other railroaders met at Roseburg, Oregon, to lay the groundwork for Division No. 1 of a new, industrially-organized union, the UBRE.<sup>36</sup> Estes and his supporters soon discovered they were not alone in their analysis of the problems of railway labour. About this time, another organization similar to the UBRE was formed in San Francisco, the Railway Employees Amalgamated Association. Upon learning of each other's existence, the two organizations coalesced as the UBRE, with Estes as president.<sup>37</sup>

The UBRE's first efforts were directed at taking over the ORT organization on the Southern Pacific. This failed, and Estes and UBRE Vice-President B.A. Meyer were expelled from the ORT.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Grand Master Morrissey of the BRT issued a warning to members of his union against "the danger of a movement of this kind."<sup>39</sup> It is likely that similar warnings were issued by the heads of the other brotherhoods as well. Perhaps because of this opposition, and perhaps because the economic climate was not such as to encourage railroaders to switch their membership, the UBRE grew much more slowly than the ARU had. — 1901 was not 1893. It is doubtful that the organization ever

<sup>35</sup> Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in the Province of British Columbia, "Report," Sessional Papers, 1903, No. 36a, p. 28. Hereafter cited as "British Columbia Royal Commission."

<sup>36</sup> Kirk, National Labor Federations, pp. 123-124.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 124; American Labor Union Journal, 3 September 1903. Hereafter cited as ALU Journal.

<sup>38</sup> Railroad Telegrapher, July 1901, pp. 601-602.

<sup>39</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1901, "Grand Master's Report," p. 69.

had more than fifty divisions, in sad contrast with the over five hundred locals of the ARU at its peak.<sup>40</sup>

Like the ARU, however, the UBRE was not conceived of at first by its organizers as a radical or socialist organization. In the spring of 1902, it attempted to affiliate with the AFofL, but was rejected primarily because the ORT was also an AFofL affiliate, and because AFofL President Samuel Gompers was unwilling to offend the other railway brotherhoods. Only then did the UBRE's executive decide to throw in their lot with the labour radicals, and began to negotiate for affiliation with a left-wing rival of the AFofL, the newly-formed American Labor Union (ALU). These negotiations were successfully completed by the end of 1902.<sup>41</sup>

The UBRE had thus severed every connection with the conservative mainstream of the North American labour movement. The ALU openly supported the Socialist Party of America. Like the UBRE, it was a product of western discontent, but had moved leftward somewhat earlier. In 1898, the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), feeling that the problems of western labour were being ignored by the AFofL, had established the Western Labor Union as a regional alternative to Gompers' organization. In early 1902, the Western Labor Union was expanded into a national organization, the ALU, becoming at the same time a firm radical socialist opponent of all the AFofL stood for.<sup>42</sup> It is possible that Estes never

<sup>40</sup> ALU Journal, 11 June 1903.

<sup>41</sup> Kirk, National Labor Federations, p. 124; Railroad Telegrapher, August 1902, p. 866; Winnipeg Voice, 24 December 1902.

<sup>42</sup> Dubofsky, "Origins," pp. 147-151.

fully subscribed to the ALU's brand of socialism.<sup>43</sup> Yet, in attempting to strengthen the position of the UBRE by joining the ALU, he ensured that his organization would be opposed, not only by conservative trade unionists, but also by all those other North Americans who feared radical socialism. Moreover, as we shall see, the link with the WFM guaranteed that there would be trouble when the UBRE gained enough strength in British Columbia to challenge the CPR.

The UBRE gained entry into Canada in April 1902, when it absorbed the small Winnipeg union of the same name. The Winnipeg UBRE, as has already been mentioned, was formed on 15 September 1898, and for some time had restricted itself to organizing railroad employees on the CPR who were not members of other railroad unions — yardmen, bridgemen and certain classes of trackmen, for example.<sup>44</sup> The Winnipeg UBRE remained small between 1898 and 1901, and seems never to have attempted to obtain recognition from the CPR management. Its relations with other railway unions were good, and its members marched in the 1901 Labour Day parade in Winnipeg along with members of the railway brotherhoods.<sup>45</sup> Towards the end of 1901, however, the Winnipeg UBRE began to grow more aggressive, probably as a result of growing unrest among railway employees

<sup>43</sup> Estes' career as a 'socialist' was brief — from 1902, when the UBRE affiliated with the ALU, until 1905, when the UBRE affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World. See below, and see also Estes, Railway Employees United, pp. 35-37.

<sup>44</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, 4 October 1899; Vancouver Western Socialist, 17 January 1903.

<sup>45</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 3 September 1901. The UBRE also took part in the parades of 1899 and 1900. ibid., 5 September 1899, 3 September 1900.

in Winnipeg.<sup>46</sup> It apparently stepped up attempts to organize freight handlers and "office men" in the CPR freight department under the leadership of its Master, William Gault, who had worked in the department for ten years.<sup>47</sup> In December 1901, the UBRE began to send delegates to the monthly meetings of the Winnipeg Trades Council.<sup>48</sup>

The American UBRE apparently was not well-known in Winnipeg until late 1901 or early 1902. It was first mentioned in the Winnipeg Voice on 15 November 1901, and then only in a report picked up from an American labour newspaper which compared it to the Canadian Order of Railway Men. The CORM was apparently much better known to Winnipeggers in late 1901 than was the American UBRE.<sup>49</sup> In April 1902, however, the American UBRE applied for an AFofL charter. It must have been clear to observers of the labour scene everywhere in North America that the American UBRE was gaining in strength and confidence. Somehow, contact was established between the two UBRE's, and on 25 April, the Winnipeg UBRE became Division No. 70 of the American organization.<sup>50</sup>

Affiliation with the American union effected a fundamental change in the nature of the UBRE in Winnipeg. Before affiliating, it had been an entirely conventional trade union in the jurisdictional sense,

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 21 April 1902; Winnipeg Voice, 25 April 1902.

<sup>47</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 25 April 1902, 2 May 1902.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1902.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 15 November 1901. See Manitoba Free Press, 22 October 1901.

<sup>50</sup> Vancouver Western Clarion, 7 May 1903.

in that it restricted its organizing activities to certain classes of workers on the CPR. Affiliation, however, launched it upon a much more adventuresome course: it was transformed into a branch of an industrial union which did not recognize any jurisdictional boundaries in the railway industry. As the *Winnipeg Voice* said, in a column publicizing the 'newcomer': the UBRE "is a general organization for the great army of railroaders in North America... It admits to membership all white, worthy railway workers on absolute equality."<sup>51</sup> The Winnipeggers had affiliated with the American union to gain new friends and allies. At the same time, however, they gained (or were soon to gain) powerful enemies: The AFofL and the railway brotherhoods.

Yet Gault and his associates probably could see only the need for friends in April 1902. Two members of their union had already been dismissed by the CPR, including a delegate to the Winnipeg Trades Council, allegedly for union activity.<sup>52</sup> Shortly afterwards, moreover, Gault was himself brought before his superior in the CPR freight department "and told that to hold his position in the freight department he would have to sever his connections with the union."<sup>53</sup> Gault had just been offered the position of UBRE Vice-President for Canada. He decided to accept the offer, and presented his resignation to the CPR.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Winnipeg Voice*, 9 May 1902.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 May 1902; *Manitoba Free Press*, 1 May 1902.

<sup>53</sup> *Winnipeg Voice*, 2 May 1902.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*; *Manitoba Free Press*, 1 May 1902.

Although there was considerable dissatisfaction in the CPR freight shed with the management's high-handed behaviour,<sup>55</sup> Gault, on the advice of President Estes, decided to hold off on strike action until it became clear whether other unions in the CPR would break with the company as well.<sup>56</sup> There seemed to be a distinct possibility of this. The machinists, trackmen, telegraphers and conductors all had grievances which remained to be settled on 30 April.<sup>57</sup> As it happened, however, most of these grievances were settled by mid-June, leaving the UBRE without potential allies against the CPR in the event of a strike. Gault and his associates thus decided to defer consideration of CPR problems in favour of exploiting a much more promising situation on the Canadian Northern Railway.

Entrepreneurs William Mackenzie and Donald Mann had, by 1902, built the CNR into a solid rival of the CPR in the Canadian West. And, as in the case of the CPR twenty years earlier, the railway's employees were attempting to establish their organizations on the rapidly expanding system. The CNR management, however, was most reluctant to permit this, probably because a lower wage structure than the CPR's would help them to undercut the CPR's freight rates. General Superintendent D.B. Hanna therefore resisted strongly any attempt by unions to gain recognition, usually by the simple techniques of refusing to meet union committees, and by denying "that any trouble exists or ..."

<sup>55</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 1 May 1902.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.; Vancouver Western Clarion, 7 May 1903.

<sup>57</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 21 April 1902, 9 May 1902, 31 May 1902.



any complaint made."<sup>58</sup> By early spring, 1902, however, the company was on the verge of serious difficulties as a result of these tactics. The brotherhoods abandoned attempts to gain individual contacts in April, and began interunion negotiations for a system federation according to the Cedar Rapids Plan, with a view towards putting combined pressure on the CNR management.<sup>59</sup> The machinists, car repairers, boiler-makers and trackmen had also been ignored by Hanna and were considering taking strike action.<sup>60</sup> The machinists and their fellow shop workers were the first to take this step, going out on strike on 17 May.<sup>61</sup> About fifty-five men were involved in the strike, including boiler-makers, tinsmiths and helpers, as well as machinists. They made it clear that they were striking for recognition as well as higher wages.<sup>62</sup>

From the first, the lot of the strikers was a frustrating one. The CNR management dealt with the strike by denying that it existed. The other employees on the road were sympathetic to the strikers, but

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 21 April 1902.

<sup>59</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1904, "Grand Master's Report," p. 82; BRT Proceedings, 1905, "Report of Grand Master," p. 5.

<sup>60</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 21 April 1902, 16 May 1902; Winnipeg Voice, 25 April 1902.

<sup>61</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 17 May 1902. It is not clear whether the strikers had permission to strike from their parent union, the International Association of Machinists (IAM), or not. IAM headquarters in the United States at this time was probably totally pre-occupied with a dispute with the National Metal Trades Association of the United States. The IAM struck the Association's members on 20 May 1902. Forty thousand machinists went out. The total membership of the IAM was only fifty thousand. Mark Perlman, The Machinists: A New Study in American Trade Unionism (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961), p. 27.

<sup>62</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 17 May 1902.

this sympathy was of little value as long as it was not translated into action. On 29 May, the strikers wired Deputy Minister of Labour Mackenzie King in Ottawa to intervene under the terms of the Conciliation Act. He replied that he had taken the matter under consideration and had consulted his minister, William Mulock.<sup>63</sup> A day or two later the strikers' position deteriorated further as the car repairers announced that their union, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, was on the verge of reaching an agreement with the CNR management, ending the possibility that they would strike too.<sup>64</sup> On 6 June, Mackenzie King arrived in Winnipeg to investigate the strike, but left almost immediately after a short talk with the strikers and a visit to the CNR offices. He apparently accomplished nothing.<sup>65</sup> It was probably about this time that the strikers began to despair of any real help from their international headquarters, the railway brotherhoods, or the government. The UBRE was the only alternative left.

On 9 June, George Estes arrived in Winnipeg. No records seem to exist of his subsequent discussions with the strikers, but his investigations apparently convinced him that support for the strikers was fairly general among railway employees in Winnipeg, and that he could further the aims of the UBRE by helping the strikers.<sup>66</sup> At an open meeting of the UBRE on 11 June, it was announced that the UBRE would

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 30 May 1902.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 2 June 1902.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 7 June 1902.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 10 June 1902, 12 June 1902.

begin an organizing drive among CNR employees "and carry through the movement for higher wages which was recently begun by the machinists of the road."<sup>67</sup> On 30 June, a UBRE committee attempted to present a schedule for CNR non-operating employees to Superintendent Hanna, but was not granted a hearing. The union thereupon struck the CNR at 4 p.m.<sup>68</sup>

Gault claimed that a number of classes of employees had struck the CNR, both in Winnipeg and elsewhere along the line. "The only important branches in the service not with the strikers," he declared, were "the conductors, engineers, firemen and brakemen... [But] these men [are] only a small portion and percentage of the C.N.R. employees and a strike could, if necessary, be carried out successfully without their aid, although it would be valued if given." Gault expected that this aid would be given shortly, because "there [are] a large number of individual sympathizers" among the train and engine crews of the CNR "who [are] only waiting instructions from their own organizations to strike."<sup>69</sup>

Gault was too optimistic about brotherhood support, however. There was evidence that the brotherhood men in Winnipeg were seriously divided on the strike issue. One faction within the brotherhoods supported the strikers openly, and some members of this faction belonged to the UBRE, in addition to retaining their memberships in the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 12 June 1902.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 1 July 1902.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

brotherhoods.<sup>70</sup> These men co-operated closely with the strikers. They hoped to present joint UBRE-brotherhood schedules to the CNR management, and were apparently prepared to join the strike if necessary to enforce their demands.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, a dozen or so members of the BRT went out with the strikers on 30 June.<sup>72</sup> A second faction, however, was against having anything to do with the UBRE. This latter group, although it may have been small in numbers, was probably the stronger of the two because it included most of the executives of the local branches of the brotherhoods, and thus automatically had the backing of international headquarters.<sup>73</sup> Yet the dominant position of this anti-UBRE faction obviously was conditional upon its being able to keep the local brotherhood rank-and-file convinced that there were positive advantages to remaining in the fold. Now that the strike had broken out, the only way to do this was to match the promises of the UBRE by getting union recognition for the brotherhoods, and a raise in wages from the CNR management. The local brotherhood officials therefore immediately reopened negotiations with the CNR management which had been stalled since April by the attempt to co-ordinate the protective activities of the brotherhoods according to the terms of the Cedar Rapids Plan of system federation.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 2 July 1902; BRT Proceedings, 1903, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 2 July 1902.

<sup>72</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1903, "Report of Grand Master," p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>74</sup> Conductor's Monthly, October 1902, p. 765.

The brotherhood negotiators found Superintendent Hanna slightly more receptive to their requests than he had been in April.<sup>75</sup> On the one hand, he had probably detected the fundamental weakness in the brotherhood negotiators' position: they were desperately anxious for a schedule, but could not strike to enforce their demands without appearing to give in to the rival pro-UBRE faction in the brotherhoods. The repeated public declarations of loyalty to the company by the brotherhood delegations were proof of this weakness.<sup>76</sup> Yet, on the other hand, Hanna could not ignore the negotiators, since he could not afford at this point to let these men lose control of the situation: he was apparently confident that he could break the UBRE strike in a week or so if he could retain the loyalty until then of the most difficult to replace men — the men the brotherhood negotiators represented — the train and engine crews. He therefore toyed with the brotherhood committees until 8 June, then abruptly severed relations, declaring that he would not recognize their unions.<sup>77</sup>

Hanna apparently believed he no longer needed the brotherhoods because the strike was all but won by the CNR by this time. The strike committee had had little success in extending the strike beyond the immediate vicinity of Winnipeg and, on 8 July, the same day that Hanna severed relations with the brotherhoods, the company announced that many of the strikers had returned to work, and that the

<sup>75</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 3 July 1902.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 1 July 1902, 2 July 1902, 3 July 1902, 4 July 1902.

<sup>77</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1903, "Report of Grand Master," p. 5.

Winnipeg shops were now operating at full capacity.<sup>78</sup> The company's willingness to give reporters full access to company property to investigate the situation seemed to confirm this claim,<sup>79</sup> as did violent denunciations of the returned strikers in the pro-UBRE *Voice*.<sup>80</sup> This development, however, strengthened the position of the anti-UBRE faction in the brotherhoods. If indeed the UBRE strike was all but over, then the brotherhoods could threaten to strike themselves without fear of acquiring any obligations to the UBRE, or appearing to give in to the pro-UBRE faction.<sup>81</sup>

The negotiations with Hanna, moreover, had given the anti-UBRE 'official' group in the brotherhoods a much-needed breathing space. They had used their time to perfect plans for joint action according to the Cedar Rapids Plan: federation papers for the CNR system were signed on 10 July. By this time telegrams had been despatched to the international headquarters of the brotherhoods telling of the management's refusal to grant recognition, and asking for the assistance of the grand officers "at once."<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 8 July 1902.

<sup>79</sup> ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 11 July 1902.

<sup>81</sup> There is no evidence, however, that the brotherhood negotiators intended to offer to give the *coup de grace* to the UBRE strike. As we shall see, in fact, the brotherhoods rejected a request from the CNR management to 'break' the UBRE strike in the CNR yards. BRT Proceedings, 1903, "Report of Grand Master," p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1904, "Grand Master's Report," p. 82.  
BRT Proceedings, 1903, "Report of Grand Master," p. 5.

Vice Grand Master W.E. Lee of the BRT and Vice Grand Chief Garretson of the ORC arrived in Winnipeg on 13 July. CNR Vice-President Mann had now taken charge of the situation for the company and, a few hours before the arrival of the grand officers, phoned to the local chairman of the joint committee with an offer to negotiate a settlement with the operating employees. Mann was told that this matter was now in the hands of the grand officers.<sup>83</sup> Garretson and Lee soon negotiated a satisfactory settlement with Mann for their unions, to go into effect as soon as the CNR had settled with the other members of the system federation. This was accomplished two days later.<sup>84</sup> Mann attempted to persuade Lee to include the CNR yard (still on strike by the UBRÉ) in the agreement. But Lee was now negotiating from a position of strength, and refused. "I said to him," Lee wrote later,

that had he met with our committee and granted a schedule prior to the present trouble that [sic] the Brotherhood would most certainly have carried it out to the letter, and that even though some few of our members had refused to comply with the law of the organization, in other words, went on strike in violation of our laws, there was always a sufficient number of members of the organization ready to uphold the law to guarantee that any contracts made by us would be held inviolate.<sup>85</sup>

This agreement was a bitter blow to the strikers and their many supporters in the Manitoba labour movement. Earlier

<sup>83</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1903, "Report of Grand Master," p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

negotiations with the pro-UBRE faction in the brotherhoods had encouraged the strikers to believe that the brotherhoods would co-ordinate their attempts to get schedules from the CNR with the UBRE, and "that no agreement would be made until all schedules presented were dealt with and signed."<sup>86</sup> The separate settlement, therefore, led to considerable criticism of the brotherhoods in local and provincial labour circles, and to charges that the brotherhoods had broken faith with their fellow workers and profited from their suffering. Said the *Voice*,

To the shame of the labor cause be it recorded that there are men in the large organizations so destitute of all knowledge of the real inwardness of the labor movement, so abandoned to selfishness and anxiety to hold their job, and keep the poorer paid in their relative position, that they would rather help a corporation in any kind of treachery than a fellow worker. Such men should take down the sacred emblem of Brotherhood and put up the signboard of Syndicate.<sup>87</sup>

The CNR settlement thus became an issue in the East-West dispute which was dividing the Canadian labour movement in the early years of the new century.<sup>88</sup> As Babcock has pointed out, western Canadian labour at this time tended to support "industrial unionism and radical political action" as represented by the American Labor Union; eastern labour, on the other hand, favoured "craft organization and legislative lobbying" of the Afofl and brotherhood variety.<sup>89</sup> At the TLC Annual

<sup>86</sup> TLC Proceedings, 1902, pp. 41-42.

<sup>87</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 25 July 1902.

<sup>88</sup> See Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930 (Kingston; Ontario, 1968), pp. 76-78.

<sup>89</sup> Babcock, "A.F. of L. in Canada," pp. 180-182.



Convention at Berlin, Ontario, in September 1902, the "Report of the Executive Committee of the Province of Manitoba" denounced the CNR settlement and roundly castigated the "trade union grand officers from the United States" for combining with "one of the largest capitalistic corporations in Canada" to oppose "the largest trade union in Manitoba, and one that ... has the full sympathy of the old established unions...."<sup>90</sup>

The domination of the TLC by its eastern wing (and ultimately by the A.F. of L.), however, guaranteed that the Manitoba "Report" was not endorsed by the Convention. Instead, the Convention condemned dual unionism and expelled the Knights of Labor from the TLC.<sup>91</sup> The consequence was to heighten western Canadian dissatisfaction with the TLC and the international craft unions, and provide opportunities for the further expansion of the influence of the UBRE and the ALU in western Canada.<sup>92</sup>

The grand officers of the brotherhoods were somewhat bewildered by the criticism directed at their organizations by the western Canadian labour movement. Wrote Grand Chief Conductor E.E. Clark:

The position of the provincial body of Manitoba is ... obscured and made more difficult to understand by the fact that the U.B.R.E. is not recognized by the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress, and furthermore, it stands as the embodiment of the dual class of organization, which was formerly [*sic*] condemned by the Berlin meeting, the congress having, by formal resolution, expelled the K. of L. and all similar organizations that had representation therein.

<sup>90</sup> TLC Proceedings, 1902, p. 42.

<sup>91</sup> Robin, Radical Politics, pp. 67-68.

<sup>92</sup> Babcock, "A.F. of L. in Canada," pp. 182-183.

while we, in this entire connection have, as ever, thoroughly and honestly represented the class organization idea.<sup>93</sup>

Clark, of course, could scarcely be expected to understand all the complexities of the Canadian labour scene. A good deal of inside information about Canadian affairs probably was not available to him because his organization, like the other brotherhoods, was not directly represented in either the AFofL or the Dominion TLC. Moreover, over 90 percent of his order's membership was American, and most of his attention, therefore, had to be given to American matters. As we shall see in the next chapter, however, the brotherhoods were becoming increasingly aware, about this time, that their Canadian operations required salaried grand officers whose primary concern was Canadian affairs — despite the small number of Canadian members. The controversial CNR settlement of 1902 was certainly evidence of this requirement.

The CNR settlement did not end the strike on the CNR. On 1 August 1902, the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council placed the CNR on its "unfair" list by a vote of thirty-five to five.<sup>94</sup> This had little immediate effect, however. By the end of August, the *Voice* was referring to the strike as a "moral victory,"<sup>95</sup> and by mid-September, as "the recent strike."<sup>96</sup> Yet the UBRE refused to call the strike "off", and

<sup>93</sup> Conductors' Monthly, October 1902, p. 767.

<sup>94</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 1 August 1902.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 22 August 1902.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 19 September 1902.

many of the strikers managed to get temporary employment elsewhere to tide them over.<sup>97</sup> In January 1903, the CNR management began to think in terms of ending the dispute, and thus getting off the unfair list and getting back the company's "old reliable employees."<sup>98</sup> A settlement was reached, ending the strike, on 24 January. The strikers were reinstated and granted schedules, and the company was placed back on the "fair" list by the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council. Only one thing was lacking in the settlement: recognition for the UBRE. The company was described as "inexorable" on this point.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, President Estes was overjoyed at this turn of events. He wrote the UBRE's Canadian organizer, Harold V. Poore, "It is a wonderful victory, and we can now say we are an organization which has never lost a strike...."<sup>100</sup>

Estes had great hopes for his organization in Canada in early 1903. Thus far progress had been slow. The UBRE had organized a division at Toronto in the spring of 1902, and another at Vancouver in June. Divisions were organized at Calgary, Revelstoke and Nelson in the fall.<sup>101</sup> Estes, however, foresaw twenty divisions in Canada by the

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 30 January 1903.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 23 January 1903.

<sup>99</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 27 January 1903.

<sup>100</sup> "British Columbia Royal Commission." p. 9.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5; Calgary Daily Herald, 19 May 1903.

summer of 1903, with the CPR completely organized by 30 June.<sup>102</sup> These hopes went completely unfulfilled. There was considerable expansion in the membership of the existing divisions in western Canada in the spring of 1903, but no new divisions. Moreover, hopes for further growth in the east proved completely illusory. The UBRE headquarters was even forced to strike the Toronto division off its list in May 1903, "no reports having been received by the grand lodge for over a year." Railway employees in Toronto claimed that the Toronto division "was never in good standing, and ... was looked upon generally with disfavor."<sup>103</sup>

The reason for this general failure is not far to seek: by this time the UBRE had become involved in a dispute with the CPR in British Columbia which finally developed into a strike which lasted over three months, and which fell considerably short of an unqualified success for the union. The events of the strike scarcely require detailed examination here, since they have been the subject of several other studies,<sup>104</sup> and, moreover, did not involve the brotherhoods as.

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<sup>102</sup>"British Columbia Royal Commission," p. 7; Winnipeg Voice, 20 February 1903.

<sup>103</sup>Railway Employees' Journal, 11 June 1903, 18 June 1903 (This was the official UBRE journal); Calgary Daily Herald, 19 May 1903.

<sup>104</sup>These studies include the "British Columbia Royal Commission" (previously cited); Allan D. Orr, "The Western Federation of Miners and the Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in 1903, with Special Reference to the Vancouver Island Coal Miners' Strike" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1968); Stuart Marshall Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66 (Ottawa, 1968), pp. 112-121; Paul Phillips, No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia (Vancouver, 1967), pp. 37-41; William Bennett, Builders of British Columbia (Vancouver, 1937), pp. 60-64.

deeply as had the CNR difficulties. Briefly, the difficulties began in January 1903, when CPR officials in British Columbia decided to resist the efforts of the UBRE to organize employees on the railroad's Pacific Division. There followed about a month of what the Royal Commission appointed to investigate the strike called "a kind of secret warfare ... between the company and its employees, who were members of the Brotherhood ..."<sup>105</sup> On 27 February, the company refused to consider the reinstatement of two UBRE members, ostensibly discharged for disciplinary reasons, and the union went on strike. By 9 March, the strike had spread to include the UBRE divisions at Nelson, Revelstoke, Calgary and Winnipeg. The considerable sympathy for the strikers among organized labour in B.C. was reflected in sympathy strikes by Vancouver longshoremen, teamsters and shipmen, who aimed to prevent passage of CPR freight. Estes also called upon the leadership of the ALU for support, and requested in particular the aid of the ALU's strongest affiliate, the WFM, in cutting off the CPR's coal supply. Although this request was granted, it proved to be scarcely necessary, since the mines which supplied the CPR with its coal, the Dunsmuir mines on Vancouver Island, were already seething with discontent at owner James Dunsmuir's absolute refusal to pay any attention to requests for better wages and working conditions. Dunsmuir's miners affiliated with the WFM and struck in early March, motivated as much by their anger at company policies as by sympathy for the UBRE. The spread of strikes in British Columbia induced the federal government to appoint a Royal Commission in April, and in early June, the Commission, which included

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<sup>105</sup>"British Columbia Royal Commission," p. 11.

Mackenzie King as secretary, effected a settlement of the dispute between the CPR and its striking employees. As in the strike against the CNR, the UBRE claimed a victory. ~~Since recognition for the UBRE~~ was not part of the settlement, however, this claim had a very hollow ring to it: the UBRE had once again failed to gain a contract from a major Canadian railroad after a strike. For a new and struggling organization, 'victories' of this sort were likely to make defeat unnecessary, and this was made clear by the collapse of the Calgary division shortly after the end of the strike.<sup>106</sup>

As this brief sketch indicates, the four railway brotherhoods were not involved in the CPR strike of 1903 as deeply as they had been in the CNR strike of 1902. There were very few defections to the UBRE from brotherhood ranks in B.C., and the UBRE was apparently forced to limit itself, for the most part, to the previously unorganized — freight handlers, clerks and office men, baggagemen, men in the stores, and labourers.<sup>107</sup> There were good reasons for this. First, the operating brotherhoods had been firmly established on the CPR's Pacific and Western divisions since the 1880's. They had recognition from the CPR, and contracts. The uncertain situation that prevailed on the CNR in 1902, providing an opening for the UBRE, was therefore not in evidence on the CPR's western lines in 1903. Secondly, the brotherhoods were by now fully alerted to the dangers of the UBRE, and reacted immediately to the outbreak of the CPR strike. ORC spokesman J. Harvey

<sup>106</sup> Calgary Daily Herald, 16 June 1903.

<sup>107</sup> Vancouver Daily Province, 4 June 1903.

Hall immediately issued a statement which declared that his brotherhood would have nothing to do with the strike.<sup>108</sup> Since Hall was joint Dominion Legislative Representative for the brotherhoods, he probably spoke for all of them.<sup>109</sup>

Indeed, the CPR's difficulties seemed to set the stage for a *detente* between the CPR and the brotherhoods, since an immediate consequence of the strike was to open the eyes of the CPR management to the virtues of conventional international unionism. On 2 March, General Superintendent Marpole of the CPR's Pacific Division issued a long statement to the press, much of which was devoted to refuting the charges of the strikers, including the charge that union members had been unjustly singled out and fired. But Marpole also contrasted the UBRE unfavourably with those 'responsible' unions with which the CPR had agreements, and declared,

We are prepared to readily and fairly treat with any proposition of organized labor properly constituted and based on just principles, but cannot permit unwarrantable interference with the conduct of business of this company, and I am sure that no body of men or individuals will countenance acts manifestly aimed at discipline.<sup>110</sup>

According to the *Winnipeg Voice* this "recently expressed regard for internationalism in organization" by the CPR was "nothing but a fraud

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<sup>108</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 6 March 1903.

<sup>109</sup> See "British Columbia Royal Commission," p. 27.

<sup>110</sup> Vancouver Daily Province, 2 March 1903.

and a sham" inspired primarily by the hostility of the international officers of the brotherhoods to the UBRE. "It was not ever thus," the ~~Voice~~ reminded its readers.<sup>111</sup>

An immediate product of this new (and, as we shall see; very transitory) friendship between the CPR and the brotherhoods was an abortive attempt to settle the strike, with the brotherhoods acting as mediators. An attempt by the Vancouver Board of Trade to settle the strike failed on 6 March, and at this point Estes called out the UBRE members at Calgary and Winnipeg. Marpole thereupon suggested brotherhood mediation.<sup>112</sup> This suggestion was at first rejected by Estes and the strikers, partly because they recalled the difficulties which President Wilson of the BRTA had encountered as a result of brotherhood mediation during the CPR trackmen's strike of 1901. "The history of the Trackmen's strike is still green in the memory of all," declared one group of strikers.<sup>113</sup> From the beginning, however, the strikers claimed the sympathy of Vancouver trainmen, and a few days later modified their stand to take account of this alleged friendship: the strikers offered to accept a conciliation committee of engineers, firemen, conductors and brakemen, provided that they were all local men running trains out of Vancouver.<sup>114</sup> By this time, however, the CPR management

<sup>111</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 13 March 1903.

<sup>112</sup> Vancouver Daily Province, 7 March 1903, 14 March 1903.

<sup>113</sup> Vancouver Western Socialist, 20 March 1903.

<sup>114</sup> Vancouver Daily Province, 14 March 1903.



had also reconsidered, and rejected the offer. As Marpole explained, the extension of the strike to the Western Division meant that the strike settlement was now out of his hands, and must be decided in Montreal.<sup>115</sup>

At this point the UBRE reverted to its earlier hostility towards the brotherhoods, declaring that the mediation offer had been made to further the brotherhoods' selfish purpose. As the *American Labor Union Journal* explained,

... such an arbitration would mean destruction to the United Brotherhood, as the "grand masters," "grand chiefs" and king fakirs of railway conductors, engineers and firemen would not render a decision favorable to a railway organization that must ultimately embrace the members of the old brotherhoods, and, consequently, confiscate their jobs.

In proposing this arbitration plan the brotherhoods ... have played directly into the hands of the company, and none knew it better than they. It is a treacherous stab in the back of the grandest railway union ever conceived....<sup>116</sup>

The CPR's use of brotherhood propaganda lent further substance to the charges of radicals that the brotherhoods were consciously acting in the best interests of the CPR management. Not long after the beginning of the strike, the CPR's security department published in pamphlet form an anti-UBRE editorial from the *Railroad Trainmen's Journal*, and distributed it widely in western Canada.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> ALU Journal, 26 March 1903.

<sup>117</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 20 March 1903.

The editorial had described the UBRE as a "revolutionary organization" based upon "a combination of duplicity, ambition and oratorical pyrotechnics," and consisting of "a traitorous set of ambitious ex-members of the regular organizations" who had come into Canada after failing to accomplish anything in the United States in order to breathe a semblance of life into a dying cause.<sup>118</sup> Eugene Debs commented:

[I] understand precisely what the strikers on the C.P. have to contend with. They have but one hand with which to fight the corporation, as the other has to be used to keep the "brotherhood" knife from cutting their throats.<sup>119</sup>

Despite the claims of radicals, however, any entente between the brotherhoods and the CPR as a consequence of the UBRE strike was so shortlived and unsubstantial as to have almost no effect upon the normally cool and stiffly correct relations between them. The brotherhoods were deeply involved in contract negotiations with the CPR when the strike broke out. An examination of the course of these negotiations shows that the brotherhoods continued to find the railway's management most unwilling to give them what they wanted, in spite of the management's freely expressed admiration for "responsible" labour unions.

The brotherhoods had never established a system federation on the CPR, as they had on the CNR, but instead had continued to conduct negotiations with management using the joint committees which had proven their effectiveness during the strike of 1892. In 1902, the BRT-ORC

<sup>118</sup> Railroad Trainman, September 1902, pp. 735-739.

<sup>119</sup> Vancouver Western Clarion, 11 June 1903.

joint committee on the Central, Western and Pacific Divisions of the CPR associated themselves with a concerted wage movement being conducted in the United States by the Western Association, an organization consisting of the general chairmen of the BRT and the ORC on all railroads west of the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. The Association was designed to raise and standardize wages in the region, and undercut management's claims that competition made it impossible for any one company to pay higher wages than its competitors.<sup>120</sup> Some thirty-six railway systems were involved in the Association's wage movement and, by early 1903, all the American railways concerned had granted the Association's demands.<sup>121</sup> The CPR resisted these demands; however, apparently because its management could see little point in conforming to a wage system devised for American railroads. Negotiations between the company and the BRT-ORC committees were still going on when the UBRE went on strike in late February.<sup>122</sup> The public declaration of friendship for the brotherhoods by the CPR at that time did nothing to accelerate these negotiations, or make the CPR management more amenable to the committees' demands. In mid-May, the joint committees of the three western divisions joined forces to confront CPR Vice-President McNicoll in Montreal, and there was some talk of a strike.<sup>123</sup> Agreement was not finally reached until 1 August 1903, when the brotherhoods agreed to

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<sup>120</sup> Robbins, Railway Conductors, p. 63.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 64; Vancouver Western Clarion, 19 May 1903.

<sup>122</sup> Vancouver Daily Province, 28 February 1903.

<sup>123</sup> Vancouver Western Clarion, 19 May 1903.

accept wage rates which differed from the Western Association's scales.<sup>124</sup>

The long drawn-out negotiations between the CPR and the ORC and BRT, in short, almost completely ignored the UBRE strike, making nonsense of radical claims of collusion between the CPR and the brotherhoods.

That the UBRE strike had not affected the relations between the brotherhoods and the CPR was further demonstrated when the BLE and BLF began joint negotiations with the CPR in the summer of 1903 for their members on all seven divisions of the road. The two organizations had acted jointly before on the CPR, and the purpose of the 1903 negotiations was the revision of a joint agreement reached in 1901. In 1901, the negotiations had been difficult enough, as "both sides contested very strongly for their rights."<sup>125</sup> But in 1903, the company looked even more unfavourably upon the joint committee's demands.<sup>126</sup> Negotiations dragged on in Montreal from October to December before an agreement was reached and, as BLE Grand Master Hannahan reported, "at times it appeared as if it would be impossible for us to come together without making an issue."<sup>127</sup> The negotiations were protracted primarily because the joint committee was determined to get a considerable increase in wages, and this was "bitterly contested by the officials."<sup>128</sup> The

<sup>124</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1905, "Report of the Grand Master," p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> BLE Proceedings, 1902, "Grand Master's Report," p. 247.

<sup>126</sup> Engineers' Journal, January 1904, p. 64.

<sup>127</sup> In other words, a strike seemed a distinct possibility. BLE Proceedings, 1904, "Grand Master's Report," p. 172.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., Engineers' Journal, January 1904, p. 64.

resulting schedule was a good one from the point of view of the brotherhoods, but probably not all that had been desired.<sup>129</sup> In short, there was little evidence of increased friendship between the CPR and its firemen and engineers as a consequence of the events of the spring of 1903.

In any case, the influence of the UBRE was rapidly diminishing by late 1903. The charter of the defunct Calgary division was cancelled in mid-summer,<sup>130</sup> and various AFofL affiliates began to move into western Canada in the hopes of enrolling former UBRE members.<sup>131</sup> Within a year of the end of the CPR strike, the UBRE was all but extinct in Canada: at the organization's biennial convention in San Francisco in May 1904, the office of Canadian Vice-President disappeared, and no Canadians were elected to any executive office.<sup>132</sup> In early 1905, the official UBRE 'Directory of Divisions' listed Winnipeg as the only Canadian division, and neither of the two Canadians listed on the Executive Board of the parent ALU had any apparent connection with the UBRE.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>129</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1904, "Grand Master's Report," p. 173.

<sup>130</sup> Calgary Bond of Brotherhood, 3 July 1903, 12 September 1903; Railway Employees' Journal, 10 September 1903.

<sup>131</sup> Vancouver Independent, 11 July 1903.

<sup>132</sup> ALU Journal, 3 June 1904.

<sup>133</sup> Chicago Voice of Labor, January 1905, pp. 12, 21. This journal (a monthly) combined the ALU Journal and the Railway Employees' Journal. The two Canadians apparently represented the Western Federation of Miners and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Toronto branch. Ibid. On the ASE, a British organization, see Eugene Forsey, "British Trade Unions in Canada, 1853-1924," paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, Kingston, 1973, pp. 4-5. Forsey does not mention the ASE's dalliance with the ALU and IWW.

By late 1904 the UBRE was a shadow organization, and the ALU had become little more than a front for the Western Federation of Miners. Still hostile to the AFofL brand of unionism, but needing allies because of a series of defeats in the Colorado mining region, the WFM's leaders therefore invited a number of anti-AFofL unionists to a conference in January 1905 to plan a new organization, the Industrial Workers of the World. George Estes of the UBRE was involved in the early planning stages of the IWW, and was one of the signers of the January 1905 'Manifesto' which announced the IWW's founding convention in June.<sup>134</sup> Estes did not attend the June convention, however, and no explanation was offered for his absence by the other UBRE delegates.<sup>135</sup> An indication of the low level to which the UBRE had fallen, however, was that the convention's Committee on Credentials credited it with only 2,087 members — and this was probably an over-optimistic estimate.<sup>136</sup> Estes had apparently gone home to Oregon, his career as a radical labour leader ended. He ultimately became a writer, publisher, and supporter of the Ku Klux Klan in Portland, Oregon.<sup>137</sup>

As far as the *Railroad Trainmen's Journal* was concerned, the UBRE had been "dead" for over a year before the formation of the IWW. The cause of death, according to the *Journal*, was the fatal

<sup>134</sup> *Industrial Workers of the World, Proceedings, 1905*, pp. 6, 85.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> See George Estes, *The Roman Catholic Kingdom, and the Ku Klux Klan (Portland, Oregon, 1923)*.

resemblance to the ARU of the mid-nineties, an organization "still fresh in the memory of the railway employes...." Estes had tried to take advantage of Canadian inexperience with this type of unionism to "use Canada as a stepping stone to his organization elsewhere." But, even in Canada, "the railway brotherhoods did not fall into the trap."<sup>138</sup> Indeed, the UBRE had nowhere proven to be as dangerous as at first feared. Said the *Journal*:

We did have some concern as to what this thing would do. We found ... that it did no harm. So we regard the matter as the two Irishmen did who were passing through a woods and heard ... a terrifying sound. They listened for a short time, but nothing came of it and one said to the other, "come along. Its [*sic*] nothing but a damned noise." That is what we think of the U.B.R.E.<sup>139</sup>

#### Other Dual Unions in Canada

Perhaps the fact that the UBRE (like the CORM) had soon proven to be little more than "a damned noise" explains why the brotherhoods paid little further attention to threats of dual unionism on Canadian railways before World War One. Several dual unions appeared, but were usually given rather scornful threatment by the brotherhoods when they were noticed at all. Admittedly, these organizations were sometimes small, although this fact had not prevented the brotherhoods from worrying about the CORM. The Provincial Workmen's Association (PWA) in Nova Scotia, for example, organized railway workers on the two hundred miles or so of Intercolonial track between Truro and Sydney.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Railroad Trainman, January 1904, pp. 48-49.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., March 1904, pp. 200-201.

<sup>140</sup> H.A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada (Toronto, 1948), pp. 165-166.

Most of these PWA members on the Intercolonial were shopmen and labourers, men "who do not come within the scope of the various brotherhoods."<sup>141</sup> There was talk, however, of organizing members of the running trades as well for the PWA, but the Nova Scotia representatives of the brotherhoods seem to have been almost completely unconcerned by this, even when the PWA railway employees threatened to strike on the Intercolonial for recognition and bring the PWA miners out in sympathy, in a manner very similar to the UBRE-WFM collaboration in British Columbia.<sup>142</sup>

Another Nova Scotia union, the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees (CBRE), formed in 1908, made claims to "industrial" status,<sup>143</sup> and was a direct spiritual descendant of the UBRE: The CBRE started life as an affiliate of the International Brotherhood of Railroad Employees, formed in the eastern United States in 1903 as an eastern equivalent of the UBRE.<sup>144</sup> In reality, the CBRE was only interested in organizing non-operating employees on the Intercolonial, and made this clear at the outset.<sup>145</sup> It was not attacked by the brotherhoods as a consequence: the threat to international unionism which the

<sup>141</sup> Halifax Herald, 4 March 1903.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 4 March 1903, 8 March 1903.

<sup>143</sup> W.W. Greening and M.M. Maclean, It Was Never Easy, 1908-1958 (Ottawa, 1961), p. 7.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-7; London, Ontario, Industrial Banner, September 1903.

<sup>145</sup> Labour Gazette, December 1908, p. 606.



CBRE posed could safely be left to others — the Dominion TLC, for example.

The CBRE did, however, inspire the formation of a union which was deliberately dual to the brotherhoods. This was the Canadian Order of Railway Trainmen, formed at Truro, Nova Scotia, in November 1908.<sup>146</sup> That this organization was clearly designed as a Canadian competitor to the international brotherhoods was shown by the preamble to its constitution:

To unite the men in the train service in the Dominion of Canada, to promote and advance their general welfare, and social, intellectual and moral interests, and for the better diffusion of a national sentiment, this fraternity has been organized.<sup>147</sup>

Despite this ambitious claim, however, the organization was not much more successful than the Canadian Order of Railway Men had been at the beginning of the decade. In fact, the brotherhoods did not even learn of its existence until the spring of 1909, when Vice Grand Master James Murdock of the BRT visited the Maritimes on a regular inspection trip. He discovered that the new organization was considered to be "a joke" outside of Truro, and that there was "absolutely no reason to believe" that it would ever amount to anything.<sup>148</sup>

The IWW, however, was obviously not a joke, and the brotherhoods felt obliged to pay attention to it at the beginning. At

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<sup>146</sup> Moncton Eastern Labor News, 6 February 1909; Railroad Trainman, June 1909, p. 519.

<sup>147</sup> Railroad Trainman, June 1909, p. 519.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

the BRT biennial convention in May 1905, a resolution was passed putting the Brotherhood on record as opposed to the IWW, since "the entire proposition is disreputable, dishonest and misrepresentative when its purposes are known...."<sup>149</sup> In October 1905 the *BLE Monthly Journal* condemned the IWW for trying to bring together in the same union "men of thrift and intelligence who become experts in what they undertake," and "another class of mediocre, indifferent men" who were useful only as labourers.<sup>150</sup> This sort of language, however, did not reflect deep concern. The outlook of the brotherhoods had changed. The IWW was never regarded as a threat as the UBRE had been, even though the IWW's decision to concentrate upon unskilled workers was not substantially different in practice from the policy of the UBRE.<sup>151</sup> After 1905, the brotherhoods' journals and conventions paid relatively little attention to the IWW. The 'wobblies' organized strikes of construction workers on the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific in British Columbia in 1912, but by 1914 had fallen sadly into decline as a force in the western Canadian labour movement, victims of "employer opposition, government repression and economic depression."<sup>152</sup> The brotherhoods'

<sup>149</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1905, p. 74.

<sup>150</sup> Engineers' Journal, October 1905, p. 913.

<sup>151</sup> A. Ross McCormack, "The Industrial Workers of the World in Western Canada: 1905-1914," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, Edmonton, 1975, p. 6.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-20, 28. Also Phillips, No Power Greater, pp. 53-54; Bennett, Builders of British Columbia, p. 42.

lack of concern had been justified, at least as far as Canada was concerned.

### Conclusion

The most notable thing about unions which attempted to compete with the brotherhoods in early twentieth century Canada was their complete failure, regardless of approach. The conservative appeal to national sentiment failed, both in the case of the Canadian Order of Railway Men in 1901, and the Canadian Order of Railway Trainmen in 1908. And the UBRE's attempt to radically restructure the organization of Canadian railway labour was equally unsuccessful, even in 1902 in Winnipeg, where recognition problems and the outlook of local labour provided a climate favourable for radical unionism. Even an attempt by the craft-oriented Switchmen's Union to extend a jurisdictional dispute with the BRT into Canada after 1900 appears to have been unsuccessful.<sup>153</sup> These failures showed that the pattern of unionization among train and engine service employees on most Canadian railroads had become firmly established by 1900. In the nineteenth century, Canadian railwaymen had shown little interest in unions which were dual to the brotherhoods; this outlook did not change significantly after 1900. At the same time, however, nationalist unions like the CORM drew attention to the unique status of Canadians as a national minority within the brotherhoods. How could the special needs and desires of this minority be accommodated without disrupting the administrative framework of the brotherhoods?

<sup>153</sup>Railroad Trainman, March 1900, p. 240, April 1904, p. 264.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OFFICE OF CANADIAN VICE-PRESIDENT, 1890 - 1909

Before 1890, the brotherhoods usually 'recognized' the existence of Canadians within their memberships by electing a Canadian to an unsalaried office in the Grand Lodge or Grand Division. This office was generally of minor importance. For example, in 1885, J. Harvey Hall of Parkdale, Ontario, was elected Grand Outside Sentinel in the ORC Grand Division.<sup>1</sup> In most other respects, Canadian members were given little special treatment, in that their administrative and organizational needs were usually attended to by salaried officers from headquarters in the United States. There was some modification of this arrangement in the nineties, and the belief began to become current that Canadians had a right to 'their' grand lodge or division office, precisely because they were Canadians. The real change, however, came after the turn of the century. By 1909, all four brotherhoods had established a new office, that of Canadian Vice-President (or Canadian Vice-Grand Chief in the BLE), whose main responsibility, as a salaried member of headquarter's staff, was to look after the administrative and organizational needs of the Canadian membership.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ORC Proceedings; 1885, p. 809.

<sup>2</sup> The ORC in 1907, the BLF in 1908, and the BRT in 1909, dropped the titles of Grand Master or Grand Chief, and Vice Grand Master and Vice Grand Chief in favour of President and Vice-President. The BLE retained its traditional nomenclature. Other international

Each brotherhood took its own individual path to the office of Canadian Vice-President, and thus each requires individual treatment. This will be the procedure in this chapter. At the same time, a number of common factors were apparently at work. The first of these was the growth of the Canadian membership.

Precise and complete data for the Canadian growth of all four brotherhoods during and after the depression of the nineties is difficult to obtain, but the experience of the BRT (for which we have relatively complete data) was probably typical. In 1891, the BRT had 1267 members, and in 1901, 2476. By 1911, Canadian members numbered 8100, representing a growth rate since 1901 of over 300 percent, and since 1891 of almost six hundred and forty percent.<sup>3</sup> To some extent growth after 1896 was a reflection of the expansion of the Canadian railway network during the Laurier years. In July 1908, for example, the BLF established its first lodge on the new Grand Trunk Pacific, at Rivers, Manitoba.<sup>4</sup> Yet the brotherhoods also grew rapidly in the United States during this period, at a rate which equalled or exceeded their Canadian growth.<sup>5</sup> The real stimulus to the growth of the brotherhoods in both Canada and the United States between 1891 and 1911,

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unions have also developed the post of Canadian Vice-President. See Crispo, International Unionism, pp. 52-53.

<sup>3</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1891, "Report of Grand Secretary and Treasurer," n.p.; Ibid., 1901, p. 48; Ibid., 1911, p. 81; Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, p. 612. See Appendix, Graph 3.

<sup>4</sup> Toronto Globe, 16 July 1910.

<sup>5</sup> Based on data in the proceedings and journals of the brotherhoods, various dates. See Appendix, Graph 1.

therefore, was probably the generally favourable economic climate after 1896, leading to a general expansion of the number of railway employees everywhere in North America. Thus the proportion of Canadian members in the brotherhoods did not change significantly between 1891 and 1911, but remained somewhere in the range of five to seven percent of the total membership. In terms of numbers, however, the Canadian membership had become large enough by the turn of the century to justify increased attention and administrative changes: by 1900, for example, the Canadian membership of the ORC (about 1400) equalled the size of the whole order in 1881.<sup>6</sup>

The second factor was internal politics within the brotherhoods themselves. These politics were often turbulent before the turn of the century, as we have seen, and at various times encompassed almost the complete range of human ambitions, abilities and frailties. Moreover, Canadians occasionally became entangled in brotherhood politics before 1900, as for example did Charles W. Flanders of the BRT. After 1900, however, Canadians were increasingly drawn into Grand Lodge politics and, as we shall see in particular in the case of the BRT, were sometimes able to advance both themselves and the status of the Canadian membership by virtue of their political astuteness or willingness to play the political game.

The third factor was North American regionalism, and the centrifugal forces which it engendered. Such forces were an ever-present threat to the unity of the North American labour movement before World

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<sup>6</sup>Robbins, Railway Conductors, p. 18; ORC Proceedings, 1901, "Report of Grand Chief Conductor," p. 89.

War One, whether they involved regional sensitivities within the United States (for example, the far west or deep south), or within Canada (which was composed of distinct regions). Indeed, Canadian nationalism itself at the turn of the century can be viewed, in the labour context, as merely a rather special type of North American regionalism. The brotherhoods could no more ignore the problems resulting from regionalism (or Canadian nationalism) than could the AFofL or the Dominion TLC, in the years before the First World War.<sup>7</sup>

The fourth factor leading to changes within the brotherhood framework was increasing attention paid to labour matters by Canadian business organizations and the Canadian government. The growing strength of international labour organizations in Canada around the turn of the century resulted in attempts by business organizations, such as the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, to force the international unions out of Canada by federal legislation.<sup>8</sup> The brotherhoods and the international unions affiliated with the AFofL succeeded in preventing this legislation from going beyond the Canadian Senate (where it originated), but the grand officers of the brotherhoods apparently realized that the fear of 'foreign interference' which had prompted this legislation could be lessened in part by putting the Canadian operations of the brotherhoods as much as possible in the hands of Canadians.

<sup>7</sup> As could be seen in the dispute with the UBRE on the Canadian Northern Railway in 1902.

<sup>8</sup> S.D. Clark, The Canadian Manufacturers' Association: A Study in Collective Bargaining and Political Pressure (Toronto, 1939), p. 42.

The Canadian Vice Grand Master of the BLF, and American Sectionalism

The BLF's Canadian members were represented in the Grand Lodge of the BLF in the 1890's by a member of the Grand Executive Board.<sup>9</sup> The Canadian member of the Board was nominated by the Canadian delegates to the annual convention of the BLF, but was elected by the convention as a whole. In the 1890's, the Canadian hold upon this office was probably strengthened by being occupied throughout the decade by a very popular member of the brotherhood, Eugene A. Ball of Stratford, Ontario, first elected to the post in 1890. When reelected to the post in 1892, Ball received "the largest vote cast for any candidate" for a Grand Lodge position.<sup>10</sup>

Ball's post was a relatively minor one, and he received no salary. He continued to work full-time as a locomotive engineer on the Grand Trunk Railway.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, his Executive Board duties were not specifically related to Canadian affairs. In 1896, for example, he was in charge of the Board's investigation into misconduct charges against Vice Grand Master J.J. Hannahan, arising out of the latter's activities during the Pullman strike of 1894.<sup>12</sup> The organizational work of the BLF in Canada continued to be done by salaried officers from the United States, and Canadian members were apparently quite

<sup>9</sup>This body acted as a watchdog over the activities of the Grand Lodge officers.

<sup>10</sup>Firemen's Magazine, April 1895, p. 307.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., August 1909, p. 258.

<sup>12</sup>BLF Proceedings, 1896, "Report of Grand Executive Board," *passim*.



content with this arrangement. During a tour of Canadian lodges by Vice Grand Master C.A. Wilson in 1896, a Brandon brother declared,

We trust that when Bro. Wilson retires across the boundary of his native land, that boundary, as far as the B.T.F. is concerned, we hope will be but imaginary: we trust that he will not forget that his Canadian brothers are not only loyal and true members, but we are desirous to attain a higher plane of usefulness and respect.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the nineties, the Brotherhood continued to ignore the existence of the Canadian border as a matter of official policy. Grand Master Frank P. Sargent explained at the Toronto convention in 1898 that "there is no difference between our people because we have been a family so many years together."<sup>14</sup>

In 1900, however, the Grand Lodge began to reconsider this policy. The nineties had been years of great trial for the Brotherhood. The considerable loss in membership owing to the ARU and the Pullman strike, in the mid-nineties had been particularly frightening, and the natural reaction had been to emphasize the monolithic unity of the order, and to play down all potentially divisive issues, including regionalism of any sort. By the turn of the century this period of crisis was passed; a certain amount of decentralization might now be feasible and even desirable. An editorial in the official *Magazine* in March 1900 attempted to feel out the opinion of the general membership on the question of decentralization by putting forward some tentative proposals. The editorial suggested, first, that the Brotherhood's

<sup>13</sup> *Firemen's Magazine*, September 1896, p. 250.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1898, p. 404.

territory might be divided into four semi-autonomous districts, each under the direction of a District Manager, to be elected by the lodges in the district. Three of these districts, the Central, the Eastern and the Western, would be similar to those already being used by the Grand Lodge for administrative purposes. Canada, however, would constitute a completely new Northern District.<sup>15</sup> Here indeed was Canadian autonomy with a vengeance!

But, if subsequent letters printed in the *Magazine* are any indication, the Canadian membership was singularly unenthusiastic about this proposal. A correspondent from Chapleau, Ontario, for example, wrote

... we are purely an international organization, and it should be one of our highest aims to foster the most thoroughly amicable international relations, and I know of no way, speaking from a Brotherhood standpoint, that it can be accomplished better than by having our district lines intersect the territory of the great republic and the Dominion of Canada.<sup>16</sup>

He suggested instead that the American South be made a separate district, because that part of the continent had the greatest need for "active Brotherhood work."<sup>17</sup>

Yet his response, and the response of other Canadian members, to a second proposal in the *Magazine* editorial indicated that these men had a genuine consciousness of their special status as

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1900, pp. 239-240.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, May 1900, p. 409.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

distinctly Canadian members of the BLF, and wanted that status given greater recognition by the order. The editorial had also suggested that

... the Canadian members of the Brotherhood deserve representation on the staff of executive officers. They have been patient "hewers of wood and drawers of water" during all these years, without presuming to participate in the execution of the laws of the organization? They are deserving of this privilege — even if it is necessary to reduce the salaries of the present officers in order that this privilege may be extended to them.<sup>18</sup>

This proposal was greeted with genuine enthusiasm by Canadian correspondents to the *Magazine*. A correspondent from St. Thomas, Ontario, suggested that Canadian firemen were being neglected by the Brotherhood, and declared, "I hope at the next convention that our brothers across the border will consider the matter and give us one of the grand officers."<sup>19</sup> A correspondent from Ottawa wrote, "A Canadian Vice-Grand Master we must have."<sup>20</sup>

Little was done at the 1900 convention, however, to satisfy Canadian wishes. Other problems, such as the setting up of a Protective Fund, preoccupied the convention delegates.<sup>21</sup> But, as the time for the next convention in 1902 approached, Canadian members raised the issue again — obviously the *Magazine's* editor had touched upon something of real interest to the *Magazine's* readership in 1900.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1900, p. 240.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1900, pp. 516-517.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1900, p. 178.

<sup>21</sup> BLF "Celebration," 1923, pp. 268-269.

Moreover, events since 1900 had demonstrated that the problem of regionalism was a real one and must be dealt with. A correspondent to the *Magazine* from Moncton, New Brunswick, for example, raised the spectre of Canadian secession, as exemplified by the CORM: "... we do not need a new order," he declared, "but what we do need is a Grand Master to be in touch with us."<sup>22</sup>

Canadians, however, were not the only members of the BLF with regional hopes and fears. Southern members were faced with a problem which, from their point of view, was much more pressing than any to be found elsewhere in North America: the black fireman question.<sup>23</sup> The BLF's original decision to bar negroes from membership had been taken at the annual Convention in Toronto in 1884.<sup>24</sup> By the late nineties, this white-only policy had become highly controversial within the Brotherhood. The South<sup>25</sup> was the least well-organized part of the United States, and some northern members were blaming this state of affairs on the ban on negro members. It was common practice for southern railroads to employ between fifty and eighty percent black firemen.<sup>26</sup> Not only were these men lost to the Brotherhood, but they

<sup>22</sup> Firemen's Magazine, April 1902, p. 561.

<sup>23</sup> A discussion of the black firemen controversy is to be found in Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, The Black Worker (New York, 1931), pp. 286-315. (Hereafter cited as Spero and Harris; Black Worker.)

<sup>24</sup> BLF "Celebration," 1923, p. 264.

<sup>25</sup> Properly speaking, the south-eastern states, or 'Old South'.

<sup>26</sup> Spero and Harris, Black Worker, p. 284.

worked for much lower wages than white firemen, and provided a large reserve of potential strike breakers.<sup>27</sup> An obvious solution to this problem was to admit black firemen to membership. Southern members, however, objected strenuously to this solution. The Brotherhood was more than just a labour union, they pointed out, it was also a fraternal organization, and to admit negroes to membership would be to admit them to social equality as well. This was unthinkable.<sup>28</sup>

For the Southerners, a principle clearly was at stake: did the Brotherhood as a whole have the right to disregard regional sensitivities, or should regional differences and regional 'rights' be taken into account in the making of policy? Southerners could thus quite naturally understand and sympathize with Canadian attempts to gain regional recognition, both because Southerners understood regional 'patriotism' very well, and because the Canadians, in a sense, were fighting the Southerners' own battle for recognition as well. For Southerners, the establishment of the office of Canadian Vice Grand Master would represent a relatively uncontroversial affirmation by the BLF of the principle that regional differences should be respected.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 287-288.

<sup>29</sup> For a similar situation in another international union see Perlman, Machinists, p. 208; and James D. Thwaites, "The International Association of Machinists in Canada" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1966), pp. 10-11.

The 1902 convention was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the first time in the South since the Atlanta convention of 1888.<sup>30</sup> Southern delegates played an active part in obtaining convention approval for an additional vice grand master, and in ensuring that a Canadian received the post. At the beginning, in fact, the Southern delegates strongly favoured the creation of two additional vice grand masterships, and were supported in this by delegates from the American northwest — likewise a region with problems of its own, problems currently being exploited by the UBRE.<sup>31</sup> Some tradition-minded delegates, however, were against having more than one additional vice grand master, for example, a group from New England.<sup>32</sup>

A half-dozen motions, three of them from the South, favouring the creation of one or two additional vice grand masters, were referred to the Committee on the Constitution and By-Laws, as was a motion strongly supported by the Canadian delegates "that an additional Vice Grand Master be appointed who shall devote his whole time to the work of the Brotherhood in Canadian territory."<sup>33</sup> Only one motion, however, recommended that an additional vice grand master "be given the territory south of Mason's and Dixon's Line."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> BLF "Celebration," 1923, p. 270. Chattanooga is on the Tennessee-Georgia border, and is less than 25 miles from the Alabama border.

<sup>31</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1902, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 62, 70, 72, 76.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

The Committee on the Constitution and By-Laws was composed largely of delegates from Kentucky, Alabama and Tennessee.<sup>35</sup> They reported back to the convention five days later with a recommendation that the Constitution be amended to add two more vice grand masters to the Grand Lodge. The Committee must have anticipated some opposition to this proposal, since no mention was made of either Canada or the South in the report.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, opposition to change of any sort apparently was crystallizing among the convention delegates, especially those from the northeast and midwestern United States, the original territorial heartland of the Brotherhood and the heart of the 'North' during the Civil War, forty years earlier. An Indiana delegate moved that there be no additional vice grand masters and, while this motion was rejected by the convention, a motion by a Wisconsin delegate that the number of additional vice grand masters be reduced to one was carried.<sup>37</sup>

It was in the election for the new post that sectional lines became most clearly drawn. Eugene Ball, the only Canadian candidate, was opposed by five other nominees — one each from Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, Kansas and Texas.<sup>38</sup> On the first ballot,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

Ball ran second to the nominee from Chicago, Illinois.<sup>39</sup> Before the second ballot, however, the four lowest candidates retired, and Ball thereupon received an absolute majority over the Chicagoan.<sup>40</sup> Two things suggest that Ball received Southern support for his victory. First, no delegates from the 'Old' South contested the post on the first ballot, despite Southern interest in it. And second, the number of additional votes which Ball received on the second ballot, which enabled him to win, corresponded very closely with the number which had gone on the first ballot to the two candidates from the states on the fringes of the Old South, Texas and Missouri. It is reasonable to assume that the supporters of these men voted for Ball on the second ballot.<sup>41</sup> Of course, Ball was a popular candidate, and he won in part on his own merits. He remained a salaried member of the Grand Lodge

<sup>39</sup>The standings on the first ballot were as follows:

Goding (Illinois) .....	158
Ball (Ontario) .....	136
Burke (Missouri) .....	73
Smith (Minnesota) .....	36
Mitchener (Texas) .....	25
Dillon (Kansas) .....	19

Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>The standings on the second ballot:

Ball .....	236
Goding .....	205

Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>A comparison of the standings:

First Ballot

Ball .....	136	Goding .....	158
Burke .....	73	Smith .....	36
Mitchener .....	25	Dillon .....	19
Total .....	<u>234</u>	Total .....	<u>213</u>

Second Ballot

Ball .....	235	Goding .....	205
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Ibid.



until he retired in 1913. At the same time, he probably had no particular following among Southern delegates, since he had never visited the South and, on his own admission several years later, had no special knowledge of either the region or its problems.<sup>42</sup> In other words, since he was a Canadian, Ball represented regionalism (as he had since 1890), and received Southern support for this reason. Moreover, Ball's status as a regional vice grand master was recognized by the Grand Lodge after his election, when he was "allotted" a territory which was largely Canadian.<sup>43</sup>

While the election of a 'Canadian' vice grand master was almost certainly interpreted by the Southern members of the Brotherhood as a triumph for regionalism, it must be emphasized that there is no evidence of any alliance, formal or otherwise, between Canadians and Southerners at the convention, nor any agreement by the Canadians to support Southerners on the black firemen question in return for getting a Canadian Grand Lodge officer. Nor did the Southerners apparently (before World War One) express any great interest in a Southern vice grand master. Indeed, they might have had difficulty in getting one. The South, however, already had a spokesman of sorts at Grand Lodge headquarters. This was William S. Carter, from San Antonio, Texas — a city on the fringes of the Old South. Carter was editor of the *Magazine* between 1893 and 1904, and it was during his editorship that the issue of regional representation for Canada was first raised

<sup>42</sup> Firemen's Magazine, July 1909, p. 101.

<sup>43</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1904, "Report of Fourth Vice Grand Master," p. 1.

in 1900. Carter was elected Grand Secretary and Treasurer in 1904, and International President in 1908.

It was not until 1909 that Ball's opportunity came to repay his debt to Southern firemen for their support in 1902. The black fireman issue had finally come to a head in 1909. The general manager of the Georgia Railroad, Thomas K. Scott, decided to cut operating expenses. He discharged ten white members of the BLF, and replaced them by lower-paid negroes. When Scott refused to reconsider his action, the BLF struck the railroad, thereby finally committing the order to a policy of attempting to drive black firemen off Southern railways.<sup>44</sup> Eugene Ball was chosen to direct the strike for the BLF. His selection was apparently accidental: he was the most senior vice-president available for the job. But once on the job, he apparently attempted to demonstrate that the Southerners had not elected the wrong man in 1902: a Southerner could not have put the case against the black firemen in more racist terms. "Even though I am from Canada," he declared in a public statement, "I am a white man, and stand for a white man's country."<sup>45</sup> He continued,

This is my first introduction to the southern people, and I leave them to judge whether my conduct or that of Mr. Scott shows a better appreciation of southern conditions. I stand for white superiority; he stands for negro superiority. Let the people of the south judge between us.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> There are accounts of this strike in the Firemen's Magazine, July 1909, pp. 95-107, and in Spero and Harris, Black Worker, pp. 289-90.

<sup>45</sup> Firemen's Magazine, July 1909, p. 100.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

Despite his almost complete identification with Southern white racist attitudes, however, Ball soon found himself under fire from the Georgia management because he was not a Southerner himself. In a statement to the press outlining the company's position, general manager Scott took pains to point out that the strike was being run by "a Canadian who only had a brief opportunity of studying conditions in Georgia...." He emphasized that "the white firemen of the Georgia Railroad ... are being used by a party unacquainted with and alien to our industrial situation...."<sup>47</sup>

The Georgia strike was thus an excellent example of the moral ambiguity of North American working-class radicalism before World War One. On the one hand, the partial success of ~~the~~ strike encouraged the BLF to pursue its racist anti-negro policy with increased vigor thereafter. On the other hand, morally unimpeachable working-class idealism was also involved. A few months after the strike, at a meeting in Winnipeg, President Carter of the BLF denounced a recent attack upon "alien labor agitators" in the Cape Breton coal fields, and declared,

There is the pot calling the kettle black. While certain people in Georgia do not like Canadians coming amongst them, people of the same class at Sydney, Glace Bay, ... objected to Americans. Yet, in spite of all that, the working men of these two countries are going to stand together.

The international labor organizations make more for international peace than all The Hague tribunals that could be created in fifteen years. The time has come when the statesman-agitator who thinks he must precipitate a war for the profit that is in it, must reckon with the labor organizations.

The time has come when the labor men will refuse to kill each other for another's profit. The inter-

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-99.

national labor organizations have come to stay.<sup>48</sup>

It was perhaps because of Carter's belief in the ideal of international working-class solidarity that the post of Canadian Vice-President never became part of the formal constitution of the BLF before World War One. A Canadian was elected to the office merely by customary right. Yet, as noted, Ball continued to be elected to the office until he retired in 1913. Moreover, when he retired, another Canadian was elected to a vice-presidency, George K. Wark of Toronto.<sup>49</sup> In terms of precedent, therefore, the post of Canadian Vice-President had become an unwritten part of the BLF constitution by 1913, and this was signified by Wark's election. As a separate district of the BLF, however, Canada remained geographically ill-defined. The Canadian Vice-President's territory continued to include a certain amount of American territory, usually along the international border, and the President still retained the prerogative of sending him anywhere he wished on special assignments.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps Canadians wanted it that way: after all, it increased the status of 'their' vice-president.

#### The BRT and the Politics of Internationalism

As a consequence of the absorption of the Conductors and Brakemen's Benevolent Association of Canada in 1885-1886 (as we have seen), a place in the Grand Lodge of the BRT was given to a Canadian,

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., October 1909, p. 576.

<sup>49</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1916, "Report of General Officers," p. 446.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

C.W. Flanders, Grand Secretary and Treasurer of the defunct Association. This place was a secondary and non-salaried position, on the Board of Grand Trustees, and it continued to be occupied by a Canadian, apparently by customary right, after Flanders' expulsion in 1891.<sup>51</sup> There is little evidence that Canadian brothers in the nineties were dissatisfied with this informal arrangement; a letter to the *Railroad Trainman* in 1893 from northern Ontario, which called for "a Vice Grand Master ... for Canada alone," seems to have been completely ignored by other Canadian members at the time.<sup>52</sup> The BRT's three Vice Grand Masters in the 1890's divided up the brotherhood's territory between themselves in complete disregard for the international boundary: the First Vice Grand Master acted as organizer and trouble-shooter for Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes and the northeastern states; the Second Vice Grand Master looked after Manitoba, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the far western United States; and the Third Vice Grand Master handled the midwestern states and the South.<sup>53</sup> In 1901, the biennial convention authorized the creation of an additional, Fourth Vice Grand Mastership. This move was not occasioned by any desire to 'recognize' Canada, but was necessitated by a general increase in the business of the brotherhood. The post went to W.T. Newman, an American.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Railroad Trainman, December 1891, p. 879.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., May 1893, pp. 418-419.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., March 1894, p. 203.

<sup>54</sup> McCaleb, Railroad Trainmen, pp. 261-262.

The process whereby the additional vice grand master of 1901 became the Vice Grand Master for Canada in 1905 can be somewhat superficially explained in terms of logical necessity. After the turn of the century, the Grand Lodge was becoming more and more aware of the necessity of making new arrangements for the handling of affairs in Canada. Canadian business was taking up an increasing amount of the Grand Lodge's time, and the Canadian membership was growing at a rate which saw it more than double between 1897 and 1905.<sup>55</sup> In 1901, the "Biennial Report" of the Grand Secretary-Treasurer began to take note of the increasing importance of the Canadian wing, and listed the Canadian membership total separately from the American, for the first time.<sup>56</sup> Finally, in 1905, quite in keeping with necessity, James Murdock, of London, Ontario, a Canadian, was elected to the post of Fourth Vice Grand Master, replacing W. G. Lee, who had been elected Assistant Grand Master, the second highest position in the brotherhood.<sup>57</sup> The Canadian members now had a vice grand master of their own, although, like Eugene Ball of the BRF, Murdock handled some American business in addition to his Canadian duties. For example, as a deputy of the Grand Master, he might be required to deal with labour-management disputes anywhere in North America.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Canadian membership in 1897 was 1803. BRT Proceedings, 1897, "Grand Secretary and Treasurer's Report," pp. 42-43. In 1905 it was 4382. Ibid., 1905, p. 81.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1901, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1905, p. 104.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 1911, "Report of Vice President James Murdock, 1910," p. 467.

Yet there was little that was entirely straightforward in the internal affairs of the BRT and, while the election of a Canadian Vice Grand Master was an entirely logical move, it also appears that brotherhood politics were significantly involved. Politics within the BRT had always been characterized by intense personal and regional rivalries, and by constantly shifting alliances within the Grand Lodge. The details of the resulting disputes were usually concealed from the public and the general membership of the Brotherhood, and have left few traces in the records. The political circumstances which led to Murdock's election in 1905, and which contributed to his retention of the post at subsequent conventions, are thus partly a matter of conjecture. Nonetheless this is the picture which seems to emerge. The political situation favoured Murdock's election in 1905. Grand Master Morrissey, a westerner, had become involved in an east-west dispute within the Brotherhood, and could use Canadian support in his struggle with the easterners.<sup>59</sup> His support for Murdock's election in 1905 probably guaranteed him the votes of the Canadian delegates on a variety of important questions. Murdock also received the support in 1905 of a potentially dangerous rival, A.F. Whitney, who withdrew from the contest for Fourth Vice Grand Master, apparently as part of a deal which made former Vice Grand Master W.G. Lee Assistant Grand Master.<sup>60</sup> With no significant opposition, Murdock received 535 of the 650 votes cast in

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<sup>59</sup> McCaleb, Railroad Trainmen, p. 59.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

the election.<sup>61</sup> By 1907, the Morrissey-Whitney-Murdock alliance had become more solid, and Lee had been squeezed out: both Whitney and Murdock were elected vice grand masters, Murdock by acclamation.<sup>62</sup> The alliance was unsuccessful, however, in an attempt to prevent Lee from being re-elected Assistant Grand Master.<sup>63</sup> In 1909, Morrissey retired, and Lee became President. Murdock ran for Lee's former post, but was unsuccessful: he no longer had Morrissey's support, and Whitney was becoming too deeply involved in a personal feud with Lee to pay much attention to Murdock's needs.<sup>64</sup> Murdock had to be satisfied with a vice-presidency,<sup>65</sup> a post which he held until he resigned to become Minister of Labour under Mackenzie King in 1921.

It seems highly likely, therefore, that Canadian representation in the Grand Lodge before World War One depended in some measure on a Canadian possessing enough political skill — or talent for intrigue — to retain the post. Murdock obviously possessed some political skill, as well as a taste for intrigue. It was not until the mid 1930's, when he was in his sixties, that this skill finally deserted him, and he was expelled from the BRT after unsuccessfully trying to

<sup>61</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1905, p. 104.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 1907, p. 103.

<sup>63</sup> H. Edens, Enemies of Bill Lee and Foes of the Trainmen's Brotherhood: A Memorial in 15 Chapters (Waco, Texas, n.d. [c. 1923]); pp. 27-28.

<sup>64</sup> McCabe, Railroad Trainmen, pp. 65, 72-73.

<sup>65</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1909, pp. 89-90, 93.



unseat his former ally, A.F. Whitney, from the Presidency.<sup>66</sup> Yet Murdock's election in 1905 fairly soon came to mean in practice that Canadians had some sort of special status within the brotherhood, and that 'their' vice-president acquired rights which could not be encroached upon by his nominal superior, the President of the Brotherhood. In 1909, for example, a convention resolution specifically declared that the Grand Master must act "in conjunction with the vice grand master from Canada" to establish a Dominion Legislative Board.<sup>67</sup> In effect, therefore, Canadian members of the BRT had acquired a measure of 'responsible government', and this was confirmed when Murdock was replaced by another Canadian, W.J. Babe, when he retired 'temporarily' in 1921.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, in the period before World War One, no constitutional provision reserved a place in the Grand Lodge for a Canadian: when Murdock was re-elected Vice-President in 1911, for example, he was opposed by two other candidates, neither of whom was from the Dominion of Canada.<sup>69</sup>

#### The ORC Spells It Out

As we saw in Chapter IV, the Canadian members of the ORC were usually represented in the ORC Grand Division right from the time of the Order's entry into Canada in 1880. Unlike the other brotherhoods in the train service, however, this Canadian representation did not seem

<sup>66</sup> McCaleb, Railroad Trainmen, p. 189.

<sup>67</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1909, p. 40.

<sup>68</sup> McCaleb, Railroad Trainmen, p. 262.

<sup>69</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911; p. 171.

to stem so much from a desire to 'honour' the Canadian members; or emphasize the international nature of the Order (although this was certainly a factor at times), as from an active Canadian interest in the Order's affairs. Several times in the eighties, Canadians held more than one Grand Division post at the same time and, in 1888, Robert Purdom of Toronto was elected to the fourth most important office in the Order, Grand Senior Conductor, apparently on his merits as a candidate.<sup>70</sup> There was little change in this situation in the nineties, although there was a distinct increase in the amount of rhetoric at annual conventions, both from Canadians and Americans, about the "right" of Canadians to a Grand Division office, and the "duty" of American delegates to give it to them.<sup>71</sup> At no time in the nineties, however, did the conventions give any formal or legal recognition to the special status of Canada or Canadians within the Order. At the beginning of the decade, Grand Chief Conductor Wheaton recommended the partition of the Order's territory into thirteen administrative districts, one of which was to consist of "Upper and Lower Canada."<sup>72</sup> This proposal was apparently lost sight of, however, in the upheaval which saw Wheaton deposed and a protective policy adopted.<sup>73</sup> Wheaton's successor, E.E. Clark, divided the Order's territory into two districts, with the Mississippi River and the western shore of Lake Michigan as the boundary.

<sup>70</sup> OBC Proceedings, 1888, p. 294.

<sup>71</sup> See *Ibid.*, 1895, pp. 177-180.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 1890, p. 31.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-291.

between them, completely ignoring the Canadian border. Grand Second Conductor Garretson was put in charge of the western district, and Assistant Grand Chief Conductor Wilkins took care of the east.<sup>74</sup> The Canadian members apparently concurred in these arrangements. In 1893, Wilkins was re-nominated for his post by the convention delegate from Canada's oldest division, at St. Thomas, Ontario, who declared,

We have come to know him [Wilkins] all over Canada, and to know him is to love him; and at last we have got him so well trained that he has learned the last thing; and that is to sing "God Save the Queen."<sup>75</sup>

The victory over the CPR in 1892 with the aid of American grand officers probably did much to convince Canadians of the worth of this system. In 1899, Garretson's re-nomination was seconded by the delegate from Winnipeg Division No. 47, who recalled Garretson's services to the Canadian brothers during the strike.<sup>76</sup>

At the turn of the century, however, new Canadian problems, and the growth of the Order in Canada, convinced some Canadian members that they needed a full-time Canadian Grand Division representative. Yet, in 1903, it was clearly demonstrated to them that the Canadian 'right' to even a non-salaried Grand Division post was non-existent, when the chairmanship of the Board of Trustees, which had been held by a Canadian since 1895, went to a delegate from Kansas City,

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 1891, p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 1893, p. 156.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 1899, p. 700.

leaving a member of the relatively unimportant Insurance Committee as the only Canadian in the Grand Division.<sup>77</sup> Canadian pressure began to build up and, at the 1905 convention, on the insistence of the Canadian delegates, an unusual step was taken. By resolution of the convention, the salaried, full-time position of Deputy Grand Chief Conductor was created. The new deputy was required to be a Canadian and, apparently to doubly ensure against the vagaries of convention politics, he was to be appointed by the Grand Chief. His duties, however, would be the same as those of an elected vice grand master.<sup>78</sup> This unusual move led a Mexican delegate to insist that the Mexican nominee for the minor post of Grand Outside Sentinel be approved unanimously, since Mexico should be "honoured" as Canada had just been.<sup>79</sup> In 1905, the job of Canadian deputy went to Samuel N. Berry. Berry, however, was not required to restrict his attention exclusively to Canadian affairs, but could be sent anywhere by the Grand Chief (or President, as he was called after

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 1903, p. 537.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 1909, pp. 226-240, contains a full account of the circumstances surrounding the creation of the office. Although unusual, it was not an unprecedented move. For example, in 1903, the President of the Brotherhood of Railroad Freight and Baggage-men included on his "official staff" a "Deputy President, Canada," in addition to other staff appointees such as an accountant, an attorney, a presidential assistant and several paid organizers. CWL, "Freight and Baggage-men's Brotherhood Youngest Organization," Halifax Herald, 26 December 1903.

<sup>79</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1905, p. 572. The ORC had about 300 members in Mexico at this time. Ibid., 1901, p. 89. The ORC, along with the other railway brotherhoods, was driven out of Mexico as a consequence of the revolution which broke out in 1910. See Richard Ulric Miller, "American Railroad Unions and the National Railways of Mexico: An Exercise in Nineteenth-Century Proletarian Manifest Destiny," Labor History, XV (Spring, 1974), 239-260.

1906). As President Garretson said in 1909, "I will use him as I need him, if I am the man who is going to direct things."<sup>80</sup>

By 1909, the awkwardness of having an appointed 'Canadian Vice-President' was becoming obvious. At the convention that year, President Garretson recommended that the appointed office be abolished, that a new office of Fourth Vice-President be created, and that a Canadian be elected to it. He explained that this recommendation was no reflection on Berry, whose work had been entirely satisfactory, but that Berry's well-deserved advancement within the organization was being blocked by the nature of his office: if he had been promoted to the post of Third Vice-President when everyone moved up after the resignation of Grand Chief Clark in 1906, Garretson would have been required by the constitution to appoint another Canadian as Deputy Grand Chief.<sup>81</sup> Two salaried Canadians in the Grand Division, Garretson declared, would "overdo a good thing."<sup>82</sup> In keeping with Garretson's recommendation, therefore, the Jurisprudence Committee produced a constitutional amendment which stated that the Grand Division headquarters staff should now include six elected executives — a President, Senior Vice-President, and four Vice-Presidents — and that one of these "shall be a citizen of the Dominion of Canada."<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1909, p. 227.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

In the ensuing debate on the Committee's Report, there was no opposition to this amendment from either the Canadian or American delegates. There was some disagreement, however, as to the place of residence of the Canadian Vice-President. Thomas Brownlee, of Brandon, Manitoba, moved that the Canadian Vice-President should not only be a Canadian citizen, but should also "be domiciled in Canada."

He explained why:

... we want to have a man over there representing us that can approach the arbitration and legislative bodies. You understand that a great deal of friction is brought about by reason of our being called upon for a grand officer to come there and represent us before any of these bodies. There was a case a few days ago in some coal matters down in Nova Scotia. We called upon the grand officer from the United States to come over there, and there was a great deal of rumpus raised on account of foreign labor agitators coming over there and interfering with our affairs.<sup>84</sup>

Another Canadian delegate supported Brownlee's motion, but disagreed with his claim that American officers were not wanted in Canada. "It may be absolutely necessary that we want all the brains of the organization over there sometime," he said, adding that the growing volume of Canadian business alone was justification for a Canadian resident officer.<sup>85</sup>

The main opposition to Brownlee's motion apparently came from some American delegates. One American declared that "We want Brother Berry so elected that we may have him down here, and not exile him into the

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 227-228.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

Dominion of Canada."<sup>86</sup> But Brownlee's motion was ultimately defeated, it appears, because the Order's constitution required the Order's two top officials, the President and Senior Vice-President, to reside at international headquarters which were located in the United States. As Garretson pointed out, if Brownlee's motion were passed, it would bar a Canadian from both of these high posts. The motion was thus unacceptable to most of the convention delegates.<sup>87</sup> The constitutional amendment as recommended by the Jurisprudence Committee passed,<sup>88</sup> however, and the Canadian members of the ORC thus gained what none of their fellow Canadians in the other three brotherhoods had, a constitutional guarantee of Canadian representation in the Grand Division.

Berry was unanimously elected to the new position,<sup>89</sup> continuing a career which was ultimately to see him become President of the ORC in 1931. Ironically enough, therefore, Berry's continuing popularity made the constitutional guarantee of 1909 completely unnecessary for many years.

#### The Position of Canadians in the BLE Grand Division

The post of Canadian Grand Division officer in the BLE Grand Division before 1890 was an unpaid 'honorary' one: usually that of First Grand Assistant Engineer (the equivalent of an honorary vice-

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp. 236-238.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 1194-1195.

president), carrying with it minimal duties and responsibilities. In other words, the position was purely a courtesy appointment designed to 'recognize' the Canadian brothers and thus emphasize the international nature of the BLE.<sup>90</sup> In 1890, however, two proposals were put forward to alter the nature of this office. The first was a proposal from a Canadian member to create a full-time salaried post in the Grand Division for a Canadian resident. This officer's duties would be to deal with Canadian legislative problems and act as a full-time organizer for the Dominion.<sup>91</sup> Although this proposal was discussed at the 1890 and 1891 conventions, however, it aroused little interest among either the Canadian or American membership.<sup>92</sup> Canadian members seemed more interested in the second proposal, that the existing post be altered to take into account the sensibilities of the various Canadian regions. Up until 1890, the Canadian grand officer had usually been a central Canadian. A Canadian correspondent to the *Journal* in 1890 explained why this had become unsatisfactory:

The Brothers of the Maritime, Pacific and Prairie Provinces have established Divisions, and maintain their membership at a much greater cost of time, money and labor than is required of the Brothers of Ontario or Quebec, and are deserving of some

<sup>90</sup> *Engineers' Journal*, September 1890, p. 695.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, February 1892, p. 120.

<sup>92</sup> The interest of Canadian members in specifically Canadian legislative problems; however, resulted in the formation of a Dominion Legislative Board in 1892. See Chapter IX, below. Canadian locomotive engineers were by no means apathetic at this time.



recognition by the Grand Body, by receiving their due share of the honors of office.<sup>93</sup>

In accordance with the suggestion, Ash Kennedy, of Winnipeg, was elected to the post of Canadian grand officer at the October 1890 annual convention. This did not, however, fully meet the requirements of all the Canadian members; Kennedy was a CPR engineer, and some Canadians felt that the CPR had unduly monopolized the post in the past. The next convention in 1891, therefore, established the principle that the post should rotate among the various railway systems and provinces of Canada and, to institute this policy, the convention elected William Hall, of Halifax, First Grand Assistant Engineer.<sup>94</sup> This arrangement apparently satisfied both Canadian and American members for some years, and the question of a paid Canadian grand officer was therefore shelved until after the other three brotherhoods had established such a post. Until 1908, relations with management in Canada were dealt with by the BLE general chairmen on the various Canadian railway systems, with assistance when necessary from salaried American officers.

By 1908, however, events had made it clear to both Canadian and American members of the BLE that this arrangement no longer suited Canadian conditions. In 1907, an acrimonious jurisdictional dispute with the BLF took place on the Canadian Northern Railway.<sup>95</sup> The BLE

<sup>93</sup> Engineers Journal, September 1890, p. 695.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, September 1892, p. 816.

<sup>95</sup> See BLF Proceedings, 1908, "Report of Grand Master," pp. 52-95. This dispute was part of a more general jurisdictional dispute between the two brotherhoods which had begun in 1900. In 1906, it resulted in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen changing its name

general chairman on the system, W.B. Best, handled the dispute well for the BLE, but it must have been obvious to his fellow engineers that he had been handicapped somewhat because he lacked the status and authority of his BLE opponent, Canadian Vice Grand Master E.A. Ball.<sup>96</sup> In 1908, an opportunity came to rectify the situation. As part of a general programme of reorganization, the BLE convention that year created several additional Assistant Grand Chiefs. A Canadian, Calvin Lawrence, was elected to one of these posts, finally giving Canada a full-time salaried executive in the Grand Division.<sup>97</sup>

#### Conclusion

By 1909, therefore, each of the brotherhoods had established the post of Canadian Vice-President, or its equivalent. This solution to the problem of adapting to Canadian conditions was not, however, unique to the brotherhoods. As John Crispo has shown, many other international unions operating in Canada have adopted the same solution.<sup>98</sup> Yet the office of Canadian Vice-President was not the only important new office created by the brotherhoods before World War One to deal with Canadian problems. There was also the office of Dominion Legislative Representative, an office not needed by international unions which were affiliated with the Dominion TLC, and could

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to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen. The dispute was finally settled by the Chicago Joint Agreement in 1913. Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, pp. 268-269, 298; BLE "Celebration," p. 271.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, p. 270.

<sup>98</sup> Crispo, International Unionism, pp. 53-54.

depend upon that body to handle Canadian legislative problems for them.  
The evolution of this office, and of the entire approach of the brother-  
hoods to Canadian government and legislation, will be examined in the  
next chapter.

## CHAPTER IX

### PLAYING POLITICS: LOBBYING IN CANADA BEFORE WORLD WAR ONE

By 1914, lobbying had become a normal part of the operations of the railway brotherhoods and their principal means of attempting to influence governments and legislation. Paid brotherhood lobbyists, euphemistically called 'Legislative Representatives', were stationed at both Washington and Ottawa, and were the key men in a system which also included national, state and provincial legislative boards. This system, in Canada at any rate, tended to give the brotherhoods an influence upon government out of proportion to their numerical strength, partly because the much larger Dominion Trades and Labor Congress (with which the brotherhoods were not affiliated) was not as single-minded on the question of lobbying as the brotherhoods, and sometimes dallied with the notion of supporting a labour party instead. Socialism or labour partyism, however, were not attractive to conservative brotherhood executives who were firm advocates of Samuel Gompers's flexible policy of rewarding one's friends and punishing one's enemies, regardless of party.

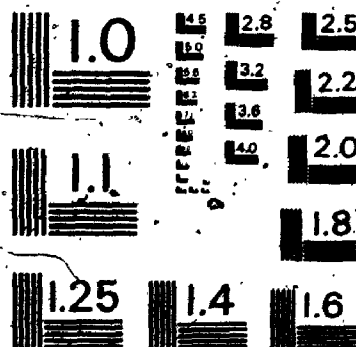
The brotherhoods had not been organized originally with any form of political activity in mind. The system of legislative

<sup>1</sup>On the situation in the Dominion T.L.C., see Robert H. Babecek, *Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism before the First World War* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 155-182.

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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

boards and representatives was forced upon them, and had its roots in the 1880's. In that decade, the many social and economic problems created by a rapidly expanding industrial society had begun seriously to engage the attention of North American governments. In the United States, this increased attention gave birth in 1887 to the Interstate Commerce Act, and in 1890 to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. In Canada, industrialization seemed to spring into being "almost at one bound" after 1879,<sup>2</sup> bringing with it provincial and federal legislation relating to industrial safety, hours and the conditions of work, and life and accident insurance, and culminating in a Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital in the late 1880's.<sup>3</sup> Government activity of this sort was obviously of crucial significance to the brotherhoods and their members, although they were slow, at first, to react to the challenge which it represented. By the early nineties, however, they had come to realize that something must be done. In that decade they laid the groundwork for a lobbying system which, as far as Canada was concerned, was to reach its full development, and mark its greatest achievements and failures, after 1900.

#### The 1880's: Passivity and a Defensive Posture

Although individual railway workers in Canada in the 1880's apparently shared the interest of the rest of the working class in politics,<sup>4</sup> the brotherhoods, as organizations, appear to have been

<sup>2</sup> Waite, Arduous Destiny, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 179-180.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Edward Williams, "a common engine-driver," was an independent candidate in an Ontario provincial election in 1883. Hamilton Labor Union, 10 February 1883. See Robin, Radical Politics, pp. 7-8.

content to remain aloof from politics as much as possible during this decade, merely reacting when necessary to the initiatives of governments and politicians. In 1887 and 1888, for example, minor brotherhood officials in Ontario were more than willing to support an attempt by D'Alton McCarthy, M.P., to gain House of Commons' approval for a private member's bill which would make a variety of safety appliances (such as air brakes, automatic couplers and guarded frogs) mandatory on Canadian railroads.<sup>5</sup> But this brotherhood support for McCarthy's bill apparently was given only because it was directly solicited by one of two of McCarthy's fellow M.P.'s who were also interested in such legislation.<sup>6</sup> Indeed (if the available evidence is an adequate guide), the posture of the brotherhoods with respect to Canadian governments seems to have been largely a defensive one in this decade. This is quite understandable. The brotherhoods were still relative newcomers on the national scene — even the BLE had previously been based only in Ontario and Quebec. An excellent example of this defensive posture, of course, was the BLE's representations to Ottawa on behalf of the Intercolonial engineers in 1882.<sup>7</sup>

But this defensiveness was also exemplified by the response of the brotherhoods to the only serious legislative threats which they appear to have faced in Canada in the eighties, threats to the operations of their insurance funds. Life and accident insurance

<sup>5</sup>House of Commons, Debates, 1888, p. 764.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>See Chapter III, above.

were fundamental aspects of the operations of the brotherhoods in the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, given the hazardous nature of railroading, cheap insurance was of "paramount importance" to the brotherhood members, and provided one of the basic reasons for the brotherhoods' existence.<sup>9</sup>

In 1884, the officers of BLF Lodge No. 151 in Hamilton, Ontario, became aware that the Dominion government was considering the adoption of insurance legislation which might "seriously affect and impair the progress of the Brotherhood through Canada."<sup>10</sup> In 1885, this threat seemed to become real in a Dominion Insurance Act which, if enforced, might require each brotherhood to deposit a bond of more than \$50,000 with the federal government or be declared an illegal lottery scheme.<sup>11</sup> There are indications that the Canadian government had no intention of applying the bonding provisions of the act to labour organizations,<sup>12</sup> but members of the BLE in Ontario detected in the bill the fine hand of the "managers and agents of insurance companies" who were intent upon destroying the brotherhoods' insurance plans.<sup>13</sup> BLE Division No. 70, Toronto (whose Chief Engineer, W.P. Marks, had been a member of the 1882

<sup>8</sup>Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, p. 132; Robbins, Railway Conductors, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup>Robbins, Railway Conductors, p. 123; also Chapter I above.

<sup>10</sup>BLF Proceedings, 1884, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup>Engineers' Journal, March 1888, pp. 225-226; House of Commons, Debates, 1885, p. 2433.

<sup>12</sup>House of Commons, Debates, 1885, p. 2432.

<sup>13</sup>Engineers' Journal, March 1888, pp. 225-226.



delegation to Ottawa on behalf of the Intercolonial engineers) took immediate action, and obtained concrete assurances from the government that the insurance bill would not apply to labour organizations.<sup>14</sup>

In 1888, however, Ontario provincial lawmakers produced an insurance act which threatened to require the brotherhoods to insure members who had been expelled for violating the rules of the brotherhoods, or be held liable in courts of law. The sting of this bill was likewise drawn on the solicitation of BLE Division No. 70.<sup>15</sup> Division No. 70, in fact, had apparently come to regard itself by this time as the legislative guardian of the BLE (and the other brotherhoods) in Canada.<sup>16</sup> This guardianship, however, apparently remained a sideline for the division's officers, and there is no evidence that they made any efforts to appoint a special official to the job, or to draw in other BLE divisions or the other brotherhoods.

#### A New Spirit in the Nineties

Yet, just as the late eighties and early nineties witnessed a growth of interest in Canadian governments in the problems of labour, so too did the brotherhoods begin to re-examine their relationship to Canadian governments. Moreover, this re-examination seems to have been conditioned by much the same spirit of confidence and aggressiveness with which the brotherhoods were now beginning to conduct their relationships with management (as in the case of the CPR

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

in 1892). This new spirit became apparent in the legislative sphere when the brotherhoods were confronted, in the same year as the CPR strike, with yet another threat to their insurance operations in Canada, an act of the Ontario legislature, sometimes called the "Gibson Bill" after its author. The Gibson Bill required all insurance companies and "friendly societies" operating in the province to be registered as provincial corporations, and some of its provisions suggested to the members of BLE Division No. 70 that it would henceforth be "impossible for the members of our Order to carry their insurance in our Order under the system that has prevailed since its inception."<sup>17</sup> Under the leadership of Division No. 70's Chief Engineer, Ontario divisions of the BLE formed an Ontario Legislative Board, in accordance with the *Constitution and By-Laws* of the Brotherhood.<sup>18</sup> The new Board first persuaded the Ontario government to delay the application of the act to the train service unions for three months, and then set about organizing a powerful lobby against the act. The other brotherhoods responded willingly: a mass meeting was held in Toronto on 18 August 1892, which included representatives from most of the lodges and divisions of the brotherhoods in Ontario.<sup>19</sup> This show of strength greatly impressed the Ontario government. A government spokesman appeared at the meeting, and earnestly assured the assembled delegates that the act had never been intended

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1892, p. 816.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; Richardson, *Locomotive Engineer*, p. 271.

<sup>19</sup> *BRT Proceedings*, 1893, "Report of Grand Secretary and Treasurer," p. 76.

to "annoy the working men" but had been framed primarily to halt the spread of fraudulent benefit societies.<sup>20</sup> In keeping with this assertion, the Ontario government amended the act at the next session of the legislature specifically to exempt organizations like the brotherhoods from the act's provisions.<sup>21</sup>

This success at the provincial level apparently convinced Canadian members of the BLE that the board system of lobbying had proven its worth. They therefore produced a plan for a BLE Dominion Legislative Board which would fulfill the same function on the federal scene.<sup>22</sup> There were, however, no provisions in the BLE's *Constitution* for such a body, nor was there any similar body in the United States to provide a precedent. The BLE delegates to the Toronto meeting therefore decided to poll the brotherhood's Canadian divisions.<sup>23</sup> By March 1893, two thirds of the Canadian divisions had voted in favour of the Board, and it was officially endorsed by Grand Chief Arthur.<sup>24</sup>

Right from the beginning, the Board's promoters hoped to draw the other brotherhoods into the scheme.<sup>25</sup> This took about two years,

<sup>20</sup> Toronto Globe, 19 August 1892; Engineers' Journal, October 1892, p. 910. The problem of fraudulent benefit societies was real enough. One such society was called the "Order of the Iron Hall." Engineers' Journal, October 1892, p. 949.

<sup>21</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1893, "Report of Grand Secretary and Treasurer," p. 77; Statutes of the Province of Ontario, 1893, 56 Vict., Chap. 32.

<sup>22</sup> Engineers' Journal, November 1892, p. 1053.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., March 1893, p. 269.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., November 1892, p. 1053.

and by 1895 the other three brotherhoods, plus the Order of Railway Telegraphers, had joined with the BLE to form a joint "Dominion Legislative Board of Railway Employees"<sup>26</sup>. The Board met annually, and was

composed of representatives from each lodge and division of railroad employes, the expense of which is borne by the local lodges represented; each lodge being entitled to one representative on the "Board".<sup>27</sup>

By 1896, the United Brotherhood of Railroad Trackmen had also affiliated, and its Grand Secretary and Treasurer, A.B. Lowe, had become the Board's secretary.<sup>28</sup> The railway brotherhoods had thus entered a new phase in their relationship with Canadian governments, by setting up a new (and hopefully permanent) structure to deal with legislative problems.

In 1897, the Board proved its worth by persuading the federal government to exempt the brotherhoods from the provisions of yet another Dominion Insurance Act.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in the mid-nineties, the Board showed itself to be willing to go beyond merely defending the brotherhoods against potentially dangerous legislation, and actively lobbied for a wide range of changes in Canadian law, including laws governing the safe operation of railways (including air brakes and

<sup>26</sup> Railroad Trainman, April 1895, p. 359.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., January 1897, p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., September 1896, p. 730.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., January 1897, p. 84.

automatic couplers), the regulation of the hours of work, and the prompt payment of wages.<sup>30</sup>

After 1897, however, the Board seems to have become less active, and left few further traces in the records of the brotherhoods. This decline into obscurity may have stemmed from ineffectiveness: aside from its success in connection with the 1897 insurance bill, it seems to have accomplished very little in getting its recommendations accepted by the federal government.<sup>31</sup> Yet the Board had one weakness which may have contributed as well to its ultimate eclipse as the brotherhoods' primary vehicle for influencing Canadian legislation, and this was the fact that representation on the Board was voluntary.<sup>32</sup> The Board thus depended for its financial strength and its effectiveness on those Canadian lodges and divisions which cared to be represented on it. Yet, even in 1896, a year in which the Board appears to have been quite active, only forty-five delegates, representing a small fraction of the locals entitled to representation, turned up at the annual meeting in Ottawa.<sup>33</sup> Because of this lack of support, it seems likely that after 1897 the Board became the private preserve of a mere handful of lodges and divisions and their officers, and no longer represented

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-76, 83-85; Ibid., March 1897, p. 256; Conductors' Monthly, November 1896, p. 677.

<sup>31</sup> See Railroad Trainman, January 1897, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

the Canadian membership of the brotherhoods as a whole.<sup>34</sup> The Board had clearly failed to meet the expectations of its founders.

The Office of Dominion Legislative Representative and its Evolution, 1898-1914

The failure of the Dominion Legislative Board led to the adoption of a system similar to that used in the United States since 1894, the appointment of a full-time lobbyist, the 'Dominion Legislative Representative'. The office of Dominion Legislative Representative was to go through a number of changes in the first few years of its existence, the most important being a gradual increase in the number of representatives after 1904, as each brotherhood withdrew from the original system of joint representation, and appointed its own official representatives at Ottawa.

The BLF took the lead in 1898 in establishing the new system. At the Brotherhood's Sixth Biennial Convention in September of that year, a motion was carried which declared that "the best interest of the engine men of Canada" had not been looked after adequately at Ottawa "during the last few months." The motion empowered Grand Master Sargent to "select a man to represent the interests of the railroad employees in Canada at Ottawa."<sup>35</sup> In keeping with this recommendation, Sargent appointed James T. Burke, of Stratford, Ontario, to the post of BLF Dominion Legislative Representative. He instructed Burke to look

<sup>34</sup> See Burke, Report of Dominion of Canada Legislative Representative, 1899, p. 5; on this point.

<sup>35</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1898, p. 143.

after "the best interests ... of members of all labor organizations" at Ottawa, especially railway labour organizations.<sup>36</sup>

Burke realized that his "first move" when he arrived in Ottawa in early 1899 would be to dislodge the Dominion Legislative Board from its position as the legitimate representative of the railway brotherhoods at Ottawa.<sup>37</sup> He was provided with the opportunity to accomplish this goal by a recent order-in-council which permitted Canadian railway companies to put into effect a uniform code of work rules, the "American Standard Rules and Regulations."<sup>38</sup> Burke interviewed the Minister of Railways, A.G. Blair, and told him that the railway brotherhoods opposed the order-in-council, because the American Rules were in reality not 'standard' at all, but varied considerably from company to company within the United States. The order-in-council would thus give the Canadian railway companies too much leeway in "framing new rules or changing them." The brotherhoods wanted uniform rules, but believed that they should actually be produced by negotiation between railway companies and their employees under government auspices.<sup>39</sup> Blair told Burke, however, that he had already spoken with the Chairman and Secretary of the Dominion Legislative Board of Railway Employes. These men had assured him, he said, that railway workers in Canada wanted the

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<sup>36</sup> Burke, Report of Dominion of Canada Legislative Representative, 1899, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

American Standard Rules.<sup>40</sup> Burke, however, had come prepared with suitable credentials. He presented Blair "with letters bearing lodge seals from engineers, firemen, conductors, trainmen and others," which clearly indicated that the officials of the Dominion Legislative Board had no authority to speak for "the men throughout the Dominion of Canada in train service...."<sup>41</sup> Blair accepted Burke's credentials, and was agreeable to his suggestion that the framing of work rules be placed in the hands of the Commons' Railway Committee.<sup>42</sup> This apparently ended whatever influence the Dominion Legislative Board might still have had in Ottawa, and Burke made no further mention of the Board in his *Annual Report*. It is probably safe to assume that the Board's demise followed shortly thereafter, although it may never have been formally dissolved by the brotherhoods.

Yet, regardless of the fact that Burke could now legitimately claim to speak for all the brotherhoods at Ottawa, only the BLF had appointed him officially, and only the BLF paid his salary. This was not only inequitable, but could mean that Burke's status as legislative representative of the other brotherhoods might be questioned in the future. Aware of this potential weakness,<sup>43</sup> Sargent persuaded the BRT to endorse Burke officially in 1901, and in 1902 recruited the

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1902, "Grand Master's Report," p. 294.



ORC and the Telegraphers.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, however, Burke had resigned his post to accept a position as Factory Inspector for the Ontario government. Grand Chief E.E. Clark of the ORC asked for the "honor" of naming Burke's replacement, inasmuch as a BRT member was National Legislative Representative in Washington, and Burke belonged to the BLE. Clark's request was met, and he appointed J. Harvey Hall of Toronto to the post.<sup>45</sup>

Hall was to play an important part in brotherhood affairs for the next twelve years. He was in his mid-forties, and had been a CPR conductor until 1893, when he had gone into the coal business in Toronto. He had already filled several minor executive positions in the ORC Grand Division, and had just been elected an alderman for Toronto's Sixth Ward.<sup>46</sup> He was able, energetic, and had a keen interest in politics — the sort of interest which, as the brotherhoods were soon to discover to their sorrow, sometimes verged upon outright partisanship. In the fall of 1902, the BLE convention authorized Grand Chief Arthur to endorse Hall as the BLE's representative at Ottawa.<sup>47</sup> None of the brotherhoods had as yet established the post of Canadian vice-president, and Hall was thus (albeit temporarily) the principal Canadian spokesman of five of the strongest labour organizations in Canada.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 295.

<sup>46</sup> From a short sketch in the Conductors' Monthly, November 1903, p. 921.

<sup>47</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1903, "Grand Master's Report," p. 75.

Hall's strong position was of undoubted value in protecting the interests of the brotherhoods at Ottawa in 1902 (as we shall see shortly). In 1904, however, he became involved in a political controversy which resulted in the BLF's withdrawal from joint representation at Ottawa. The direct issue was the Grand Trunk's Benevolent Society, which for some years had operated in such a way as to limit the liability of the company in the case of employees' accidents. Hall believed that Charles Hyman, M.P. for London, Ontario, and Chairman of the House Railway Committee, had attempted to sidetrack legislation correcting what many railway employees believed to be an iniquitous situation.<sup>48</sup> In the general election of November 1904, Hall campaigned actively against Hyman in London.<sup>49</sup> Various Canadian members of the Brotherhoods criticized this action as "political and partisan" and as a result "the matter came before the executives of all the organizations interested."<sup>50</sup> With the exception of the BLF, the executives of the brotherhoods decided that Hall had acted quite properly. "as it was shown that Mr. Hyman was opposed to legislation in the interests of labor."<sup>51</sup> The new BLF Vice-President for Canada, Eugene A. Ball, however, recommended that Hall be dismissed as the BLF's legislative representative. Hall, said Ball, lacked the "necessary qualifications"

<sup>48</sup> London Free Press, 24 October 1904. See Chapter VII, footnote 31, above.

<sup>49</sup> London Free Press, 24 October 1904, 1 November 1904.

<sup>50</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1905, "Grand Master's Report," p. 93.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

for the post.<sup>52</sup> Hall's advice was followed, and the BLF was without representation at Ottawa until early 1907, when Canadian members of the BLF came to the conclusion that continued non-representation at Ottawa was "unsafe, as frequent antagonistic bills were introduced and in some instances laws hostile to our interests enacted."<sup>53</sup> Hall, however, was not re-appointed as the BLF's legislative representative. Instead, a Canadian Legislative Board was set up, with George K. Wark of Toronto as Chairman of the Board and Dominion Legislative Representative.<sup>54</sup>

Although Hall was still the legislative representative of the other brotherhoods, the fragmentation of representation at Ottawa had begun. Within three years, each of the brotherhoods would have its own lobbyist at Ottawa. The most important reason for this fragmentation probably was the 1904 election episode, which had given rise to a belief that Hall was too ardent a Tory to represent the brotherhoods during a Liberal regime.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, however, Hall's position made him a very real rival to the newly appointed Canadian vice-presidents of the various brotherhoods, since he was in no way constitutionally subordinate to these new men, and had for a short time enjoyed the status of chief spokesman for the brotherhoods

<sup>52</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1906, "Fourth Vice-Grand Master's Report," p: 11.

<sup>53</sup> Firemen's Magazine, October 1907, pp. 527-528.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 528.

<sup>55</sup> See ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 785. Hall, indeed, never tried to conceal his allegiance to the Conservative Party. See London Free Press, 1 November 1904.

in Canada. Rivalry of this sort, indeed, may have been the source of Ball's opposition to Hall in 1904.

Organized opposition to Hall in the BRT emerged in early 1907, when the Canadian delegates to the Grand Lodge convention persuaded the convention to amend a resolution accepting the "Report of the Grand Lodge Officers" so that "the portion of the report relating to the continuance of joint legislative representation by the railroad brotherhoods in the Dominion of Canada be stricken out."<sup>56</sup> BRT Grand Master Morrissey realized that antipathy to Hall lay behind this resolution. He believed, however, that it would be "unwise to have a divided representation of the railway employes" at Ottawa at this time, because of important questions coming before Parliament. He therefore asked President Garretson of the ORC to replace Hall with a more acceptable member of his order.<sup>57</sup> Garretson refused, alleging that "a large proportion" of the ORC's membership wanted Hall kept on, as did the Engineers and Telegraphers.<sup>58</sup> Morrissey refused to be stymied. He sent an official circular to the Canadian lodges of the BRT

outlining the situation, and requesting an expression from the lodges as to whether or not, in view of existing conditions, they desired to have Bro. Hall continued as their representative.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1907, p. 22.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., "Grand Master's Annual Report, 1907," pp. 24-25. Morrissey apparently overlooked George K. Mark's appointment as BLF Legislative Representative earlier that year.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

The Canadian membership got the point, and Hall was re-confirmed by a majority of the Canadian lodges. <sup>60</sup>

Garretson was wrong, however, when he said that the Engineers wanted Hall kept on. The next year, the BLE re-organized its Canadian operations and took the opportunity which this re-organization offered to dispense with Hall's services. The BLE Dominion Legislative Board, in limbo for some years, was revived, with the new Canadian Assistant Grand Chief, Calvin Lawrence, as its Chairman and Dominion Legislative Representative. <sup>61</sup>

Hall's eviction as BRT Legislative Representative took another year, and was made part of a programme of streamlining the brotherhood's legislative activity in Canada and making it more responsive to the wishes of the Canadian membership. For some time, the BRT's constitution had provided for provincial legislative boards in Canada similar to state legislative boards in the United States. Apparently such provincial boards, when they had functioned at all, had achieved little, because provincial legislatures had little authority over railway matters in Canada, in contrast with American state legislatures. <sup>62</sup> A group of Canadian delegates to the 1909 Grand Lodge convention therefore presented a resolution, which passed with little opposition, which

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, p. 270; Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, A Century of Service (Cleveland, 1963), p. 10. See also BRT Proceedings, 1909, "Grand Master's Annual Report, 1908," p. 29.

<sup>62</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1909, pp. 39-40.

recommended the formation of a Dominion Legislative Board.<sup>63</sup> This board had twenty-three members directly elected by the Canadian lodges, and was empowered to nominate a Dominion Legislative Representative, who had to be approved by two-thirds of the Canadian membership in order to take office. This representative was required to submit copies of all Canadian legislation in which he was taking an interest to the Brotherhood's president, for the latter's "consideration and advice."<sup>64</sup> At its first meeting in November 1909, the new Dominion Legislative Board selected John Maloney, of Ottawa, as the Brotherhood's Dominion Legislative Representative.<sup>65</sup>

This post was clearly designed to curb independent thought and action, and its designers obviously had Hall's maverick disposition in mind. In 1912, however, even the hitherto compliant Maloney ran afoul of the Grand Lodge when he dared to oppose Vice-President Murdock and President Lee on the long and drawn-out controversy which followed the 1910 Grand Trunk strike.<sup>66</sup> Maloney was dismissed and Murdock assumed the legislative duties himself.<sup>67</sup>

By this time, the Telegraphers had also bowed out of the joint system of representation at Ottawa. Hall was now acting only for the

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1911," pp. 77-79.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter XI, below.

<sup>67</sup> McCaleb, Railroad Trainmen, p. 264.

ORC, and even here his position had apparently been uncertain for a time. In early 1911, he was rumoured to be on the way out as Dominion Legislative Representative for the ORC, and may have been able to maintain his position only because of his stand during the controversy over the Grand Trunk strike settlement.<sup>68</sup> Hall stayed on as ORC representative at Ottawa until his death in 1915. Indeed, after the 1911 federal election, his Conservative bias was no longer a liability, and the Borden government apparently came to value him as a Conservative spokesman for the Canadian labour movement. In fact, at the time of his death, he was rumoured to be in line for a seat in the Senate.<sup>69</sup>

It is difficult to assess the net effect of this gradual fragmentation of representation. To begin with, the various brotherhood representatives apparently found it possible to co-operate most of the time after 1907, and there is little evidence of serious differences of opinion. In 1913, however, President Carter of the BLF commented on the situation:

Personally, I have always been of the opinion that nothing is more detrimental to the Legislative interests of railroad employes than to make it evident that the members of the several organizations cannot unite in a common cause and agree on one National Legislative Representative.<sup>70</sup>

Carter may have been right, and it is certainly worth noting that the most serious failure which brotherhood lobbyists experienced before

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter XI, below.

<sup>69</sup> Toronto Globe, 6 July 1915.

<sup>70</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1913, "President's Report," p. 32.

World War One occurred just as the split was beginning, in 1907. This was a fruitless attempt to have the brotherhoods exempted from a restrictive feature of a new conciliation act, the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (to be discussed shortly). It is difficult, therefore, to escape the conclusion that the system was not only needlessly cumbersome, but potentially dangerous as well.<sup>71</sup> It contrasted badly with American practice: the four brotherhoods maintained a single National Legislative Representative at Washington for most of the period 1894-1914.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, not only was the Canadian system inefficient in comparison with the American system after which it had been patterned originally, but it had one feature which was manifestly unfair to Canadian members of the brotherhoods, and reflected upon their national status as well. This feature was the way in which the system was funded. While the National Legislative Representative in Washington was paid out of general funds (to which Canadian members contributed in the form of dues), the Dominion Legislative Representatives were usually paid out of special assessments on Canadian lodges and divisions.<sup>73</sup> Dominion

<sup>71</sup> Only in 1916, after the period under review in this study, were changes made, with the formation of a Joint Dominion Legislative Board. But, by this time, circumstances had been radically altered by war and by events south of the border. BLF Proceedings, 1916, p. 590. See Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era 1910-1917 (New York, 1963), pp. 235-237.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. The Hall case was paralleled briefly, at Washington, however. For two or three years before 1911, BLE dislike of National Legislative Representative A.A. Roe (a BRT member) led the BLE to appoint its own representative at Washington. Roe's expulsion from the BRT in 1911 apparently solved this problem, and the BLE returned to the fold. See BRT Proceedings, 1911, pp. 17-18.

<sup>73</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1913, "President's Report," p. 32; BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1909," p. 80.



Legislative Representatives were thus accorded status equivalent to American State Legislative Representatives, who were remunerated in the same fashion. Rules established by the BRT in 1909 made this subordinate status quite clear:

Whenever authorized by meeting of the legislative representatives in the Dominion, state or territory, or by its legislative board... the General Secretary and Treasurer shall levy a pro rata assessment on all members of each Lodge of the brotherhood located in the Dominion, state or territory....<sup>74</sup>

As far as can be determined, only the BLF finally realized that its Canadian members were being subjected to a financial inequity because of this arrangement (although the sums involved apparently were not large).<sup>75</sup> In 1913, President Carter recommended that the BLF estimate the *per capita* cost of the National Legislative Representative "during the past years," and then "return to the Dominion Legislative Board the same amount per capita to members in Canada," and to continue to do this in the future.<sup>76</sup> There is no evidence to suggest, however, that the American executives of the BLF or of any of the other brotherhoods considered that there might be anything wrong in equating the Dominion of Canada with an American state or territory. In all fairness, however, it must be admitted that the Canadian members did not record any objections either.

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<sup>74</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1909," p. 80.

<sup>75</sup> See ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 712.

<sup>76</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1913, "President's Report," p. 32.

The Dominion Legislative Representatives at Work

Much of the work of the various Dominion Legislative Representatives between 1898 and 1914 might be described as important enough, but routine. For example, protection of the brotherhoods' insurance plans remained on the agenda year after year, as did legislation concerning railway safety, pensions, alien labour, and so on. The creation of the Board of Railway Commissioners in 1903 merely increased the volume of routine work. Indeed, by 1914, much of a typical representative's time was likely to be taken up in examining the rulings of the Board, especially in the field of safe railway operation. In 1913, for example, much of the BLF's representative's forty page annual report was devoted to "the circulars and general orders of the Board"<sup>77</sup> in the past year. On three different occasions after 1900, however, the Dominion Legislative Representatives of the brotherhoods were confronted with legislative problems which departed from routine. These were, first, a proposed government bill in 1902, the Railway Labour Arbitration Bill, second, a private member's bill introduced to the Canadian Senate in 1903, the 'Lougheed Bill', and third, a government bill (which has just been cited), the Industrial Disputes' Investigation Act of 1907. The brotherhoods found all three of these bills objectionable, either totally or in part, and made strenuous attempts to amend or defeat them.

The Railway Labour Arbitration Bill of 1902 was apparently inspired by recent strikes on Canadian railways, especially the CPR

<sup>77</sup> Firemen's Magazine, December 1913, p. 812.

trackmen's strike of 1901.<sup>78</sup> As its title implied, the bill would require compulsory arbitration of railway labour disputes, making strikes on Canadian railways illegal.<sup>79</sup> This was a radical innovation in Canadian law (although there were precedents elsewhere, especially in New Zealand where all strikes were illegal). In recognition of this, the Minister of Labour, Sir William Mulock, told the House of Commons that the government did not intend to enact the bill into law in the current session of Parliament, but would wait until opinion from interested parties could be properly assessed.<sup>80</sup>

The leaders of the brotherhoods and a significant proportion of their Canadian membership were appalled at the prospect of compulsory arbitration, which they believed posed a threat to the continued existence of their organizations in Canada. A letter from a Canadian correspondent in the *BLF Magazine* in September 1902, for example, declared that the proposed bill, "if ... put through in its present form will mean the dissolution of railway organizations," because the proposed penalties for inciting a strike or lockout would render the brotherhoods "powerless in the protection of their members."<sup>81</sup> As the time for the 1903 session of the House approached, brotherhood

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<sup>78</sup> Frank Robert Anton, The Role of Government in the Settlement of Industrial Disputes in Canada (Don Mills and Montreal, 1962), p. 66.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. See also H.D. Woods and Sylvia Ostry, Labour Policy and Labour Economics in Canada (Toronto, 1962), pp. 47-48.

<sup>80</sup> Labour Gazette, August 1903, pp. 136-137.

<sup>81</sup> Firemen's Magazine, September 1902, p. 396.

opposition to the bill began to mount. *The Railroad Trainman's Journal*, for example, quoted a resolution against the bill endorsed by a number of British Columbia Lodges, and declared that, "all of our Canadian Lodges will do well to follow suit."<sup>82</sup> It is quite probable that Labour Minister Mulock had not anticipated this much opposition. It may be, indeed, that he had relied too confidently upon the technocratic mind of his Deputy Minister, Mackenzie King, in framing the act.<sup>83</sup> In any case, he moved quickly to repair the damage the act had done to the government's reputation among the working men of the Dominion.<sup>84</sup>

Mulock met with a number of representatives of the brotherhoods and put together a new bill, the Railway Labour Disputes Act, which met the specifications of Canadian railroaders.<sup>85</sup> J. Harvey Hall played a prominent part in these negotiations, and Mulock gave him much of the credit for the changes which had been made. As Sir William said in the House, Hall "occupies a very prominent position in the labour world. ... He took part in all the negotiations with me, at which the railway employees were present."<sup>86</sup> Framed as it was,

<sup>82</sup> Railroad Trainman, February 1903, pp. 134-135.

<sup>83</sup> See the memorandum in KP, J4, file 181, C23766.

<sup>84</sup> At the annual convention of the Dominion TLC in September 1902, J. Harvey Hall had been able to persuade the convention to reject compulsory arbitration, by a vote of 78 to 12. Babcock, "A.F. of L. in Canada," pp. 220-221.

<sup>85</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1903, pp. 2538-2539.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

therefore, in close and frequent consultation with brotherhood representatives, the new bill reflected their distaste for compulsory arbitration. An element of compulsion was retained, in the form of compulsory investigation, and this, as the *Labour Gazette* noted, was something new.<sup>87</sup> Yet the decision of the investigating board was unenforceable in the courts, and this was made explicit in the Act.<sup>88</sup> The new bill went through the Senate with only minor amendments, and was to form the basis for the formal conciliation of railway labour disputes until 1907.

Yet even as this bill was in passage through the House of Commons, the brotherhoods were faced with a new threat from another direction. In mid-April, Senator James Lougheed of Calgary, the Conservative Party leader in the Upper House, introduced a private bill which he believed would do much to solve current problems of labour unrest in Canada. The 'Lougheed Bill' passed its second reading with little difficulty on 29 April. Its key clause read:

Every one is guilty of an indictable offense and liable to two years' imprisonment who, not being a British subject, or who, being a British subject and not having been continuously domiciled and resident in Canada during one year next before the commission of the act complained of, does in Canada counsel, incite, urge or induce any strike or any lockout, or the continuance of any strike or any lockout.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Labour Gazette*, August 1903, p. 139.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>89</sup> *Firemen's Magazine*, August 1903, p. 279.

Senator Lougheed's motives were fairly obvious. As far as he was concerned, Canadian strikes were usually American in origin — not a new idea, but one which was presently popular because of a recent rash of strikes and a rising level of anti-Americanism in the Dominion.<sup>90</sup>

As far as the brotherhoods were concerned, however, it was unfair for Lougheed to link them with the radical organizations, such as the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees and the Western Federation of Miners, which were causing much of the present difficulties.<sup>91</sup> But even worse, should the Lougheed bill become law, it could seriously weaken the brotherhoods' protective activities in Canada;<sup>92</sup> it could serve as the basis for a wide range of restrictive injunctions;<sup>93</sup> and it could encourage the growth of all-Canadian dual unions like the Canadian Order of Railway Men.<sup>94</sup> Clearly, the bill must be stopped.

The leaders of the AFofL and the Dominion TLC were equally alarmed by the Lougheed bill,<sup>95</sup> and joined with the brotherhoods in an effort to crush it. The combined forces of international labour were unable to prevent the bill from passing the Senate, but the

<sup>90</sup> C. Brian Williams, "Development of Relations between Canadian and American National Trade Union Centers - 1865-1925," Industrial Relations, XX (1965), 359-361; Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto, 1974), pp: 28-29.

<sup>91</sup> Firemen's Magazine, August 1903, pp. 280-281, November 1903, p. 765. Engineers' Journal, June 1903, p. 414.

<sup>92</sup> Firemen's Magazine, July 1903, p. 148.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., August 1903, p. 280.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., July 1903, p. 148.

<sup>95</sup> Babcock, "A.F. of L. in Canada," pp. 252-253.

government and the members of the House of Commons, when made aware of the views of Canadian workingmen, were much less willing than the appointed senators to have anything to do with legislation which clearly smacked of hostility to organized labour. One M.P. told J. Harvey Hall that "such damned fool legislation cannot be permitted to become law in this country."<sup>96</sup> James Murdock of the BRT reported that

There is probably not one member of the House of Commons who has not been interviewed as to his views on this bill, and they one and all state that they are opposed to any such measure.<sup>97</sup>

The bill was never introduced into the House, and Senator Loughheed never took up the issue again. Hall, indeed, discussed the bill personally with Loughheed, and believed that the senator "felt that he had made a mistake."<sup>98</sup> Many of Loughheed's fellow senators probably would not have agreed.

But whatever the senators' beliefs, the Loughheed bill was clearly perceived by Canadian trade unionists, including the members of the brotherhoods, as an attack upon internationalism. The strength of their concerted attack on this bill was thus a clear demonstration of the extensiveness of the support of organized labour in Canada for the general principles of international trade unionism at the turn of the century.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Engineers' Journal, October 1903, p. 670.

<sup>97</sup> Railroad Trainman, August 1903, p. 647.

<sup>98</sup> Conductors' Monthly, November 1903, p. 922.

<sup>99</sup> Babcock believes that there was a significant difference in the outlook of Canadian and American trade unionists at this time. He

The victory over the Loughheed Bill, however, was soon balanced off by defeat on another measure. This measure, the Industrial Disputes' Investigation Act of 1907 (The IDIA or "Lemieux Act"), represented the expansion of the jurisdiction of the 1903 Railway Labor Disputes Act to include not only railways, but also mines, communications and public utilities, and retained the compulsory investigation of the 1903 act in a somewhat simplified form.<sup>100</sup> It had one feature not found in the 1903 act, however, a mandatory 'cooling-off' period: a strike or lockout in an industry enumerated in the act could not legally take place until the completion of the compulsory investigation of the dispute by the conciliation board.<sup>101</sup>

Opinion in the Canadian labour movement was seriously divided on the new act. Leaving aside the brotherhoods, much of the support for the act came from leaders of purely Canadian unions, whereas opposition, by and large, originated within international unions affiliated with the A.F. of L.<sup>102</sup> At issue was government intervention. Samuel Gompers of the A.F. of L. had a deep distrust of government intervention in labour disputes, based upon many years of hostile government action in

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has shown, for example, that many Canadian trade unionists favoured compulsory arbitration, in contrast with fairly solid American opposition to it. Babcock, "A.F. of L. in Canada," pp. 220-221. He has admitted, however, that few Canadian trade unionists (except, perhaps, in French Canada) opposed international unionism in principle at the turn of the century. Ibid., p. 421:

<sup>100</sup> Woods and Ostry, Labour Policy, pp. 50-51.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 51; Anton, Role of Government, pp. 70-71.

<sup>102</sup> Babcock, "A.F. of L. in Canada," pp. 400-401.



American labour disputes, whereas Canadian experience with government intervention was much less unfortunate.<sup>103</sup> The principal reaction of the railway brotherhoods, however, was to focus criticism upon the mandatory cooling-off period. According to J. Harvey Hall,

It will be almost impossible for this Board [of Investigation] to be in operation inside of thirty days. Then the enquiry, which on a road like the Canadian Pacific or the Grand Trunk Railway, might take two or three months, so that we can readily decide on three or four months' time being taken up before the report of the Board would be gazetted. This has given the Company ample time to put themselves in a position to defeat the object of the employes in case they attempt to enforce their demands by striking.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, while Samuel Gompers and the AFofL wanted to kill the act completely, the brotherhoods had a different, more limited objective — to exempt the brotherhoods from the compulsory delay of strikes. The Canadian government must have been aware of these divisions within the Canadian labour movement, and was probably aware, as well, of the disagreements within the brotherhoods which were currently undermining J. Harvey Hall's authority as Dominion Legislative Representative. In all probability, it was evidence of this extensive disunity which encouraged the government to stand firm against the pressure of the brotherhood lobbyists.

On 7 February 1907, Hall and BLF Legislative Representative Wark introduced a brotherhood defegation to Minister of Labour Lemieux, which included BRT Vice Grand Master Murdock, ORC Deputy Grand Master Berry, ORT Vice-President Campbell, and the brotherhood

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp. 399-403.

<sup>104</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1907, "Grand Master's Report," p. 94.

general chairmen on several Canadian railways.<sup>105</sup> The delegation made "very little impression" on Lemieux and, on 11 February, met Prime Minister Laurier, with equal lack of success. A further meeting between Hall, Wark and Laurier a week later was also a failure. The principal effect of Hall's and Wark's lobbying, indeed, was merely to delay the consideration by the House of Commons of the clauses of the bill which affected railway labour. In early March, Lemieux offered the brotherhoods' representatives the option of using the 1903 act if they wished. The catch was that the compulsory "cooling-off" period would be made applicable to the 1903 act as well. Acting on the advice of the Canadian Vice-Presidents and the general chairmen of the brotherhoods, Hall and Wark rejected Lemieux's proposal. Nonetheless, on 15 March, a government amendment to the IDIA implemented Lemieux's proposal in an apparent attempt to appease the brotherhoods.<sup>106</sup> Hall was not impressed: the amendment meant "exactly the same thing as if we had been included in the original Bill." He and Wark fought a final, futile, rear-guard action: on 19 March, three Opposition amendments respecting the application of the act to Canadian railways were defeated in the House.

Except for obtaining one meaningless concession, therefore, the brotherhoods were completely defeated in their efforts to be excluded from the 'cooling-off' provision of the IDIA. In view of the subsequent importance of the bill, this was perhaps the most significant

<sup>105</sup> The following account is drawn from Ibid., pp. 94-95.

<sup>106</sup> R. MacGregor Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King; A Political Biography, Vol. 1, 1874-1923 (Toronto, 1958), p. 140f.

failure experienced by Brotherhood lobbyists in the period before World War One.

Was Playing Politics Worthwhile?

Undoubtedly, the maintenance of lobbyists at Ottawa by the brotherhoods before World War One was necessary, if only to defend the brotherhoods against hostile government action. But, overall, how effective were the brotherhood lobbyists?

Certainly, in relation to cost, their efforts were effective enough. In early 1911, for example, Hall estimated that his total expenses for the year should not exceed \$1,000, and the cost to the other three brotherhoods was probably no greater.<sup>107</sup> Such sums were miniscule for organizations which dispensed millions of dollars every year for insurance benefits. Clearly, the brotherhoods bought protection at Ottawa very cheaply, and there is no surviving evidence that they ever gave any serious consideration to scrapping the system. Moreover, there were some genuine achievements, such as the amendment to the railway labour bill in 1902-1903, and the defeat (with the AFofL and the TLC) of the Lougheed Bill. Yet against this must be counted the failure to get the brotherhoods exempted from the provisions of the IDIA in 1907: how realistic were Hall's fears about the effects of the IDIA's cooling-off clause? The brotherhoods would find out in 1910.

<sup>107</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 712. See also ibid. "Report of President," p. 80.

## CHAPTER X

### THE GRAND TRUNK STRIKE OF 1910

The year before the passage of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act was a year of decision for conductors and trainmen on the Grand Trunk railway. In that year, 1906, the BRT and ORC general committees on the Grand Trunk<sup>1</sup> decided to affiliate with the newly formed Eastern Association of General Committees, an organization patterned after the highly successful Western Association,<sup>2</sup> and designed to raise and standardize wages for conductors and trainmen on railways in eastern North America. The decision to join the Eastern Association put the Grand Trunk conductors and trainmen on a direct collision course with the Grand Trunk management, resulting, in 1910, in the only major strike to be fought in Canada by the brotherhoods in the two decades before World War One.

#### Company-Union Relations to 1906

In the late nineteenth century, generally speaking, the ORC and BRT committees on the Grand Trunk pursued a policy of appeasing management, with the result that conductors and trainmen received substantially lower wages on the Grand Trunk than they did on other

<sup>1</sup> Since 1892, the ORC and BRT had been coordinating their protective activities in a system of 'joint committees' on both the Grand Trunk and the CPR. See Chapter V, above.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter VII, above.

major railroads in eastern North America. In part, this policy reflected a recognition of, and general sympathy for, the company's shaky financial position,<sup>3</sup> but it was also made necessary by the reluctance of the brotherhoods' rank-and-file (especially, perhaps, the older conductors) to sanction strike action to gain wage increases. This reluctance was particularly apparent in 1892, when the membership of the ORC on the Grand Trunk voted against a strike,<sup>4</sup> and in 1894, when the Pullman boycott of the Grand Trunk's Michigan lines stopped short at the Canadian border.<sup>5</sup>

In 1896, however, the Grand Trunk Board of Directors appointed a new General Manager. This was Charles M. Hays, an American-trained railway executive of notable intransigence as far as labour organizations were concerned.<sup>6</sup> After Hays' appointment, relations between the Grand Trunk and the brotherhoods began to deteriorate and, by 1902, brotherhood committees were looking back to the 'good old days' before the Hays administration.<sup>7</sup> Negotiating contracts with the Grand Trunk management became increasingly difficult. In 1904, it took two months to negotiate a contract for Grand Trunk yardmen,<sup>8</sup> and, in 1905,

<sup>3</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 648.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter V, above.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter VI, above.

<sup>6</sup> Hays' actions during the trackmen's strike of 1899 have already been discussed in Chapter VI.

<sup>7</sup> See BLF Proceedings, 1902, "Grand Master's Report," p. 80.

<sup>8</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1905, "Report of Grand Master," p. 23.

a general agreement for conductors and trainmen required the personal intervention of the grand chiefs.<sup>9</sup> In 1906, a strike vote was required on the Central Vermont (a Grand Trunk subsidiary) to gain a new schedule,<sup>10</sup> and this was followed the next year by a wildcat strike of Central Vermont yardmen.<sup>11</sup> The conductors and trainmen were not alone in their difficulties. BLE contract negotiations dragged on for six months in 1905, before being submitted to binding arbitration.<sup>12</sup> Yet Grand Trunk wages still remained low.

The Eastern Association, 1906-1909

By late 1906, the ORC-BRT committees on the Grand Trunk (and probably the rank-and-file as well) had come to the conclusion that a more aggressive policy must be adopted. The 1905 agreement had been in effect for less than a month before the company began to exploit loopholes in it, requiring further personal intervention by the grand chiefs.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the contract itself was proving to be "unsatisfactory," since it did not meet the wishes of an increasingly restive rank-and-file.<sup>14</sup> It was at this point that the ORC-BRT committee

<sup>9</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1907, "Report of Grand Chief Conductor," p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1907, "Grand Master's Report," p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>12</sup>Engineers' Journal, July 1906, p. 619.

<sup>13</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1907, "Report of Grand Chief Conductor," p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 648.

received word of the formation of the Eastern Association, and asked the grand chiefs for advice on affiliation. The grand chiefs advised the committee to join the Association; on learning of this, the Association's officials decided to extend the Association's territory to include eastern Canada.<sup>15</sup>

The first formal meeting of the Eastern Association took place in March, 1907. The chairmen of the Grand Trunk joint committee were shown the schedule of wage rates which the Association intended to present to Eastern railroads. The Canadians were "amazed:" the new rates would result in an "enormous increase of pay" on the Grand Trunk.<sup>16</sup> They were told they should have received these rates years earlier, and that "what was required on the Grand Trunk Railway system was a wheelbarrow full of backbone."<sup>17</sup> The Grand Trunk committeemen agreed, and decided to associate themselves with a concerted wage movement which the Eastern Association planned to undertake very shortly.<sup>18</sup>

The financial slump of 1907, however, brought a halt to the Eastern Association's programme, as the Association's executive decided to postpone the presentations of their demands to the managers

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 649.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

of eastern railways until business conditions improved.<sup>19</sup> The Grand Trunk committees were once again (if temporarily) on their own.

Their attempts to renegotiate the 1905 agreement with the Grand Trunk in 1908, however, were conducted with an aggressiveness which showed that they had been greatly influenced by the example of the Eastern Association. The committee presented a demand for a new and much improved schedule to the Grand Trunk management. When they were threatened with a wage reduction instead, they called in brotherhood vice-presidents Berry, Murdock, Morrissey, and Sheppard to assist in the negotiations.<sup>20</sup> Grand Trunk officials were noticeably more courteous to the union vice-presidents than they had been to the joint committee, but remained firmly opposed to wage increases. They admitted that while the company's wage rates were 23 percent lower than the CPR's, the committee's demands would cost the company \$600,000, an additional burden which could not be borne during a depression. They offered, instead, to continue to abide by the 1905 agreement until business conditions improved, and then to discuss revision.<sup>21</sup> The committee men were most unhappy with this proposal, and were all for conducting a strike vote then and there, but the brotherhood vice-presidents persuaded them that the time was "inopportune," and no doubt reminded them that the Eastern Association

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<sup>19</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1907, "Grand Master's Report," p. 14.

<sup>20</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1909, "Grand Master's Report, 1908," p. 13; ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 731.

<sup>21</sup>Railroad Trainman, June 1909, p. 521.



had just made a similar decision to defer action.<sup>22</sup> The committee thus reluctantly decided to accept, temporarily, the company's offer of an "improvised" schedule, based on the 1905 rates.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, it had become quite clear by this time that the level of dissatisfaction among Grand Trunk conductors and trainmen had risen high enough to bring about a strike at any time, should it be sanctioned by union headquarters.<sup>24</sup> In mid-1909, in fact, the joint committee, after three months of renewed negotiations with the Grand Trunk management, had almost reached the point of calling a strike vote. They were deterred only by the revival of the Eastern Association, whose officials informed them that a concerted wage movement was planned for early 1910.<sup>25</sup> In October 1909, the Grand Trunk joint committee agreed to join with the other members of the Eastern Association in the new wage movement, and present the Association's model schedule to the Grand Trunk management.<sup>26</sup>

By this time, the ORC-BRT joint committee on the CPR lines east of Fort William had also decided to join the Eastern Association. The feelings of CPR conductors and trainmen were probably

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<sup>22</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 731.

<sup>23</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1909, "Report of President," p. 90; Railroad Trainman, June 1909, p. 521.

<sup>24</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 648-649.

<sup>25</sup>ibid.

<sup>26</sup>ibid.

less bitter than those of their brothers on the Grand Trunk. Wages on the CPR, after all, were considerably higher than on the Grand Trunk. At the same time, however, relations between the brotherhoods and the CPR showed no signs of deviating from the cool and stiffly correct levels which had prevailed since the 1892 strike. That strike, indeed, had made the conductors and trainmen on the CPR very much aware of the virtues of firmness in dealing with the company, and they knew only too well that CPR officials would gladly seize upon any sign of weakness, or grasp any opportunity, to destroy the influence of unions among CPR employees. The CPR trackmen's strike of 1901 had demonstrated this, as had the more recent strike of CPR machinists and shopmen in 1908. In the latter strike, in fact, only about fifty percent of the strikers were fortunate enough to receive their old jobs back after the dust had settled.<sup>27</sup> Clearly it made good sense for conductors and trainmen on the CPR's eastern lines to affiliate with the Eastern Association in 1909.

A joint committee from a third Canadian railroad was also drawn into the Eastern Association in 1909. This was the committee for the Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway, a short line owned jointly by the CPR and the New York Central Railroad, which leased Grand Trunk and Canada Southern tracks for some of its mileage.<sup>28</sup> The TH&B was a relatively unimportant railroad with only a handful of employees. But the affiliation of the TH&B committee with the Eastern Association, plus the affiliation of the CPR committee, indicated that militancy

<sup>27</sup> Winnipeg Voice, 13 November 1908.

<sup>28</sup> See Currie, Grand Trunk, p. 379.

among railway conductors and trainmen in central Canada in 1909 and 1910 was far from restricted to the Grand Trunk.

The IDIA Investigation, 1910

Joint committees throughout Eastern Association territory submitted the Association's schedule to their respective companies in early January 1910.<sup>29</sup> The Grand Trunk's initial rejection of the Eastern Association's schedule was fairly typical of a number of eastern railways. The GTR joint committee (which included the GTR's American lines west of Ontario) submitted a written copy of the Association's schedule to General Transportation Manager W.G. Brownlee on 3 January, together with a request for a conference on 20 January. On 17 January, however, Brownlee wrote the committee "to decline your request for the adoption of the schedule which you presented."<sup>30</sup> Brownlee explained that

while the business in 1909 shows some improvement over 1908, it is yet below that of 1907, and after carefully considering the matter, we are of the opinion that there is nothing to justify an increase in rates beyond those prevailing in 1907....<sup>31</sup>

When, on 20 January, the committee attempted to meet Grand Trunk officials as they had promised, they found all the officials "absent

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<sup>29</sup> The U.S. phase of the 1910 wage movement is discussed in James William Kerley, "The Failure of Railway Labor Leadership: A Chapter in Railroad Labor Relations, 1900-1932" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1959), pp. 49-53.

<sup>30</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 666-667.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

from the city in different directions...."<sup>32</sup> The committee thereupon called for the assistance of union vice-presidents Berry and Murdock.<sup>33</sup> In the meantime, the CPR management had also rejected the Association's schedule, as had the management of the TH&B. On 31 January, Berry and Murdock had a general conference with the brotherhood joint committees on the CPR and GTR, and it was decided to coordinate the activities of the two joint committees wherever possible, "giving preference to the C.P.R. on account of the higher standards of rates and rules in effect on that property."<sup>34</sup> The TH&B committee was also included in this cooperative effort. The committees decided to make one further effort to negotiate separate settlements with the managements of the three roads. Should this fail (as they anticipated it would), the committees planned to make a joint application for a board of investigation according to the terms of the IDIA.<sup>35</sup>

On 3 February, the CPR joint committee, together with Berry and Murdock, had a completely fruitless conference with CPR First Vice-President McNicoll.<sup>36</sup> On 10 February, Brownlee once again rejected the Grand Trunk committee's demands.<sup>37</sup> The TH&B management was equally

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 350.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 464.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 458.

stubborn,<sup>38</sup> and the brotherhoods thereupon undertook to invoke the IDIA. This required a strike vote, and a joint strike ballot was prepared for the three lines.<sup>39</sup> In the case of the CPR, the joint committee decided to order the strike vote over the entire CPR system, including the western lines, in order to "utilize the protective features of the organizations over the entire line should it later be considered advisable and necessary."<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, this meant an additional delay, owing to the necessity of convening the BRT and ORC committees for the CPR Western lines.<sup>41</sup> The last ballots were not received and counted until 4 March.

The vote on all three lines showed overwhelming support for the joint committees: on the CPR, ninety-eight percent; on the GTR, ninety-six percent; and on the TH&B, one hundred percent.<sup>42</sup> The committee members on the Grand Trunk, indeed, were so impressed by the results that they were all for "using that vote," and going on strike immediately, in defiance of the law, and against the advice of Berry and Murdock. Grand chiefs Garretson and Lee were forced to intervene to prevent this. Garretson impressed upon the ORC committee that the

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 465.

<sup>39</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 351.

<sup>40</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 464.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 667.

strike vote was purely a formality, a legal requirement for invoking an IDIA investigation. He issued strict orders: "You will vote and you won't hurry the game."<sup>43</sup> The joint application for a board of investigation was prepared immediately, and submitted to the Department of Labour in Ottawa on 5 March.<sup>44</sup>

What the brotherhoods probably hoped to achieve by a combined investigation was the establishment of a uniform structure of wages and work rules for all three railroads. This would, however, considerably reduce the autonomy of the individual railroad companies in this field, and was apparently unacceptable to the companies for this reason. On 12 March, the Department of Labour advised the joint committees that the officials of the Grand Trunk and CPR had "bitterly protested" the combined investigation, and added that the Department of Justice believed that the railroads might have grounds for legal action should the brotherhoods persist in their demands for a combined board.<sup>45</sup> This effectively brought to an end the combined action of the three brotherhood committees, and on 18 March they reluctantly submitted separate applications to the Department of Labour, which were duly approved. In an attempt to salvage what they could, however, the brotherhood committees requested that all three boards have the same

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; p. 751.

<sup>44</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 351.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.; BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 351.

personnel. Over the objections of the railroads, the Department decided in the brotherhoods' favour.<sup>46</sup>

An IDIA Board of Conciliation and Investigation consisted of three men: a company representative, a union representative, and a mutually acceptable chairman. In 1910, the railways were represented by Wallace Nesbitt, K.C., of Toronto, and the unions by J.G. O'Donoghue, a well-known labour lawyer. Since the companies and the unions were unable to agree upon a chairman, the Department of Labour appointed J.E. Atkinson, of the *Toronto Star*, to the post.<sup>47</sup> In accordance with their earlier tactical decision, the brotherhood committees asked that the CPM investigation be undertaken first, and Atkinson decided in their favour.<sup>48</sup>

One of the purposes of an IDIA investigation was to provide time for tempers to cool, and thus bring company and men closer together. As far as the Grand Trunk dispute was concerned, however, the hearings may well have driven the company and the unions further apart. According to the brotherhoods, the company took "only a superficial interest in the investigation.... The company's officials seemed disposed to wait until some future time to definitely dispose of the

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Canada, Department of Labour, Fourth Report of the Registrar of Boards of Conciliation and Investigation of the Proceedings under The Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, 1907 (Ottawa, 1911), p. 131. Hereafter cited as IDIA Report. This was also printed as Sessional Paper No. 36a, 1912.

<sup>48</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 730-731.

employes' demands."<sup>49</sup> The Grand Trunk management, on its part, had apparently come to the conclusion that the investigation was serving no useful purpose, given the insistence of the brotherhoods on the Eastern Association schedule. Indeed, Grand Trunk President Hays despatched Vice-President William Wainwright to Ottawa during the hearings to urge Prime Minister Laurier to "compel" binding arbitration — to force a settlement, in other words. Laurier told Wainwright that the government could do nothing until the board had presented its report.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, as Hall had feared in 1907, (but not quite for the reasons he had advanced), the hearings consumed an inordinate amount of time. The CPR hearings did not begin until 25 April, owing to the sickness of the CPR representative on the board, and then were adjourned on the 29th for over two weeks, when the CPR representative once again fell ill. The death of King Edward VII, in mid-May caused a further delay. As a result, the Grand Trunk hearings did not begin until 25 May. A certain amount of time was saved when the TH&B committee reopened negotiations with the line's management, and reached an agreement on 18 June, making an investigation of TH&B problems unnecessary. Yet the board did not hand down its final reports until 22 and 23 June.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 351.

<sup>50</sup> Mackenzie King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>51</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 465.



The reports revealed that the board had been able, more or less, to reach an agreement on CPR questions, recommending immediate raises only slightly different from the Eastern Association's standards. The board was hopelessly divided, however, on Grand Trunk matters. On the question of wages, company representative Nesbitt recommended only an immediate across-the-board raise of fifteen percent, whereas the majority report submitted by Atkinson and O'Donoghue recommended eighteen percent, retroactive to 1 May 1910, and the adoption eventually of the Eastern Association's standard rates, which would mean a total increase in wages of about forty-two percent.<sup>52</sup> The board was also divided on the "basis" of wage payment. Since 1899, the Grand Trunk had paid conductors and trainmen on its through freight service on a mileage basis.<sup>53</sup> For all other service, however, the employees were required to perform a "specified" amount of work per month, for which they were paid a monthly salary.<sup>54</sup> Nesbitt's minority report recommended that this system be retained, whereas the majority report recommended that mileage become the basis for payment for all train service employees — a system which had become standard on almost all other North American railways.<sup>55</sup> On the question of work rules, the majority report recommended the adoption of a detailed set of rules similar to

<sup>52</sup> IDIA Report, pp. 133-135, 143; BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 352.

<sup>53</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1901, "Report of Grand Chief Conductor," p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> IDIA Report, p. 142.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 133, 142-143.

those in effect on the CPR and American roads. Fifty-eight rules were recommended which enumerated not only the rights and duties of train service employees in their performance of their duties, but also spelled out such things as seniority rights and the size of train crews.<sup>56</sup>

Nesbitt's dissenting report, however, declared that

I have over and over again expressed my view that multiplicity of rules leads to inefficiency in service. It is the modern craze for continually tinkering with statutes and passing laws. If the service is well administered and no hardships are complained of, the fewer rules, to my mind, the better.<sup>57</sup>

Nesbitt therefore recommended the retention of the present, fairly general rules.<sup>58</sup>

The fact that the board had found it possible to present a joint recommendation on CPR matters indicated that neither the CPR nor the unions were very far apart on major points. Nonetheless, the brotherhoods joint committee on the CPR rejected the board's recommendations because they differed somewhat from the Eastern Association's standard wages and suggested some changes in work rules with which the committee disagreed.<sup>59</sup> Clearly, however, the board's report provided the basis for further negotiations, and indicated the strong possibility of a peaceful settlement.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 135-139.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 465.

Not so on the Grand Trunk, however. As the differences of opinion within the board indicated, the report could do little more than provide further ammunition for the two parties in the dispute. Nesbitt obviously spoke for the company in rejecting the majority report, and the great difference between the immediate wage increase which the majority report recommended (eighteen percent) and the amount needed to conform to the Eastern Association's scales (fourteen percent) provided the brotherhood committee with more than sufficient justification for rejecting the majority report as well. The committee also brushed aside the majority report's suggestion that the wages should be raised to Eastern Association standards eventually — pointing out that the board had not recommended a date for such standardization. The committee had other, more minor disagreements with the majority report as well, particularly on the details of certain work rules.<sup>60</sup> It is clear that the brotherhood committee was in a militant mood in the early summer of 1910, and, to a considerable extent, looked upon the IDIA hearings as just another hurdle which must be taken before getting down to the serious business of putting real pressure on the Grand Trunk management.

The Grand Trunk committee, however, could scarcely be blamed for being impatient. By this time, late June, agreements had already been reached in the U.S. on two major roads, the Baltimore and Ohio, and the New York Central. Moreover, all but one of the remaining American roads had agreed to submit matters to a mediation conference

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 459-460; BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," pp. 351-352.

at Washington, D.C. The conference had begun on 16 June, and was going so smoothly as to promise an early settlement.<sup>61</sup> Only the Pennsylvania Railroad continued to hold out in the U.S. The *Railway Conductor* blamed the workings of the IDIA for the "tedious slowness" of the negotiations in Canada, pointing out that "more than fifty settlements have been effected south of the Canadian boundary since the Eastern movement started...."<sup>62</sup> And there was some truth to this charge, as even the author of the act, Mackenzie King, later admitted.<sup>63</sup> Yet, much of the delay had been the direct result of brotherhood strategy — the involvement of the CPR western lines in the strike vote, and the insistence upon a combined investigation of the CPR and Grand Trunk matters. Now the brotherhoods were right back where they had been in February.

Countdown to the Strike, 25 June to 18 July 1910

There was one very important difference from February, however: the Canadian government had now been drawn into the dispute. On 25 June, two days after the IDIA board had submitted its report, Grand Trunk Vice-President Wainwright came to Ottawa for another interview with Prime Minister Laurier, and repeated his request for binding arbitration. The company's solicitor, W.H. Biggar, had been examining the problem, Wainwright declared, and had come to the conclusion that

<sup>61</sup>Robbins, *Railway Conductors*, p. 175. Berry and Murdock later claimed that they had asked the Grand Trunk management to take part in this conference, but were turned down. Berry and Murdock to Gerald H. Brown, 15 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9135-9137.

<sup>62</sup>*Conductors' Monthly*, July 1910, p. 553.

<sup>63</sup>King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

the Minister of Labour could, on his own authority, establish a "Board of Arbitration" to deal with the dispute under the terms of the Conciliation and Labour Act of 1906.<sup>64</sup> This act (essentially Mulock's Railway Labour Disputes' Act of 1903)<sup>65</sup> provided for such a board, should an appointed conciliation committee fail to settle a dispute.<sup>66</sup> Wainwright indicated to Laurier that the company had just about given up hope for a negotiated settlement. He believed that

an agreement might be reached between the Company and its trainmen on the wage question, but that what the Company most objected to in the employees' demands were the code of rules which it was sought to impose upon them, which would ... in reality turn the management of the Company's affairs to the Company's employees.<sup>67</sup>

Wainwright did not specify how binding arbitration would solve this problem, nor did he explain why a truly disinterested and properly constituted Board of arbitration would come to different conclusions from the IDIA board. It must have been obvious to Laurier that Wainwright's primary concern was to enlist the government on the Company's side in the dispute — in short, to persuade the government.

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<sup>64</sup> Gerald H. Brown, "Memorandum re interview with Mr. William Wainwright — and interview between Mr. Wainwright and the Prime Minister in matter of Grand Trunk Railway trainmen's dispute (confidential)," 25 June 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9145-9146.

<sup>65</sup> In 1906, the Conciliation Act of 1900 and the Railway Labour Disputes' Act of 1903 were consolidated as the Conciliation and Labour Act. Anton, Role of Government, p. 68.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>67</sup> Brown, "Memorandum," 25 June 1910, op. cit.

to appoint a board of arbitration more friendly to the company than the IDIA board had been. This was the only way that the company could be entirely sure of benefitting from binding arbitration.<sup>68</sup>

Laurier was not yet ready to take the company's side in the dispute, however, and he showed little sympathy for Wainwright's arguments. The Prime Minister suggested that it was time for the Grand Trunk to start "paying the same wages as its competitors," and asked Wainwright about a recently published company statement which showed an increase of 244 percent in funds available for dividends since 1896. When Wainwright replied that this was an "optimistic" statement intended to promote bond sales in England, Sir Wilfrid observed that this "looked like a case of chickens coming home to roost." He suggested, moreover, that American-born and trained officials could scarcely complain about "importing" American rules into Canada. Finally, somewhat exasperated, he explained carefully to Wainwright that the "arbitration" referred to in the Conciliation and Labour Act was not 'binding' arbitration at all, so that a board established according to the act would only duplicate the work which had already been done by the IDIA board.<sup>69</sup>

The meeting between Wainwright and Laurier on 25 June set the tone for subsequent dealings between the Grand Trunk and the government in connection with the dispute between the company and its trainmen, and established a relationship which was characterized

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

thereafter by frustration and a mutual lack of understanding of each other's point of view.<sup>70</sup> This atmosphere of suspicion contributed to the outbreak of the strike, and made settlement of the strike difficult. Indeed, as will be seen in the next chapter, it helped to ensure that the end of the strike did not solve the difficulties.

In late June 1910, however, Laurier's Minister of Labour, Mackenzie King, was still optimistic that a settlement could be reached, and a strike averted. With ten years experience behind him in the Department of Labour, he had come to have considerable confidence in his abilities as a mediator in labour disputes. He met Wainwright the day after the latter's interview with Laurier, and offered to go to Montreal immediately to ask the brotherhood committee if they would agree to "arbitration in the true sense of the word" — in other words, binding arbitration. Wainwright promised to check with President Hays, and phone the next day "if this course were desired." Wainwright did not phone, but King refused to abandon hope.<sup>71</sup>

On 27 June, the CPR management agreed to accept the Eastern Association's standard wages and, while there were still some important points of difference between the CPR management and its trainmen, the concession of higher wages indicated that a settlement was not far off. This undoubtedly stiffened the resolve of the Grand

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<sup>70</sup>This, of course, was not a new experience for either Hays or Laurier, as we have seen in the case of the trackmen's strike of 1899. Indeed, with his air of arrogant authority, Hays seems to have been the sort of man that Laurier instinctively disliked. See Waite, Arduous Destiny, pp. 51, 194, and Brown and Cook, Nation Transformed, p. 118.

<sup>71</sup>King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

Trunk committee.<sup>72</sup> The next day, the committee met with company officials for the first time since the report of the IDIA board had been handed down. Nothing was accomplished.<sup>73</sup> The second meeting on 4 July was equally unproductive, but it was agreed to meet again when President Hays returned from a trip over the Grand Trunk Pacific lines in the west.<sup>74</sup> On the same day, the Central Vermont railway was drawn into the dispute, when the Grand Trunk vice-president in charge of the Central Vermont, E.H. Fitzhugh, reluctantly accepted the contention of brotherhood vice-presidents Berry and Murdock that the Central Vermont could legitimately be considered part of the Grand Trunk system.<sup>75</sup> On 7 July, the Central Vermont joint committee met with the Grand Trunk and agreed upon amalgamation. A "pledge" was made that neither committee would settle unless the other was "considered" in the settlement.<sup>76</sup>

The newly enlarged joint committee, together with Berry and Murdock, met with President Hays on 8 July. Hays handed the committee a written statement which proposed an immediate increase in wages which he claimed was "equivalent of that recommended by the majority report brought in by Chairman Atkinson and your representative

<sup>72</sup>See "Memorandum for the Minister," 8 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9147.

<sup>73</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 352.

<sup>74</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 671.

<sup>75</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," pp. 352-353.

<sup>76</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 671.



Mr. O'Donoghue, being an increase of approximately eighteen (18) per cent."<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the statement declared that

The Management will pay the same standard of wages as the Canadian Pacific as soon as the Grand Trunk through its relations with the Grand Trunk Pacific is in a position to participate in the higher rates obtaining in the Northwest by reason of the completion of that road and the obtaining of through rail connections between the Grand Trunk and Grand Trunk Pacific, which should be accomplished within two years.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, the company was willing to have any disputed points submitted to binding arbitration, by a board "composed of experienced railway men." No mention was made of the Conciliation and Labour Act in this latter connection.<sup>79</sup>

It is quite probable (as King later intimated to Laurier) that the brotherhood committee had by this time developed a profound distrust of Hays.<sup>80</sup> Otherwise, Hays' offer, which bore a close similarity to the ultimate strike settlement, might have formed the basis for a settlement then and there. Instead, Hays' vagueness on the mileage question, on the date for the standardization of wages, and on standard rules, appear to have merely reinforced the committee's distrust. By this time, indeed, the committee was probably not prepared to accept anything but a complete capitulation by Hays, which would be

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<sup>77</sup>This statement is quoted in Berry and Murdock to Hays, 8 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9132-9133.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid. Also Toronto Globe, 9 July 1910.

<sup>80</sup>King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

signified either by his acceptance of the IDIA majority report in every particular, or better still, the complete Eastern Association schedule.<sup>81</sup>

The discussion which followed the submission of Hays' statement was thus "prolonged" and apparently stormy.<sup>82</sup> The committee eventually withdrew and submitted its answer to Hays' proposals in writing. The committee's letter rejected both Hays' wage proposal and arbitration, declaring that the question of "standardization of wages and general conditions have [*sic*] been fully arbitrated already ... under the provisions of the so-called Erdman Act" on a number of eastern railroads. The committee men told Hays that they were undertaking a strike vote immediately.<sup>83</sup>

Five days later, on 13 July, Hays received word that the strike vote was going decidedly against the company. Aware that he was now faced with a genuine crisis, he decided to approach the government once again, and wrote Minister of Labour King to repeat his request for "arbitration" according to the terms of the Conciliation and Labour Act. Uppermost in his mind, apparently, was the thought that the establishment of a board of arbitration according to the act would force the brotherhoods to delay a strike until the board's hearings were over.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 671.

<sup>83</sup> Berry and Murdock to Hays, 8 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9132-9133.

<sup>84</sup> Hays to King, 13 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9131-9132.

King, however, found Hays' request most annoying, and he rejected it.<sup>85</sup> King would have welcomed an arbitrated settlement, since requests for government-sponsored arbitration were coming into his department in increasing numbers from city councils and boards of trade,<sup>86</sup> but he apparently did not want to force it upon the brotherhoods.<sup>87</sup>

Faced with this rejection, Hays came up with a new proposal for the government. He informed King that the Grand Trunk might be more receptive to the committee's demands if the government would increase the company's mail subsidy, or at the very least establish a commission to re-assess mail rates.<sup>88</sup> This would get around the difficulty of finding enough money to raise wages to the Eastern Association level immediately, rather than two or three years hence. King had no authority to discuss mail rates with Hays, and he wired Laurier, who was in western Canada, for advice. Laurier, probably still unaware of the seriousness of the situation, replied that the company should not make such a request during vacation, but should wait until he returned to Ottawa in September.<sup>89</sup> King could therefore give

<sup>85</sup> King to Hays, 15 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9133-9134.

<sup>86</sup> See Toronto Globe, 16 July 1910.

<sup>87</sup> Gerald H. Brown to Berry and Murdock, 14 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9134-9135.

<sup>88</sup> King to Laurier, 16 July 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>89</sup> Laurier to King, 16 July 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

Hays ~~to~~ assurances on the matter. Apparently, however, he did approach Postmaster General Lemieux informally for his view on the feasibility of buying off the Grand Trunk in this fashion.

On the same day, 16 July, the brotherhood committee finished counting the strike votes. The results showed overwhelming support for a strike — about ninety-eight percent, in favour.<sup>90</sup> The joint committee thereupon set up a sub-committee of eight to remain in Montreal, while the remainder of the committee returned home to make arrangements for a strike to begin at 9:30 p.m., 18 July. At the same time, the committee made arrangements for a final conference with Hays for 11:30 a.m. on the 18th, and a final list of demands was prepared for submission at that time.<sup>91</sup> In a telephone conversation with King, Murdock expressed some hope for a settlement on the 18th, but promised to give King "an opportunity to intervene between the parties" if the conference failed.<sup>92</sup>

Before meeting the committee on the morning of the 18th, Hays once again contacted the Department of Labour in Ottawa to request a board of arbitration under the terms of the Conciliation and Labour Act. The request was once again turned down.<sup>93</sup> At the meeting itself, Hays offered to grant the Eastern Association standard rates by

<sup>90</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 671-672; Toronto Globe,  
18 July 1910.

<sup>91</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report,  
1910," pp. 461-462.

<sup>92</sup> King, "Memorandum Re G.T.R. Dispute," 16 July 1910,  
KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9148.

<sup>93</sup> King, "Memo. re GTR. Dispute," 18 July 1910, KP, J4,  
Vol. C13, file 81, C9149.

1 January 1913, in addition to the immediate eighteen percent increase recommended by the IDIA board.<sup>94</sup> The committee in turn presented Hays with the results of the strike vote.<sup>95</sup> Beyond this point the records for this and subsequent meetings on 18 July are somewhat fragmentary and contradictory. It is not clear, for example, whether Hays also accepted the IDIA majority recommendations on work rules and payment according to mileage at this first meeting.<sup>96</sup> In any case, the meeting adjourned after one hour, with nothing accomplished. At 3:00 p.m. the committee handed Hays the minimum schedule which they had prepared on 16 July. Its details are unknown. Hays promised to "analyse" the proposition and meet the committee at 5:00 p.m. with a final offer of his own.<sup>97</sup> At this meeting, which lasted less than an hour, the committee rejected Hays' final offer, and also turned down a request to delay the strike for a day or two in order to give the offer more serious consideration.<sup>98</sup> The terms of this final offer of Hays are obscure, although Hays apparently offered immediate raises averaging about eighteen percent and differing only slightly from the

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 461.

<sup>96</sup> King, "Memo. re G.T.R. Dispute," 18 July 1910, op. cit.; ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 731; King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>97</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 462.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

IDIA board's recommendations.<sup>99</sup> While this was obviously not an unreasonable offer, Murdock telephoned King at 6:30 p.m. and said that it was unacceptable because it repudiated the earlier offer to accept the IDIA majority report. Murdock suggested that Hays had intentionally presented an unacceptable offer because he "had really determined to beat the men, and had been pressing for that believing he would be able to break the strike in a short time."<sup>100</sup>

King made a last desperate attempt to avert a strike at this point. Probably referring to the mail subsidy, he informed Murdock that the government might be able to make an offer to Hays "which might mean dollars and cents to the Company," and which "would prove a means of enabling Mr. Hays to meet the demands of the men to the extent of preventing a strike." King asked Murdock for a twelve-hour delay of the strike to permit Hays to consider a government "proposition." Murdock replied that only a settlement (in other words, Hays' capitulation) could avert a strike at 9:30 p.m., since "nothing could be more disastrous to a strike than a hesitation or a delay at the outset."<sup>101</sup>

By this time, the company had begun to prepare for the worst, hiring special constables to protect company property.<sup>102</sup> Yet

<sup>99</sup> These rates were, in fact, put into effect by the company immediately, and accepted by the brotherhoods as part of the final settlement. See below, and see also Strafford Daily Herald, 22 July 1910.

<sup>100</sup> King, "Memo. Re G.T.R. Dispute," 19 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81. C9150-9151.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Toronto Globe, 18 July 1910.

the surprising thing is just how unprepared the company was for a strike. Company officials apparently had only begun to look for strike-breakers on 9 July, despite the many weeks of advance warning of trouble.<sup>103</sup> This suggests that Hays had no intention of forcing a strike, and that a more diplomatic man might have been able to convince the brotherhood committees that he could be trusted and that his offers were genuine.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, however, some company officials apparently believed that the brotherhoods would never be able to get all their members to go out on strike (despite the results of the strike vote) because of the large number of older men who would become eligible for company pensions within the next five years.<sup>105</sup> It was well known that the company considered striking to be sufficient grounds for forfeiture of pension rights, and was prepared to be very firm on this point. In 1908, for example, Hays had ruled that employees who had gone on strike in 1894 on the company's American lines could not apply for a pension on the basis of their service before 1894. He had explained that

If the action of an employee in a case of this sort is to be disregarded entirely, then we do away with one of the very purposes for which the Pension Fund was created, viz: — to recognize the faithful,

<sup>103</sup> Stratford Daily Herald, 9 July 1910.

<sup>104</sup> On 18 July Hays narrowly avoided a strike of the Grand Trunk's telegraphers when he bowed to union demands for binding arbitration. This agreement was reached after Hays' final meeting with the conductors and trainmen, indicating that only then did Hays recognize the seriousness of the situation. The telegraphers had voted eighty percent in favour of a strike. Toronto Globe, 18, 19 July 1910; King, "Memo Re G.T.R. Dispute," 19 July 1910, op. cit.

<sup>105</sup> Toronto Globe, 18 July 1910.

continuous service of the Company's employees. It is, of course, impossible for an employee to qualify under these conditions if he has been out on strike.<sup>106</sup>

This principle had also been applied to the machinists who struck in 1905.<sup>107</sup>

Yet the company's hopes that the pension scheme would deter a substantial number of trainmen and conductors in 1910 proved almost completely unfounded. At 9:30 p.m., 18 July, with only a handful of exceptions, ORC and BRT members left their jobs, as scheduled, over the entire Grand Trunk system, including the Central Vermont.<sup>108</sup>

#### The First Week of the Strike

Between 3,200 and 3,500 men struck the Grand Trunk system on 18 July.<sup>109</sup> The overall success of the strike committee in mobilizing

<sup>106</sup> Hays to Mr. Moore, 5 November 1908, quoted in J.W. Flavelle to Arthur Meighen, 9 November 1921, Flavelle Papers, PAC, MG 30, B4, Vol. 90, file 322(a).

<sup>107</sup> Toronto Globe, 18 July 1910. See also Bliss, Living Profit, pp. 90-91.

<sup>108</sup> About 250 conductors and trainmen employed by the Wabash Railroad in Canada also struck on 18 July, in a bid to gain the recognition which had been denied them for fourteen years. The Wabash leased Grand Trunk lines between Detroit and Fort Erie, and had an agreement to pay the same wages as the Grand Trunk on that stretch of track. The Wabash therefore refused to bargain with its Canadian conductors and trainmen, alleging it was pointless, while the Grand Trunk management refused to deal with them because they were Wabash employees. Their strike in 1910 was completely illegal, since it violated both Canadian law and the rules of the brotherhoods, but it succeeded in extracting a contract from the Wabash management, and was called off on 25 July. BRT Proceedings, 1909, "Grand Master's Annual Report, 1908," p. 19; ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 682-683.

<sup>109</sup> About 350 of these men had worked on the Central Vermont, three-quarters of whom were American residents. Altogether, about 25 per cent of the strikers lived in the United States. Just under 900 strikers



the Grand Trunk's conductors and trainmen was indicated by the significant number of non-union members who went out: 62 of the striking conductors, for example, did not belong to either the ORC or BRT.<sup>110</sup>

The threat of cancelled pensions failed to prevent more than a handful of men from striking, demonstrating both the solidarity of the Grand Trunk's work force, and the strength of social pressure. The decision to strike had been an agonizing one in some instances. The *Toronto Globe* cited the case of a striking conductor, 64 years of age, who would have received a \$50 a month pension in eight months, but had lost it because he obeyed the strike order.<sup>111</sup> On the evening of the 18th, shortly after the strike began, the company widened the scale of the conflict by ordering the shutdown of the company's shops. An additional 4,500 men were thereby put out of work. At the same time, the company instituted the wage increases for conductors and trainmen it had offered the joint committee at the final meeting on 18 July.<sup>112</sup>

The strike committee was determined to minimize violence. The lesson of the Pullman strike of 1894 had been well learned, and the brotherhoods were resolved that the Grand Trunk management would have no

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were conductors, and the balance plied the various other trades organized by the two brotherhoods, including brakemen, yardmen and switchmen. *Toronto Globe*, 21 July 1910; Acland to Laurier, "Memorandum as to progress of reinstatement of Conductors and Trainmen of the Grand Trunk Railway in accordance with terms of agreement of July 31," LP, Vol. 644; unsigned memorandum, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, 'C9277-9278; Robbins, *Railway Conductors*, p. 175.

<sup>110</sup> Unsigned memorandum, op. cit.

<sup>111</sup> *Toronto Globe*, 22 July 1910.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 19, 20 July 1910, *Stratford Daily Herald*, 22 July 1910.

opportunity to gain public sympathy and justify government intervention on the grounds of widespread disorder.<sup>113</sup> Strikers were ordered to stay away from company property, and no pickets were posted outside Grand Trunk yards and stations. Picketing was strictly limited to a few observers, dressed in their Sunday best, stationed well away from company property and instructed merely to keep track of strike-breakers.<sup>114</sup> The strike committee realized that a certain amount of disorder was inevitable, of course; they knew that it might be difficult to control sympathizers or the laid-off shop workers, but hoped that the government and the public would realize that the strikers themselves were not significantly involved should there be any incidents. On 20 July came the first indication that the strike might not be entirely peaceful. At Niagara Falls, Ontario, a mob of "roughs" and "hangers-on" hurled "eggs, stones and curses" at a Grand Trunk superintendent. The fracas was broken up by the police, with no injuries reported.<sup>115</sup>

The company, on its part, immediately undertook to scrape up enough replacements to restore normal service. Enough men had been hired before the strike and enough office staff was available to keep the passenger trains running on schedule (although the public showed considerable reluctance to use the trains at first and they ran almost empty for several days).<sup>116</sup> But freight service was completely

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<sup>113</sup> See ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 676.

<sup>114</sup> Toronto Globe, 20, 21 July 1910.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 21 July 1910.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 20-22 July 1910.

tied up, and Grand Trunk officials began a frantic scramble for strike-breakers. Over-age pensioners were contacted.<sup>117</sup> Handbills were distributed to the laid-off shop-workers offering them jobs as conductors, brakemen and yardmen, and promising the reopening of the shops as soon as enough replacements had been hired.<sup>118</sup> Advertisements for "500 Trainmen and Yardmen" were placed in daily newspapers.<sup>119</sup> There was apparently little difficulty in obtaining replacements on American sections of the line, owing to the large American reserve of unemployed railwaymen.<sup>120</sup> To the disgust of company officials, however, this pool of labour could not be drawn upon adequately for Canadian service because of the Alien Labour Law.<sup>121</sup>

Canadian trade unionists had sometimes complained in the past that the Alien Labour Law was not adequately enforced, but this apparently was not the case in 1910. Minister of Labour King (the only Cabinet Minister in Ottawa at the beginning of the strike) instructed the Immigration Department to make "no exceptions" to immigration

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<sup>117</sup> Engineers' Journal, September 1912, p. 875.

<sup>118</sup> Toronto Globe, 20 July 1910.

<sup>119</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Unsigned memorandum, 28-30 July 1910, in KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9160-9175. Although unsigned, this typescript memorandum of 16 pages was obviously written by Mackenzie King. It is a day-by-day account of the first three days of the negotiations which ended the strike, and differs in some respects from King's report to Laurier after the strike (King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638), being more detailed, and less critical of Hays. It is useful because the King diary has an unexplained gap for the strike period, and will be referred to hereafter as King, "Strike Account."

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

regulations during the strike,<sup>122</sup> and subsequent arrests of American strike-breakers showed that these instructions were being carried out.<sup>123</sup> One small loophole did exist, and was undoubtedly used. Just before the strike began, an order-in-council had relaxed immigration rules to meet a shortage of railway construction workers in the western provinces.<sup>124</sup> But President Hays' bitter complaint to King about the Alien Labour Law during the second week of the strike indicates that the Immigration Department did its work reasonably well.<sup>125</sup>

King, however, was reluctant to involve either the government or the Department of Labour more deeply than this in the dispute at first, and quite definitely did not want to force a settlement, regardless of the seriousness of the strike. On 19 July he made this very clear, when he told the press that his Department could not "intervene directly" unless he received a formal request from either the company or the strikers.<sup>126</sup> At the same time, however, King felt that his department had a positive duty to do what it could to bring the disputing parties together again and end the strike. On 20 July, therefore, he sent an open letter for newspaper publication to Hays and union vice-presidents Murdock and Berry reminding them that each side had suggested arbitration of some sort before the strike, and asking them whether each

<sup>122</sup> King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>123</sup> Stratford Daily Herald, 5 August 1910.

<sup>124</sup> Toronto Globe, 20 July 1910; House of Commons, Debates, 1912, p. 6754.

<sup>125</sup> King, "Strike Account."

<sup>126</sup> Kingston Daily British Whig, 20 July 1910.

side would be willing now to refer the dispute to a mutually acceptable board of arbitration, at government expense.<sup>127</sup> King explained in a letter to Prime Minister Laurier that his proposal would "throw a very heavy onus on whichever side refused..." and added that, "if favourable replies are received, I will go at once to Montreal with a view to assisting the parties in arranging the establishment of a Board."<sup>128</sup>

This strategy, however, was a failure. The first replies to King's letter were evasive,<sup>129</sup> and when King finally persuaded the brotherhood committee to accept government-sponsored arbitration, after several days of back-and-forth correspondence,<sup>130</sup> Hays came down firmly in the negative. He declared on 24 July that

the time for such action is now passed, and it is only necessary that we should have the protection to which we are entitled to enable us to resume the full operation of the road.<sup>131</sup>

The Grand Trunk was now in a fight to the finish, Hays explained to the press, and he believed the company would win. King drew what consolation he could from this rebuff. He wrote Laurier that Hays' intransigence had, at least,

<sup>127</sup> King to Hays, Berry and Murdock, 20 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9137-9138.

<sup>128</sup> King to Laurier, 21 July 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>129</sup> Murdock to King, 21 July 1910, Hays to King, 21 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9138-9139.

<sup>130</sup> Murdock to King, 22 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81; C9141.

<sup>131</sup> Hays to King, 24 July 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9143.

successfully relieved us of any justifiable criticism on the score of not being able to effect a settlement, and has placed the onus for such incidents as may grow out of a prolongation of the dispute wholly upon Mr. Hays.<sup>132</sup>

But the brotherhoods were still locked in combat with the Grand Trunk on 25 July; and their leaders could not be so objective about the situation as King. Much had happened in the preceding five or six days, but no settlement was in sight. On 21 July, the brotherhoods had reached a final agreement with the CPR, on terms which Murdock (who was conducting the negotiations for the brotherhoods) later described as "satisfactory."<sup>133</sup> And if the mighty CPR had given way, then it was clear to Murdock that something had gone very wrong in the Grand Trunk. Murdock was worried. The last American railway in the east, the Pennsylvania Railroad, had finally capitulated on 18 July, after a strike vote, and the Grand Trunk was thus the last holdout on the Eastern Association territory.<sup>134</sup> Murdock had been involved in strikes before, and had personally helped negotiate five contracts with American railroads earlier in the spring.<sup>135</sup> He could recognize an abnormal situation when he saw one, and on the day the CPR surrendered, he wired BRT President Bill Lee to ask that he and President Garretson of the ORC "come on the line," to give "additional prestige and

<sup>132</sup> King to Laurier, 25 July 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>133</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 465; Toronto Globe, 22 July 1910.

<sup>134</sup> Kerley, "Failure," p. 52.

<sup>135</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 466.

experience."<sup>136</sup> But Sam Berry was more optimistic than Murdock. Berry was out 'on the line' directing the strike, and was apparently impressed by the company's difficulties in moving freight. On 21 July, indeed, no freight traffic at all moved on the Grand Trunk main line, and the great Toronto and Mimico yards were filled with a vast pile-up of stalled freight cars.<sup>137</sup> Berry was not yet ready to call in outside help, and Garretson and Lee remained in the wings for the time being, awaiting Berry's call.<sup>138</sup>

The first real violence of the strike occurred on the evening of 21 July, at Belleville, Ontario. When the 'local' arrived from Toronto, a mob of about one hundred attacked the train's conductor and brakeman and roughed them up. The two men were not seriously injured.<sup>139</sup> The next day, at Brockville, a crowd of six or seven hundred people attacked a group of strike-breakers. Three strike-breakers were hurt, but again not seriously. Local authorities at Brockville, however, were unable to control the mob, and the 41st Regiment of Militia was called out to restore order.<sup>140</sup> There was no further mob violence at Brockville during the strike, but the continued

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 462.

<sup>137</sup> Toronto Globe, 21, 22 July 1910.

<sup>138</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice-President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 462.

<sup>139</sup> Toronto Globe, 22, 23 July 1910.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 25 July 1910.

presence of street crowds led the mayor to request continued military protection. On 26 July, the standing army was called upon to relieve the militiamen. Number One Company of the Royal Canadian Regiment, consisting of fifty-five men and their officers, was despatched from Stanley Barracks in Toronto. Its commander, a Major Carpenter, had had charge of troops in three previous strikes.<sup>141</sup> On 25 July, the only death of the strike occurred, when a railway detective shot into a crowd at South Bend, Indiana, and killed a demonstrator.<sup>142</sup>

The Grand Trunk ran its first through freight of the strike on 22 July, from Port Huron to Montreal.<sup>143</sup> By the 25th, freight was being moved at various points on the main line, sometimes in considerable quantity, but traffic to northern Ontario, and on the branch lines, was still considerably disrupted, despite company claims that it now had all the men it needed to resume full freight service.<sup>144</sup> On 25 July, the shops were re-opened all along the line.<sup>145</sup> The Canadian Pacific was benefitting from the strike, and so too, undoubtedly, were the American lines in competition with the Grand Trunk for business

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 27 July 1910.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 26 July 1910.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 23 July 1910.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 25, 26 July 1910; Stratford Daily Herald, 23 July 1910.

<sup>145</sup> Toronto Globe, 25 July 1910.



in the American mid-west.<sup>146</sup> Company officials admitted to a loss of \$100,000 in freight receipts in the first week of the strike, but gave out no estimates of the other expenses involved in fighting the strike.<sup>147</sup> Both sides claimed to be winning, but Hays' final rejection of arbitration on 24 July, and his talk of a fight to the finish, must have given the strike leaders further reason to worry. Previous fights to the finish, such as the Burlington strike of 1888, and the Pullman boycott of 1894, had demonstrated conclusively that management had a decided edge in wars of attrition.<sup>148</sup>

Outside Intervention and the Settlement

On Monday, 25 July 1910, exactly one week after the start of the strike, Vice-President Sam Berry finally called QRC headquarters for help.<sup>149</sup> Garretson and Lee were obviously waiting for this call: they arrived in Toronto the next day, and immediately began to try to re-open negotiations with Hays.<sup>150</sup> This called for pressure, if Hays was truly determined upon outright victory. The mayor of Toronto, who was known to be sympathetic to the strikers, was thus asked to send telegrams to mayors and boards of trade across the province "asking them

<sup>146</sup> Stratford Daily Herald, 25 July 1910.

<sup>147</sup> Toronto Globe, 28 July 1910.

<sup>148</sup> See Donald L. McMurry, The Great Burlington Strike of 1888 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1956), pp. 272-273; QRC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 757-758.

<sup>149</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Vice President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 462.

<sup>150</sup> Toronto Globe, 27 July 1910.

to join us in insisting upon a settlement" by sending telegrams to Hays, the government, and the strike committee. The mayor co-operated, and telegrams began to pour in.<sup>151</sup> Hays agreed to meet the strike committee on the 27th, and Berry and Garretson later claimed that this "artificial" pressure had done the trick.<sup>152</sup>

The mounting cost of the strike may have had something to do with it too, of course.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, Hays was probably aware that the federal cabinet could not permit the strike to drag on much longer, owing to the serious effects it was having upon trade and manufacturing in towns and cities served by the Grand Trunk.<sup>154</sup> The Cabinet, with the aging Sir Richard Cartwright as Acting Premier, met on 26 July to consider the situation. Labour Minister King (whose initial attempts to settle the strike had been blocked by President Hays) apparently made his position quite clear at the meeting: the Government as a whole should urge Hays to reconsider his decision to fight the strike to a finish.<sup>155</sup> But Cartwright did not want to be rushed. He believed that priority must be given to acquiring accurate information about the impact of the strike upon the economy, and to finding out who

<sup>151</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 733-734, 753.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Total strike costs to the company may have gone over \$500,000 for the first week. See Labour Gazette, August 1910, p. 198; Stratford Daily Herald, 5 August 1910.

<sup>154</sup> Toronto Globe, 23 July 1910; Laurier to King, 28 July 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>155</sup> King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

was winning the strike.<sup>156</sup> Cartwright's point was well taken. That morning's edition of the *Toronto Globe* had pointed out that the claims of the company and the strikers were "as wide apart as the poles."<sup>157</sup> Cartwright therefore sent the following telegram to the collectors of customs in every major town and city in Ontario:

Confidential and Urgent. Please inform me by wire immediately ... extent to which business in your locality is being affected by present strike, to what extent freight is being moved.<sup>158</sup>

The response indicated a massive tie-up of freight across the province, with serious effects upon trade and manufacture.<sup>159</sup>

This information painted a gloomier picture than did the daily newspapers, but it provided the cabinet with the excuse it needed for putting pressure on Hays. At its next meeting on the 27th, the Cabinet decided to send a letter to Hays informing him that, in view of the above information, the government felt an immediate settlement to be "eminently desirable," whether by negotiation or arbitration.<sup>160</sup> The Minister of Militia, Sir Frederick Borden (a more senior member of the Cabinet than King), was leaving for Nova Scotia on private business, and agreed to deliver the message personally to Hays. In

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Toronto Globe, 26 July 1910.

<sup>158</sup> Labour Gazette, August 1910, p. 199.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Cartwright to Hays (Confidential), 27 July 1910, 1P.

order to make Hays more receptive to the government's request, Borden was apparently authorized to suggest the possibility of an increased mail subsidy to the Grand Trunk.<sup>161</sup>

On the same day, 27 July, Presidents Lee and Garretson, together with two brotherhood committee men, met as scheduled with Hays in Montreal. Canadian Vice-Presidents Murdock and Berry were left "at home" because of the "unfriendly relations" between them and Hays "growing out of the strike...."<sup>162</sup> The two American union leaders told Hays that they were willing to accept an immediate raise of 18 percent and the arbitration of other disputed points, including the date of standardization of wages and rules. All they asked for in return was the reinstatement of all the strikers to their former positions (which would include their pension rights).<sup>163</sup> This was practically a capitulation; since it asked for little which the strikers had not been offered before the strike; but Hays was not impressed. As was to become obvious in subsequent negotiations, Hays placed a high value on employee loyalty, and the mere thought of re-hiring "disloyal" strikers filled him with intense displeasure. He refused to be "pinned down" on reinstatement, declaring that this should be one of the points subject to arbitration.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>161</sup> King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638; King, "Strike Account."

<sup>162</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 754.

<sup>163</sup> Toronto Globe, 28 July 1910; King, "Strike Account."

<sup>164</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 753-754; King, "Strike Account."

The meeting thus broke up with nothing achieved, and Hays subsequently told the press that "the men who went out will lose their pensions."<sup>165</sup>

The presidents' offer to Hays made it very evident that they had become convinced that it was essential to end the strike as soon as possible, and at all costs. This was "necessary," Lee later explained, "if the organization on the system was to be preserved." In Lee's view (and in the view of President Garretson and the other chief executives of the brotherhoods) the strike was already all but lost, and this could be seen in the "determined attitude" of the management and the declining morale of the strikers.<sup>166</sup> According to Garretson, the strikers

were famished for encouragement. They were good stickers. Never a better bunch went into camp than the Grand Trunk men. From start to finish they played it... but I want to tell you, that they felt what was resting on their shoulders. I have been there often enough. I have only in my life put on one strike, but I have been in the tail end of a good many other men's strikes, and I recognize the appeal in men's eyes when they get to the stage where apprehension commences to come in.<sup>167</sup>

The alternative to taking "very decisive action"<sup>168</sup> to end the strike was thus the 1894 disaster on the Grand Trunk's American lines all over

<sup>165</sup> Toronto Globe, 28 July 1910.

<sup>166</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 354.

<sup>167</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 753.

<sup>168</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 354.

again: brotherhood committees "disorganized," hard-won schedules "shot to pieces," and union recognition forfeited for years.<sup>169</sup>

Garretson and Lee returned to Toronto after the meeting with Hays with the intention of increasing the pressure on the company. The Grand Trunk's firemen and engineers were known to be sympathetic to the strikers, and were considering leaving the service of the company themselves on the grounds of safety.<sup>170</sup> Garretson therefore wired President Carter of the BIF, and Grand Chief W.S. Stone of the BLE to come to Canada immediately, to give whatever aid they could.<sup>171</sup>

At this point, Mackenzie King decided that the time had come for him to go personally to Montreal and, in his capacity as Minister of Labour, offer his services as a mediator in the dispute.<sup>172</sup> This was a familiar role, which he had played many times before. He had stated earlier, however, that he could not intervene without a request. He got in touch with James Murdock, and asked him to have the brotherhood committee apply to the Department of Labour for the Minister's "personal intervention."<sup>173</sup> Murdock complied willingly: the brotherhood committee, after all, had accepted government

<sup>169</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 673, 676.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 754; Firemen's Magazine, September 1910, p. 398; King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>171</sup> Toronto Globe, 30 July 1910:

<sup>172</sup> King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638. Borden's mission to Montreal had been a different one: to put pressure on Hays.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

intervention in principle several days earlier, when they agreed to government-sponsored arbitration. Murdock then telephoned Garretson and Lee to return to Montreal at once, as "the Minister of Labor was getting into the game."<sup>174</sup>

King arrived in Montreal at 6:30 p.m., 28 July. He was met by Borden, who told King of his talks with Hays. Borden reported success, stating that he believed that Hays would be willing to negotiate a settlement. Wainwright, Borden added, had once again raised the question of an increased mail subsidy, and he had discussed this with Hays as well. King showed Borden wires he had received from Laurier and Postmaster General Lemieux, which apparently approved the increase, if this proved necessary. Borden said he had arranged a meeting with Hays for later in the evening.<sup>175</sup>

The meeting, on the verandah of Hays' house, lasted for over two hours. The whole question of arbitration was gone over again, and King, perhaps to his surprise, came to the conclusion that Hays had been entirely sincere in wanting arbitration all along. But the arbitration phase was unfortunately over, and King thus asked if Hays was now ready to consider a negotiated settlement, with King as negotiator. The answer was "Yes" and the question of the mail subsidy did not have to be raised.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 754.

<sup>175</sup> King, "Strike Account."

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

King then went down to strike headquarters at the Grand Union Hotel to discuss the situation with Murdock and Maloney, the only union men still out of bed. Murdock and Maloney were dispirited and apprehensive. It had been eleven days since the beginning of the strike, and they had come to the conclusion that the strikers could not hold on much longer. The two unionists told King.

that from the point of view from their side the question of getting all the men back to work was all-important. Murdock stated that he could settle the terms and conditions, but on the question of all the men being taken back, that was a matter in which he was powerless.<sup>177</sup>

On this note, the meeting ended, and King arranged to meet the full strike committee the next morning.<sup>178</sup>

That the strike leaders had in fact begun to lose their nerve was even more apparent the next morning. King wanted to wind things up as soon as possible, but the men proved reluctant to commit themselves to anything concrete. King later noted that Murdock, especially, "was inclined to be a little shifty in the matter of committing the men to any position." As the discussion went on, the reason for this reluctance slowly emerged: Murdock and the committee men were afraid of binding themselves to anything that would endanger reinstatement; reinstatement aside, they were willing to be flexible. Once he understood this, King was able to prod the committee into formulating several proposals (including alternatives on such debatable issues as the

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.



date of the standardization of wages and rules) which the committee thought might provide the basis for a settlement. Reinstatement, however, was understood to be strictly non-negotiable, and must be "as soon as possible" after the end of the strike. This meant that "all men" were to be "back within thirty days," although this time limit "could be understood by private agreement" between Hays, the committee and the government. Moreover, the Central Vermont must be included in the agreement. 179

What the committee most wanted, in other words, was to get everyone back to work. To admit this to Hays, however, would be to acknowledge that the strike could not be won, and this was apparently too much for the committee. They flatly refused to authorize King to present their proposals to Hays as the official position of the strikers, and explained that "they believed that the head men [i.e. the presidents of the brotherhoods] would agree to a settlement on these lines, but they would like the head men to take the responsibility for it...." King therefore agreed to take the carefully formulated proposals to Hays, telling him "that this is what I had proposed to the men and find out if a similar proposal would be agreeable to him." 180

At the afternoon meeting between King, and Hays and Fitzhugh, Hays led off with a complaint about the effect of the strike upon the company's financial position. He was apparently worried lest

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179 ibid.

180 ibid.

the strike endanger the company's ability to borrow the money in England which was necessary for the various development projects which the company currently had under way. In an obvious bid for government support, he "dwelt strongly" on "the danger to Canada of any setback" in securing English money for this country." King was properly sympathetic, and said he had tried to bring that point home to the men this morning. He then outlined the committee's proposals, putting them forward as his own, as he had promised the committee.<sup>181</sup>

Hays, however, was also unwilling to commit himself to the proposals, and the issue again was reinstatement. He told King

that on an occasion of this kind the Company would be glad of the occasion to get rid of certain employees who were troublesome, and this would be a convenient time to drop them.<sup>182</sup>

Moreover, reinstatement might be especially difficult on the Central Vermont. Because of the Alien Labour Law, there had been difficulty in getting qualified staff for the Grand Trunk; there should therefore be plenty of openings for the returned men on that road. The company, however, had been able to replace "a large number" of the Central Vermont strikers with adequate permanent staff from the U.S., and would not want to let them go to merely re-hire 'disloyal' strikers. Hays requested a meeting with the union presidents in the company board room the next day, if they were going to "have the final say."<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

King had a final meeting with the strike committee in Murdock's hotel rooms that night, and arranged to meet Garretson and Lee the next morning. As King left, Maloney went to the door with him, and once again emphasized to King "that if they could get all the men back, the propositions I had submitted would be acceptable; that I could take that from him."<sup>184</sup> King was optimistic about the possibility of this, and about the settlement in general. Before going to bed, he wrote, "It looks to me tonight as if this time tomorrow the strike will be at an end, though one can never tell what turn will come in negotiations in a few hours."<sup>185</sup>

Even as King was writing these words, the pressure for a speedy settlement had gone up another notch. President Carter of the BLF had arrived in Toronto on the evening train, in response to Garretson's request to come to Canada. Carter declined to reveal his intentions to the press, but did admit "that there was a close community of interests between the organizations of trainmen and firemen..." He added that he meant to stay in Canada until the current dispute was settled.<sup>186</sup> Carter, of course, could not legally sanction a strike of the Grand Trunk's firemen, but neither could he afford to see the conductors and trainmen lose their strike, since the BLF contract with the Grand Trunk expired on 1 October 1910.<sup>187</sup> It might be difficult,

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Toronto Globe, 30 July 1910.

<sup>187</sup> BLF Proceedings, 1908, "Report of Grand Master," p. 115.

if not impossible, for the BLF to negotiate a satisfactory new contract with a victorious Hays. Carter's arrival in Toronto was thus essentially another move in a war of nerves, and was calculated to increase public fears of a wider tie-up and tighten the screws on both the Canadian government and the company.

The next morning, 29 July, Garretson and Lee, together with Murdock, Berry and the strike committee, went to King's hotel room. Before any business was discussed, Garretson declared (apparently for the record) that Murdock and Berry "had full authority to act" and that he and President Lee "were really in a position of legal advisers so to speak." With that said, the union presidents gave their blessing to the proposals which King had so laboriously extracted from the committee the previous day, adding that, since Hays had publicly repudiated arbitration, direct negotiation might "prove the line of least resistance." This advice was accepted by the committeemen without comment, showing that the American presidents had taken charge of the strike despite their claim to be mere "legal advisers." At the end of the meeting, indeed, Garretson confirmed this for King. He drew King aside and told him

that whatever he and Mr. Lee agreed to would be done, that he had the final say in matters, and that Berry and Murdock would carry out whatever he agreed to. He also said that whatever he undertook should be ~~carried~~ carried out; I might be assured he was prepared to stand by it, and could tell Mr. Hays so. 188

Borden and King then went to Hays' office, where King found Hays in a less co-operative mood than the day before. King once again outlined the strikers' proposals for the benefit of Hays' associates — Wainwright, Biggar and Fitzhugh — who were present at the meeting. But Hays this time raised a number of objections to the proposals, asking King to convey them to the strikers. In contrast with his attitude the day before, Hays now seemed to want to avoid meeting the union presidents. King, however, had come to Hays' office primarily to arrange face-to-face negotiations between Hays and the brotherhood leaders, and not to act as an intermediary between the two sides. Nonetheless, he found himself drawn into arguments on two points: pensions, and the status of the Central Vermont strikers. 189

In these arguments, King showed very clearly how he viewed his role in the dispute: a disinterested neutral, he could not let his own feelings intrude, and he could not concern himself with the nature of the agreement which might emerge from the negotiations between Hays and the union presidents; the important thing was a compromise which would end the strike. Thus, when Hays declared himself to be absolutely opposed to restoring the pension rights of the strikers, King "expressed some disgust at this attitude," but nonetheless said he "was quite prepared to advise the men" to accept this position, and "let the pensions go."<sup>190</sup> As a labour expert, King almost certainly knew that the leaders of the brotherhoods, like many other trade

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

unionists, distrusted company pension plans, and might be willing to compromise on this point.<sup>191</sup> At the same time, however, he knew that the brotherhoods would not compromise on the inclusion of the Central Vermont strikers in the negotiations, and threatened to "withdraw from the negotiations altogether" if this was not accepted by Hays.<sup>192</sup>

After lunch, King insisted that the time had finally come for Hays to meet Garretson and Lee, as he had requested the day before. Hays was reluctant, but conceded the issue when King pointed out that Borden hoped to leave Montreal that evening. The brotherhood delegation arrived shortly after, and consisted of two committeemen, Maloney and Kelley, and the two presidents, Berry and Murdock stayed away, at King's request (and perhaps on the advice of Garretson and Lee). The negotiations which followed took up most of the afternoon, with King and Borden as interested spectators. There was "a good deal of close fencing between Mr. Hays and Mr. Garretson," King wrote later, and added that Borden believed the men to have had "the better of the Company" in every argument.<sup>193</sup>

But Borden misjudged the situation, perhaps because of a lack of experience in labour matters: an understanding was reached between the company and the men only because the union presidents were

<sup>191</sup> In 1909, a special committee established by the ORC specifically rejected a proposal to urge railroads to establish company pension plans. Robbins, Railway Conductors, pp. 158-159. Shortly after the strike, Sam Berry described pensions as "a fake devised to deceive the workers..." Toronto Globe, 5 August 1910.

<sup>192</sup> King "Strike Account," King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

willing to compromise with Hays on almost every point. Hays agreed that the date for the standardization of wages to the CPR level should be 1 January 1912. In return, however, the union leaders agreed to the standardization of rules (in particular, payment according to mileage) on the same date rather than immediately. And, instead of insisting upon the interim raises which the IDIA Board had recommended, the union presidents accepted the schedule of rates which Hays had offered on 18 July, and which had, in fact, gone into effect on that date. This wage increase was to be retroactive to 1 May 1910. The question of the strikers' pensions was apparently not raised. As for reinstatement, both parties agreed that this should take place "as soon as possible." Hays, however, adamantly refused to be specific as to how soon "as soon as possible" would be after the strike was declared "off".<sup>194</sup> At this point, the meeting broke off, since Hays had a personal engagement. When they were alone, King showed Garretson and Lee Murdock's recommendations regarding reinstatement, with the provision for a thirty-day limit to be "kept secret if the Company wished it." This proposal was acceptable to the union presidents, who said that they would declare the strike off if Hays would accept it as well.<sup>195</sup>

But when the meeting resumed that evening, Hays sabotaged the negotiations by a singular display of erratic behaviour. At first, Hays seemed inclined to accept the thirty-day limit on reinstatement, and was agreeable, as well, to the inclusion of the Central Vermont in

194 *Ibid.*

195 *Ibid.*

the agreement. He then left to draw up the final agreement. The draft agreement he returned with, however, was significantly different from the propositions which had been agreed upon that afternoon. The date when the new rates were to go into effect had been changed from 1 May 1910 to 18 July 1910 (the day that the strike began). The new rules were to be those recommended in the IDIA award, not the CPR rules, and might be modified after further negotiations. When these 'errors' were pointed out to Hays, "he admitted one mistake after the other, saying that clearly there was an error." On one point, however, he refused to back down. He would not bind the company to any time limit on reinstatement. He turned a deaf ear to Sir Frederick Borden's request to name any time limit, even "a year or more." He was not interested in the union presidents' proposal to let King and Borden decide what a reasonable time limit should be. Finally, the discussion became very heated, and Hays lost his temper completely and left the room "in a very excited condition." Biggar and Wainwright tried to salvage what they could of the situation, and apologized to King and Borden for their superior's actions, explaining that the Grand Trunk president "was not himself" and should not be judged too hastily. But all hopes for a quick settlement were effectively dashed.<sup>196</sup>

King refused to give up, however, and was able to persuade the union men "not to declare negotiations at an end," but to "let us have one more try on the next day." Fortunately, Wainwright, over a late supper, agreed to help King by arranging another meeting with Hays



the next day, when presumably the Grand Trunk president would be himself again.<sup>197</sup>

After breakfast the next morning, 30 July, Borden and King drew up an agreement which incorporated the various proposals which had been tentatively agreed to the previous afternoon, including the proposal to reinstate the strikers "as soon as possible." They then conferred with the strike leaders, who were prepared to accept the agreement but stipulated that Hays' signature on this piece of paper was not enough to end the strike; the union presidents declared that there must also be "a definite understanding . . . in regard to the return of the former employes," although they were apparently willing to be very flexible on the time limit itself.<sup>198</sup>

The meeting with Hays began as the previous day's had, with Hays in an accommodating mood. He went over the draft agreement with King and Borden, finding nothing wrong with it, and agreed moreover with King's suggestion that ninety days would be a reasonable interpretation of "as soon as possible." His mood then changed suddenly: in agreeing to take all the strikers back within ninety days, he was assuming an unpleasant obligation. The government, however, had assumed no similar obligation. In recent years, in fact, the company had assumed many obligations — very expensive obligations, but the government had not given the company adequate assistance in return. The government might, for example, consider reducing coal duties or

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*; BRT Proceedings, 1910, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 355.

increasing the allowance for carrying the mail. King replied that the Cabinet might well prove more sympathetic to the company in these matters in the future, and Hays came to the point: as a *quid pro quo* for his agreeing to take back all the strikers within ninety days, would the government agree to provide for any 'loyal' employees (i.e. strike-breakers) who might have to be discharged to make way for the strikers, by, for example, giving the strike-breakers jobs on the Intercolonial? There would not be many such men, Hays suggested, and the understanding would be confidential. Borden and King found this request "very reasonable" and Hays finally signed the agreement. 199.

But when Hays saw a written draft of his understanding with the government to take back the strikers within ninety days, his mood changed again. He immediately objected to the statement therein that the company was obliged to "reinstate ... all of the men," and that the government was obliged to consider only the "possibility" that the company could not do so. He had agreed to take back only as many men as he could, he declared, and the government had agreed to provide for the rest. Borden and King disagreed, and Hays went into "a sort of rage," and asked for the signed agreement back. King refused, and Borden subjected Hays to a stern lecture on public responsibility. Borden and King then turned to leave, and King fired a parting shot: "It will never do to have any kind of a breach between the Government and your Company." Hays retorted that "a break with the Government"

<sup>199</sup> King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

would be "too bad," but that he had no intention of changing his position. King and Borden then left for their hotel.<sup>200</sup>

Despite this unpleasantness, however, King had secured one thing he wanted — Hays' signature on the company's agreement with the strikers. King returned to the strike leaders, who signed the agreement too, on the understanding that "as soon as possible" meant ninety days. They agreed to bring the strike to an end when King could assure them that Hays also agreed to the ninety-day limit. King tried to give the impression that this was largely a formality: "We had not yet secured this understanding in a form that was entirely satisfactory, but hope to be able to[,] and that as soon as it was obtained we would communicate with them at once."<sup>201</sup>

King then prepared a press release which included the texts of both the agreements just reached, including the ninety-day proviso, and which placed the entire blame for the continuance of the strike on Hays' subsequent repudiation of the agreements. This was purely a pressure play, but Wainwright and Biggar, who had come to see King, were very alarmed by it. They suggested another meeting with Hays right away, and King agreed to delay the press release. King arrived at Hays' house after the latter had gone to bed, and was ushered up to Hays' room. Hays, in his dressing gown, read King's statement, and then listened carefully while King made an important point. The company was not obliged to take the men back in order of

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

"seniority," King said, the three-month period "gave ample room for discipline, and would enable the company in the eyes of the public to appear to have had entirely its own way in the settlement of the dispute." Hays liked this argument, but said he must talk it over with the other officers of the company. King, on his part, agreed to remain in Montreal.<sup>202</sup>

The next day, Monday, 1 August, marked the beginning of the third week of the strike, with the strikers still standing firm despite the apprehensions of their leaders. The level of violence had declined slightly since the first week of the strike. The Brockville riot of 22 July had not been duplicated since then, although groups of strike sympathizers had hindered the movement of trains at a number of points — Fort Erie, Bridgeburg and Palmerston, for example.<sup>203</sup> The company experienced its most serious difficulties in the Palmerston area, where its trains were stoned, and it became necessary to patrol the track with section gangs to prevent spikes being pulled and lengths of track from being removed.<sup>204</sup> Local authorities remained very conscious of the possibility of renewed rioting and, on 31 July, a squadron of the Royal Canadian Dragoons entrained for Bridgeburg, in response to a "hurrying call." Once there they found little to do.<sup>205</sup> The situation

<sup>202</sup> ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Toronto Globe, 28-30 July 1910.

<sup>204</sup> ibid., 30 July 1910.

<sup>205</sup> ibid., 1 August 1910.

was little different on the Grand Trunk's American lines. On 29 July, for example, 500 Michigan National Guardsmen were despatched to Durand, Michigan; their only confrontation with the strikers was a baseball game — which ended in a draw.<sup>206</sup>

The company was still making a valiant effort to resume normal service and, indeed, was probably making genuine progress in that direction.<sup>207</sup> At the same time, a large backlog of freight still existed: the company was successfully clearing some of the major freight yards in Toronto and Montreal,<sup>208</sup> but off the main line the story was much different. On 29 July, the *Toronto Globe* had reported that "a great part of Ontario and Quebec is drifting rapidly into a freight-congestion of the most serious kind..." North of Guelph,

indeed, the situation was chaotic.<sup>209</sup> Nonetheless, the company remained publicly optimistic, and, on 30 July, issued instructions to its freight offices on the main line to again accept freight in greater than carload lots.<sup>210</sup> The impact of the strike on commerce, industry, and the general public, however, was increasing in seriousness, as local suppliers began to report shortages of coal, lumber, cement and

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 30 July 1910; Engineers' Journal, September 1910, p. 765.

<sup>207</sup> Toronto Globe, 1 August 1910.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 30 July 1910.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Stratford Daily Herald, 2 August 1910.

food.<sup>211</sup> Public pressure on the government to settle the strike was therefore increasing as well.<sup>212</sup>

On 1 August, however, Hays attempted to place further obstacles in the path of a settlement. He sent Wainwright and Biggar to King with the proposal that the company should not be required to displace a loyal employee (i.e. a strike-breaker) from a position he currently held to make way for a returned striker, but should only be required to take the strikers back "from time to time as vacancies occur." King objected that this proposal would completely nullify the obligation to re-hire any of the strikers, and the proposal was withdrawn. Biggar and Wainwright then asked if the government was prepared to "look after" displaced loyal employees on the company's American lines. King, taken somewhat by surprise, replied that the Canadian Government could scarcely "look after" Americans, and Biggar and Wainwright left to consult with Hays.<sup>213</sup> They returned shortly with a memorandum which proposed a limitation of the company's obligation to correspond to the government's: if the government would only "take care" of Canadians, the company would only promise to reinstate Canadians. King fumed, but could find no flaws in Hays' logic. Yet by this time he very much wanted a settlement.<sup>214</sup> He returned to his hotel room to

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 2, 3 August 1910.

<sup>212</sup> See Laurier to King, 28 July 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>213</sup> King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.; also scribbled memorandum in King's handwriting, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9195-9196.

consider the problem, and then went to see Berry and Murdock. The Canadian Vice-Presidents, however, could offer him no way out: they were not prepared to "betray" any of their fellow workers to make way for scabs.<sup>215</sup> King returned to Wainwright and Biggar to accept the logic of Hays' argument. It could mean the end of the strike. He promised to try to get Cabinet approval for government aid to all displaced strike-breakers, regardless of nationality, if Hays would agree "without reservation" to reinstate all the men currently on strike within ninety days. The agreement, of course, would be confidential. Biggar and Wainwright liked this suggestion. Biggar agreed to remain in Montreal to try to get Hays' approval, while Wainwright agreed to go to Ottawa to be ready to sign, for the company, an agreement embodying King's proposal the instant that Cabinet approval was obtained.<sup>216</sup>

There were only two other Cabinet Ministers in Ottawa the next day, 2 August, when King resumed work. These were Louis-Philippe Brodeur, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, and William Pugsley, Minister of Public Works. Acting Prime Minister Sir Richard Cartwright was out of town and, as a result, it was impossible to arrange a formal Cabinet meeting. Thus, when Wainwright arrived with word that Hays had agreed to the confidential memorandum on the reinstatement of the strikers, King arranged an informal meeting between him and the other two Cabinet

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<sup>215</sup> King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638; BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," pp. 355-356.

<sup>216</sup> King to Laurier, 4 August 1910, LP, Vol. 638.

Ministers.<sup>217</sup> Wainwright told the Cabinet Ministers that he had full authority from President Hays to sign the memorandum for the company. He assured them, moreover, that the obligation of the government would be minimal,

that he doubted if all the men that would be left on the system ... would amount to more than a few dozen at the outside, if as a matter of fact there were any at all.<sup>218</sup>

He had only one additional request, that the Central Vermont be specifically named in the memorandum in order to clarify Fitzhugh's position as officer in charge of the Grand Trunk subsidiary. This request was readily granted, and the memorandum was signed by Wainwright and the three Cabinet Ministers.<sup>219</sup> It contained the following understanding:

The men will, within three months from this date, be taken back into service, and within that time be placed in their former positions.

If at the end of the three month period there should be still in the train or yard service on the Grand Trunk system or the Central Vermont Railway any men engaged prior to this date and since the strike commenced and retained by reason of such engagement, the Government of Canada will relieve the company of any responsibility arising under such engagement to the extent of seeing that these men shall be provided with suitable employment at a similar rate of pay for a period of at least sixty days or be paid such rate of pay for that period.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>217</sup> ibid.

<sup>218</sup> ibid.

<sup>219</sup> ibid.

<sup>220</sup> For a copy of this agreement, see KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9182-9183.



King immediately telephoned Murdock, Garretson and Lee to ask them to call off the strike. Murdock received the first call, because, as King declared, "You are a Canadian, and as a Canadian Minister I think it better that we should have our negotiations this way." Murdock was asked to "explain" this to Garretson and Lee. King emphasized to all three men that the memorandum just signed was to be kept "absolutely confidential." At the same time, in answer to a question from Lee, King said that he realized that "You may have to communicate to your fellows about taking perhaps three months for some of them to get their places back, but give out nothing officially other than the agreement" of 29 July laying out the financial and other terms of the settlement. The grand officers agreed to this, and agreed as well to call the strike off immediately.<sup>221</sup> After just over two weeks, the strike had ended.

### Conclusion

The Grand Trunk strike of 1910 was the consequence of many years of low wages, plus Charles M. Hays' persistent refusal to negotiate with the company's unionized employees in an open and straightforward fashion. Apart from a desire to correct this situation, however, the objectives of the strikers were singularly ill-defined: it was never very clear whether the strikers wanted the IDIA majority award, the Eastern Association schedule, or the CPR contract. Moreover, the extended negotiations before the strike so completely embittered relations between the strike committee (especially Murdock and Berry)

<sup>221</sup> Stenographic copies of King's words in these telephone conversations appear in KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9187-9194.

and President Hays that little could be done for some days to re-open negotiations between them, despite the attempts of Mackenzie King. It required the combined intervention of the presidents of the brotherhoods and the Canadian Government to break this log-jam.

During the ensuing negotiations, however, Hays remained stubborn and confident, while the union presidents feared total collapse. Labour Minister King, on his part, was more interested in an agreement which would be acceptable to both sides and thus end the strike, than he was in the actual content of the agreement. The result was a final settlement which gave little more to the strikers than they had been offered before the strike, and which placed the government in the position of guarantor of the most contentious part of the whole settlement — the reinstatement of the strikers. This was obviously not a very satisfactory settlement from the point of view of either Mackenzie King or the presidents of the brotherhoods, and its principal virtues were to end the strike and preserve the integrity of the brotherhoods on the Grand Trunk.

Yet, given Hays' poor record for keeping promises to strikers, and in view of his behaviour during the final negotiations, how could the brotherhoods or the Canadian Government have any confidence that Hays would observe even this truncated settlement to the letter — especially when it came to the touchy business of reinstatement? Moreover, the strikers themselves had not been consulted during the negotiations, and their approval of the settlement had not been asked for. The settlement was imposed upon them by their union presidents, the Canadian Government, and the company. Even their Canadian Vice-

Presidents' were little more than obedient ciphers during the final negotiations (although, to be fair, this was apparently what Berry and Murdock wanted). How would 'the men' accept the settlement, especially if it was not strictly observed by President Hays?

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LOST PLACE: THE AFTERMATH OF THE GRAND TRUNK STRIKE OF 1910

The aftermath of the 1910 strike was a disaster for the organized conductors and trainmen on the Grand Trunk Railway. Individual strikers soon found themselves completely at the mercy of management, and were discriminated against in a variety of ways, principally by being refused immediate re-employment and by having their pension rights taken away. OBC and BRF committees on the Grand Trunk were gradually reduced to impotence and, by the spring of 1912, had become little more than puppets of management. Normal conditions were not restored for over two years, and it was over ten years before the strikers got their pensions back. The whole unpleasant affair meant that the two unions completed three decades on Canadian railways on a distinctly sour note.

#### The Grand Trunk Exacts Its Pound of Flesh

When the strikers received word on 2 August 1910 that the strike was over, they were jubilant. The Toronto strikers greeted the announcement of the strike's end with "tumultuous applause," said the <sup>1</sup> and this response seems to have been duplicated all along the

<sup>1</sup> Toronto Globe, 3 August 1910.

line." President Garretson told the press, "All the trouble is blotted out. The men resume service, and once more it is a happy family on the Grand Trunk."

But Garretson was a poor prophet. The initial reports of the strike's end did not mention the terms of the settlement, and, when these became known, the strikers angrily discovered that their two weeks off pay had gained them only fractionally more than they had been offered by the company just before the strike. Even worse, the settlement did not guarantee the strikers' immediate re-employment, and said nothing whatsoever about pensions. The pension oversight, in fact, apparently, angered the strikers more than anything else. They had been assured by their leaders that the company's promise to take them back into their former positions automatically included a resumption of their pension standing.<sup>6</sup> But, on 3 August, the Grand Trunk Pension Committee met, and resolved

that all previous services of employees of the Grand Trunk Railway System who had been on strike from July 18th to August 2nd, 1910, be cancelled, and that all future service be reckoned only from the latter date.

<sup>2</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 702;

<sup>3</sup>Toronto Globe, 3 August 1910.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4 August 1910.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 21 July 1910, 3 August 1910.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in J.W. Flavelle to Arthur Meighen, 9 November 1921, in Flavelle Papers, MG30, B4, Vol. 70, file 322(a). See also Stratford Daily Herald, 4 August 1910.

This action alone might have been enough to ensure the unpopularity of the settlement with the strikers, but the company's treatment of strikers who wanted to return to work as quickly as possible soon pushed the pension issue completely aside. It would not become a major issue again for several years.

Most strikers assumed that the end of the strike meant immediate reinstatement, and reported for work the next day as if nothing had happened. They were rapidly disillusioned. In accordance with the agreement, company officials had telegraphed divisional superintendents to take the strikers back "as soon as possible."<sup>8</sup> It soon became clear, however, that the superintendents were being given considerable latitude in interpreting these instructions, and may even have been told informally to ignore them if they wished. At Stratford, Ontario, for example, the trainmaster declared that about forty percent of the strikers on his division would not be re-hired, since there would be no vacancies.<sup>9</sup> At various points along the line, conductors reported for work in their uniforms, and were told to return home because their places had been filled.<sup>10</sup> There were indications as well that some company officials were bent on taking revenge on strikers who had offended them during the strike. One superintendent reportedly told strikers at Bridgeburg, "You fellows ... have been dictating to me long

<sup>8</sup>See F.H. Fitzhugh to W.G. Brownlee, 3 August 1910, MP, JB, Vol. C13, file 81, #9215.

<sup>9</sup>Stratford Daily Herald, 1 August 1910.

<sup>10</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 638.

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enough; now I'll do some dictating myself."<sup>11</sup> A Central Vermont striker was refused re-employment because he had read a letter (written by someone else) at a closed meeting, which had shown "disrespect" for Central Vermont officials.<sup>12</sup> Finally, company officials were taking the opportunity to weed out the old, the disabled, and the incompetent. One conductor, for example, was refused reinstatement because he had severe rheumatism and was blind in one eye. He had been with the company for forty years, but was now told by the General Manager that "he would not reinstate any man that he would not hire...."<sup>13</sup>

The strikers blamed their leaders for this state of affairs, and feeling against them ran high for several days after the end of the strike. M.C. Carey, ORC General Chairman on the Grand Trunk Western, travelled to Montreal at this time. He heard "condemnation" of the brotherhood grand officers all along the line, and later reported that "Brother Berry's personal safety was at stake to mingle with the men in and around Toronto." It was generally felt that the grand officers should have insisted upon ironclad guarantees on reinstatement. Carey also reported, moreover, that "local officials" of the company were trying to weaken the brotherhoods by claiming that the brotherhood negotiators had "sold out" to the company.<sup>14</sup> Union officials did what

<sup>11</sup> Stratford Daily Herald, 4 August 1910.

<sup>12</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 716. The company apparently had a spy at the meeting. Ibid., p. 718.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 723.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 677.



they could placate the rank-and-file. They informed union members about the 'confidential' agreement to reinstate all strikers within ninety days, and promised them that strike pay would continue until the ninety days were up, including pay to non-members who had struck in support of the brotherhoods.<sup>15</sup> Fortunately for brotherhood officials, the majority of strikers were taken back into the service within a week or two after the end of the strike. This considerably reduced the level of criticism, although the failure of the company to return all the men to their original jobs in strict accordance with the terms of the strike settlement caused a certain amount of grumbling.<sup>16</sup> It was now a matter of waiting until three months were up to discover whether Hays would live up to his agreement to take everyone back.

By mid-September, however, this was beginning to appear doubtful. Perhaps 650 to 700 men were still out of work, more than half of them conductors.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the company was not living up to the spirit of the agreement, since a number of completely new men (according to rumour up to 500) had been hired since the end of the strike.<sup>18</sup> By early October the situation had not improved, and the brotherhood rank-and-file were becoming distinctly uneasy. Three months,

<sup>15</sup> Railroad Trainman, September 1910, pp. 797-798; Conductors' Monthly, September 1910, pp. 717-718.

<sup>16</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 658.

<sup>17</sup> Berry to F.A. Acland, 15 September 1910, Graham Papers, Vol. 1, Folder 1, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> F.A. Acland, "Memorandum as to progress of reinstatement of Conductors and Trainmen of the Grand Trunk Railway in accordance with terms of agreement of July 31," LP, Vol. 644.

on a strike pay of \$35 per month, was a long time to be out of work.<sup>19</sup> The temper of the men was not improved, moreover, by the company's failure, in many instances, to pay the retroactive wages called for by the agreement, or even, in a few cases, to give the promised wage increase.<sup>20</sup> Brotherhood executives, however, remained optimistic, especially as reports began to come in towards the end of October that a considerable number of men had finally been returned.<sup>21</sup> Yet, when the 2 November deadline had passed, a substantial number of men were still out of work. The BRT alone had records of 209 such men, and Berry and Murdock immediately began receiving complaining telegrams and letters from every part of the Grand Trunk system.<sup>22</sup>

#### The Government Finds a 'Solution'

Berry and Murdock immediately contacted Mazkenzie King in Ottawa, and made it clear that they felt that "the government was responsible for seeing that Mr. Hays carried out the terms of the settlement in reference to the men's return."<sup>23</sup> King could scarcely disagree, in view of the confidential agreement of 2 August between the government and the company, and the problem became the subject of

<sup>19</sup> See J.J. Hunter to Laurier, 3 October 1910, LP, Vol. 645.

<sup>20</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 359; House of Commons, Debates, 1912, p. 6572.

<sup>21</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 358.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 359; F.W. Giddens, "Memorandum. RE Grand Trunk Strike Settlement," 2 November 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9203.

<sup>23</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 358.

meeting of the cabinet two days later. The decision was made to have King communicate the government's displeasure to the Grand Trunk management, and he immediately telephoned Vice-President Wainwright, the man who had signed the confidential agreement for the company. Wainwright maintained that he knew nothing about the situation, and added that he believed that only about fifty men were still out, most of whom had been guilty of some misdemeanour during the strike. King, however, told Wainwright that Laurier was "tremendously annoyed about the whole business..." and declared that the Prime Minister "took the position that until this matter was straightened out he would do nothing for the Grand Trunk Pacific..."<sup>24</sup> This threat apparently alarmed the Grand Trunk management, for on 8 November, President Hays visited Laurier in Ottawa. Hays promised Laurier to investigate the situation personally, and assured Laurier that any employee who felt he had been wronged could make a direct appeal to him or Fitzhugh.<sup>25</sup>

Quite understandably, in view of Hays' record, this promise did nothing to satisfy Murdock or Berry. King therefore suggested another approach, an independent investigation of the affair. He informed Murdock, Berry and Hays that he would be willing to ask Judge John A. Barron, of Stratford, Ontario, to conduct hearings to determine which strikers had in fact been guilty of acts of violence

<sup>24</sup> F.W. Giddens, "Memorandum RE Grand Trunk Strike Settlement," 4 November 1910, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, 09205.

<sup>25</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 359.

which would make them ineligible for reinstatement.<sup>26</sup> Barron had a good deal of experience in labour matters, and that summer had acted as the chairman of a board of conciliation in a dispute between the Toronto Street Railway Company and its employees.<sup>27</sup> Murdock and Berry accepted King's proposal, but this time Hays refused. The company, he declared, "shall be the sole judge as to the proper qualifications of the employe and his fitness for the duties assigned to him."<sup>28</sup>

At this point King apparently was prepared to force an investigation upon Hays, and on 11 November went so far as to draft a formal request for a royal commission.<sup>29</sup> Laurier disagreed with this approach, however. On 12 November, he, together with King and Minister of Railways George P. Graham, met Berry and Murdock and, (according to Murdock) promised to tell Hays

that there would be no further business transactions between the present government and the Grand Trunk Railway Company until such time as that agreement had been carried out literally.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 359-360; King to Murdock, Berry and Hays, n.d., KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9289-9291.

<sup>27</sup> Toronto Globe, 29 July 1910.

<sup>28</sup> Berry and Murdock to King, 10 November 1910, in BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," pp. 360-361; Hays to King, 10 November 1910, in Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>29</sup> "Minister of Labour to His Excellency, the Governor General in Council, 11 November 1910," KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9294, 9298.

<sup>30</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 362.

Laurier added that he would ask Hays and Wainwright to come to Ottawa again on Monday, 14 November, to discuss the situation.<sup>31</sup>

On 14 November, however, Wainwright came to Ottawa alone, bearing a memorandum which stated that the company had set up a "committee" consisting of Fitzhugh, General Transportation Manager Brownlee, and Hays, which would "personally investigate" cases of unfair treatment of ex-employees.<sup>32</sup> This was an obvious diversionary tactic, since Hays and Fitzhugh had just left on an inspection tour of the company's western lines.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, on 16 November, A.J. Nixon, Chief Operating Officer of the Railway Commission and a former Grand Trunk official, informed the Department of Labour that subordinate officers on the Grand Trunk had received orders *not* to take any more men back and that

it was the intention to show Mackenzie King and the Government where they 'got off', and that they would be tired of labour troubles by the time they got through with a man like Hays.<sup>34</sup>

By this time, the leaders of the brotherhoods had become dissatisfied with the government's lack of accomplishment. Some 250 men had still not been taken back in mid-November, while those men who had

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> C.M.H., "Memo as given by Mr. Wainwright to Minister on November 14, 1910," KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9209.

<sup>33</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 362.

<sup>34</sup> F.W. Giddens, "Memorandum re G.T.R. Strike," 16 November 1910 (confidential file), KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9210-9211.

applied directly to Hays had been merely referred back to their divisional superintendents where, in many cases, they were faced with the difficult task of proving themselves not guilty of charges of violence and misconduct.<sup>35</sup> The leaders of the brotherhoods therefore decided to convene the Grand Trunk joint committee in Montreal on 17 December, "in the hope that sufficient influence could be brought to bear [upon the company] to compel the return to service of former employes in accordance with the settlement."<sup>36</sup> When the joint committee wangled an interview with President Hays on 3 December, however, they found him in a truculent mood. He flatly refused to be impressed with the committee's arguments, and at one point, apparently told the men to be thankful they had regained their own jobs. As far as he was concerned, he added, there were presently three classes of men on the Grand Trunk: the first-class men who refused to strike; the second-class men who had come to the aid of the company during the strike; and at the bottom, in the third class, the strikers.<sup>37</sup>

Angered by this rebuff, the committee set up a special sub-committee, consisting entirely of Canadian members, to go to Ottawa to demand a royal commission.<sup>38</sup> Laurier met the sub-committee personally, and was properly sympathetic. While he rejected the request for a

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<sup>35</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Board of Trustees Annual Report, 1910," pp. 75-76; Laurier to Hays, 13 December 1910, LP, Vol. 655; Ibid., 19 December 1910.

<sup>36</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "Board of Trustees Annual Report, 1910," p. 76.

<sup>37</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 659.

<sup>38</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910,"

royal commission; he promised to do everything he could to persuade Hays to accept an investigation by Judge Barron.<sup>39</sup> Laurier moved quickly. He wrote to Hays the same day, and severely criticized the company's failure to make a "sincere effort" to live up to "the terms of the agreement."<sup>40</sup> When Hays refused to be moved by this criticism,<sup>41</sup> Laurier went a step further, and suggested a meeting to discuss the disposal of four million dollars from the sale of bonds for the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific which the government had previously refused to turn over to the company on terms which the company could accept.<sup>42</sup> This carrot-and-stick approach stirred Hays into action. On 20 December, he informed the government that he would be willing to permit an investigation by Judge Barron — but on the condition that it be conducted under company auspices and at company expense.<sup>43</sup>

Hays' proposal was scarcely an adequate answer to the reinstatement problem, since it meant, in effect, that the Grand Trunk would be investigating itself. The government, however, was badly in need of some sort of 'solution' to the reinstatement problem by this

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Laurier to Hays, 13 December 1910, LP, Vol. 655.

<sup>41</sup> Hays to Laurier, 15 December 1910 (Personal), LP, Vol. 655.

<sup>42</sup> Laurier to Hays, 19 December 1910, LP, Vol. 655.

<sup>43</sup> "Grand Trunk Railway Strike; Judge Barron's Report," n.d. (memorandum), KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9214.

time, since opposition questions in the recently-opened Parliament were becoming decidedly embarrassing.<sup>44</sup> The government accepted Hays' terms, and Barron received his appointment four days later. He would report directly to President Hays.<sup>45</sup>

It is not clear whether the leaders of the brotherhoods or the general public realized in December 1910 that the 'Barron Investigation' thus amounted to sweeping the whole problem under the rug. In any case, the brotherhood leaders decided to wait until the investigation was completed before pursuing the matter further. Perhaps they felt they had no other choice at this point. Perhaps they were playing for time themselves, hoping that the rather embarrassing problem of reinstatement would eventually solve itself.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, they were not bound by the judge's findings. As Garretson rather cynically explained in early January 1911,

Should the result of the investigations which His Honor, Judge Barron, is now conducting prove favorable, we can afford to accept his findings. Should they not meet with the requirements of settlement we are in a position to still contend for a literal adherence to the terms of settlement, as we have not agreed to accept his findings.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See "Re G.T.R. Strike. Reference in Hansards to Questions and Debates," KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9302.

<sup>45</sup> "Grand Trunk Railway Strike; Judge Barron's Report," *op. cit.* See also Berry to King, 28 January 1911, KP, J1, Vol. 16, p. 14951.

<sup>46</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 703-704.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Ibid., p. 704.



The brotherhoods thus extended strike pay for another few months until the investigation should be completed.<sup>48</sup>

The Rank-and-File Became Restless

Yet, within a month, the brotherhood rank-and-file on the Grand Trunk had begun to become disillusioned with the way the hearings were going. On 28 January, Sam Berry wrote Mackenzie King to complain that the investigation, apparently on Hays' instructions, was "much broader" than the brotherhoods had expected:

Instead of reporting to Mr. Hays whether or not the men concerned were guilty of "Acts of violence or disorderly conduct", the learned judge is enquiring as to peaceful picketing, trespassing on the company's property (that is ordinary passenger depots) etc., and in some cases complaints four or five years old are being investigated and reported upon, although the company had continued during those years to give employment to the men involved notwithstanding the complaints.<sup>49</sup>

Berry continued that both he and the men had "perfect confidence" in Judge Barron, but felt that "we have been victims once more of trickery on Mr. Hays' part." The government, Berry concluded, should use its influence to "force Mr. Hays to reinstate every man who is not guilty of 'acts of violence or disorderly conduct' within the meaning of the settlement."<sup>50</sup> The Government, however, was not willing to reopen the affair at this time. Mackenzie King merely attempted to soothe Berry's feelings by assuring him that he would continue to use his good offices

<sup>48</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, "President's Annual Report, 1910," p. 363.

<sup>49</sup> Berry to King, 28 January 1911, KP, J1, Vol. 16, pp. 14931-14932.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 14932.

"in so far as it is within my power" to persuade the company to live up to its agreement.<sup>51</sup> Nor did the government take any positive action in late March when the brotherhoods made another unpleasant discovery: Hays had not authorized Barron to investigate the situation on the Central Vermont, despite the fact that the judge's work on the Grand Trunk had taken him into adjacent American territory as far south as Portland, Maine. When Berry and Murdock complained to King about this, he replied that he had mentioned the matter to Laurier, who had promised to contact Hays "forthwith."<sup>52</sup> Yet, if Laurier did get in touch with Hays, the Grand Trunk President was unimpressed, and the Central Vermont situation remained uninvestigated.<sup>53</sup> Hays was still in complete control of things.

The situation was especially worrisome for Murdock and Berry because it had begun to undermine the authority of the grand officers of the brotherhoods among the rank-and-file on the Grand Trunk. In early March, the London, Ontario, divisions and lodges of the ORC and BRT distributed a circular to brotherhood members on the Grand Trunk which condemned the strike settlement as a "defeat to our members and a disaster to our organization." The circular denounced the executives of the brotherhoods for their inactivity since the strike, and called for a meeting of the Eastern Association to devise "ways and means of

<sup>51</sup> King to Berry, 7 February 1911, ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 739.

<sup>52</sup> Berry and Murdock to King, 23 March 1911, KP, J1, Vol. 16, pp. 14940-14941; King to Murdock, 24 March 1911, KP, J1, Vol. 16, p. 14942.

<sup>53</sup> See "List of Cases investigated by Judge Barron," 18 August 1911, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9248-9273.

enforcing [sic] the G.T.R. Co<sup>e</sup> into a fair and reasonable agreement...."<sup>54</sup>

In a letter to Mackenzie King in early April, Sam Berry claimed that this circular was not representative of the views of the brotherhood members on the Grand Trunk.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, rank-and-file unrest on the Grand Trunk was more widespread than Berry was prepared to admit. This became evident in late April, when Berry and Murdock attempted to regain the initiative from the Grand Trunk by means of an IDIA investigation of the reinstatement question. Grand Trunk officials were easily able to turn this request aside by pointing out to Labour Minister King that the only signatures on the application for the board of investigation were those of Berry and Murdock, not those of the chairmen and secretary of the general committees as required by the act. The Grand Trunk officials claimed that Berry and Murdock were "not popular with the men and have lost influence" and, "as a result, could not get rank-and-file support for anything they suggested — even an IDIA investigation."<sup>56</sup> This was confirmed on 2 May when King had a phone conversation with Berry and Murdock who agreed to "postpone" their request for an IDIA board.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Circular from the "Hall of London Division No. 16, Order of Railway Conductors and Forest City Lodge No. 240, Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen," to "all Lodges of B.R.T. and Divisions O.R.C. on Grand Trunk Railway System," 5 March 1911 (Title varies), KP, J1, Vol. 18, pp. 16285-16287, and ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 679-680.

<sup>55</sup> Berry to King, 8 April 1911, KP, J1, Vol. 16, pp. 14944-14945.

<sup>56</sup> Fitzhugh to King, n.d., ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 741-742; 'D.M.L.' "Re G.T.R. Trainmen Matter," Memorandum to Minister (private), 1 May 1911, KP, J1, Vol. 16, p. 14758.

<sup>57</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 742.

By May 1911, indeed, Canadian unrest within the ORC had begun to assume the proportions of a minor revolt. This became apparent during the regular biennial convention of the Order in May 1911. The Grand Trunk strike and the post-strike difficulties were given a complete airing at the convention, with Canadian Vice-President Berry coming under considerable fire for his role in the affair. Leading the attack on Berry, and on the settlement in general, were two of the most prominent Canadian members of the Order: J. Harvey Hall, Dominion Legislative Representative of the Order, and Thomas Todd, Chief Conductor of Montreal Division No. 75 and ORC General Chairman on the Grand Trunk's Eastern lines.

Todd opened the attack upon Berry, and upon the manner in which the Grand Trunk difficulties had been handled by the Grand Division, during the debate on the acceptance of the 'President's Annual Report' for 1910. Todd's criticism was a wide-ranging one: there had been too much delay in early 1910; the company's offer of 18 July should have been accepted as the basis for a settlement; the Grand Division officers, and the Canadian government, had been "tricked" into a hasty and inadequate settlement by Hays when the strikers were actually winning the strike; the settlement should have included iron-clad guarantees of reinstatement, including the dismissal of strike-breakers; and the Barron investigation was worthless, because Hays

can do just as he likes with it, throw it in the stove, or make it public property, or throw it in the desk. It belongs to Charles M. Hays and nobody else.

The proper course for Berry to have followed in recent months, Todd continued, was to have been very firm with the government when it

became clear "that they were not keeping faith with us" instead of "accepting what we would call b— s— and a dose of taffy once in a while from them...." He concluded by asking the convention to "give this matter fair and square justice...."<sup>58</sup>

J. Harvey Hall's criticism was, if anything, more hard-hitting than Todd's, and showed less reticence about apportioning the blame for the unsatisfactory settlement and the failure of reinstatement. Hall blamed the unsatisfactory settlement on the grand officers for ending the strike when "the Grand Trunk was licked....," and declared that the strike should have been fought "until the finish" even if it "wrecked the company." "What do we care for the Grand Trunk Company?" he demanded. As for the unsatisfactory condition since the strike, Hall placed the blame on three parties:

First, on the Grand Trunk Railway Company for not carrying out the conditions of the agreement.

Second, on account of the government for not enforcing it.

Third, on the Vice Presidents for Canada for not insisting on the government carrying out its part.

Indeed, continued Hall, the Canadian Vice-Presidents had thrown away "the only club they had" when they "relieved the government of its responsibility" to reinstate the strikers. Moreover, their attempt to rectify the situation by means of an IDIA investigation did "not amount to a hill of beans" because there was nothing compulsory about the board's findings. The Canadian Vice-Presidents of the brotherhoods, in

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 655-665.

short; must shoulder most of the blame for not making the strike settlement work.<sup>59</sup>

The ORC leadership, however, proved equal to the challenge presented by the dissidents. M.C. Carey, Chairman for the Grand Trunk lines west of the St. Clair River, explained to the convention that the strikers had been near the breaking-point in the second week of the strike, making an immediate settlement essential to prevent a break in the ranks, and the ruin of the organization on the Grand Trunk.<sup>60</sup> Vice-President Curtis declared that Hall and Todd were motivated by political ambitions for office within the order, and contended that Hall was inspired as well by a partisan hatred of the Liberal government of Canada. Hall, said Curtis, had "practically lived on political pap and patronage" of the Conservative Party of Canada for seventeen years.<sup>61</sup> Finally, President Garretson addressed the convention, in a speech which was an expert mixture of directness and earthy humour. He admitted that the strike "did not meet some of the requirements of success," but pointed out that no one in the Order had much experience in conducting strikes. Berry especially, he declared, should not be made a "scapegoat," since Berry had done his honest best under the circumstances. Indeed, Berry's difficult position reminded him of a violinist he had once seen in a wild west "Bucket of Blood" saloon, with a sign board over his head

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 696-713.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 673.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 681.

which said, "For Christ's sake, don't kill the fiddler; he is doing the best he can."<sup>62</sup>

Garretson was clearly master of the convention, and his report on the strike (which had provided the occasion for the debate) received the convention's approval.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, when Todd challenged Berry for the office of Vice-President for Canada, Berry emerged on top by 450 votes to 146.<sup>64</sup>

Within the BRT, rank-and-file dissatisfaction with the Grand Trunk settlement in 1911 was more muted than in the ORC primarily because only a few trainmen were still unemployed in 1911 as a result of the company's non-reinstatement policy. Trainmen tended to be younger and more physically vigorous than conductors, with fewer dependents, and had found it easier to get work elsewhere after the strike.<sup>65</sup> In 1911, the BRT paid Grand Trunk strike benefits to an average monthly total of only forty men — about one in five of the unreturned strikers.<sup>66</sup> Yet, despite this, Murdock and President Lee did not escape criticism entirely at the BRT's 1911 convention, which was held at the same time as the ORC's. Indeed, Murdock and Lee were

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 750-758.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 784.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 1258-1262.

<sup>65</sup> As J. Harvey Hall pointed out. Ibid., p. 698.

<sup>66</sup> By February 1912 this total had dropped to 14. BRT Proceedings, 1913, "Board of Trustees Annual Report, 1911," pp. 276-277. Ibid., "President's Annual Report, 1912," p. 395.

subjected to a number of searching questions about the Grand Trunk settlement.<sup>67</sup> Lee, however, was able to side-track this criticism.

Just a month earlier, the American Socialist Party's newspaper had devoted an entire issue to charges by former BRT National Legislative Representative A.A. Roe that the leaders of the brotherhoods had been selling out to management on a large scale in recent years. Prominent among Roe's charges was the claim that the Grand Trunk strikers

had the company licked to a finish, when President Lee and Garretson rushed to the rescue of the company and negotiated one of the most shameful settlements in the history of the Brotherhoods....<sup>68</sup>

At Lee's urging, the convention delegates angrily rejected Roe's charges, and branded his supporters as radical and obstructive.<sup>69</sup> As a consequence, a reasoned examination of the Grand Trunk settlement became impossible, and there was no serious challenge to Murdock's position as Vice-President for Canada; nor any attempt to censure the Grand Lodge officers.<sup>70</sup>

Neither Lee nor Garretson, then, had any great difficulty in May 1911 in meeting the challenge presented at their respective conventions by critics of the Grand Trunk settlement. As the convention proceedings showed; the two presidents were too strongly entrenched in their positions, and too adept at political manoeuvring to be seriously

<sup>67</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, pp. 63, 67-68, 100-102.

<sup>68</sup> Girard, Kansas, Appeal to Reason, 8 April 1911.

<sup>69</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1911, pp. 9-23, 57-58, 100-102.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 171.



threatened by the relatively small number of trainmen and conductors who worked on the Grand Trunk and Central Vermont.<sup>71</sup> The convention proceedings also showed, however, that Berry's and Murdock's personal prestige in Canada had definitely declined — Berry's most of all, since he had been elected unanimously at the ORC's previous convention in 1909.<sup>72</sup> Clearly neither of these men could afford to let the reinstatement problem go unsolved for much longer, since continuing dissatisfaction among the rank-and-file might well have unpleasant consequences for both them and their organizations.

#### Judge Barron Reports

On 25 May 1911, Judge Barron deposited the last installment of his report in the Grand Trunk head office in Montreal. He met James Murdock the next day in Toronto, and told him

there were only two or three men among the entire number of those whose cases had been investigated against whom [I] had rendered an unfavorable decision. ... there were not more than five on the entire line.

He added that he had been assured in Montreal

that the remainder of the men who had been kept out of service would be returned to service at once, and that ... the matter would be promptly smoothed out.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> See Van Tine, Making of the Labor Bureaucrat, pp. 158-159.

<sup>72</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1909, pp. 1194-1195.

<sup>73</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 67.

But Barron was too optimistic. His report disappeared into the files of the Grand Trunk Railway Company, leaving no trace that anything had been done to implement his findings. After a week or two, this inactivity began to disturb Minister of Labour King. When he got in touch with the Grand Trunk head office, however, he was informed that no one there was aware that Barron had submitted his report. Indeed, Hays told King that he had not seen it, and did not know where it was.<sup>74</sup> King thereupon informed Berry and Murdock (who were equally concerned) about the mysterious disappearance of the judge's findings, and promised to ask Barron to submit another copy of his report.<sup>75</sup> Incredibly, Barron had kept no copy of his findings, and the Department of Labour had to prod Hays again, causing further delays.<sup>76</sup> Hays did not give in until early August, when he wired Barron to come to Montreal to examine the missing papers, which had been found at last.<sup>77</sup> Barron went over his data carefully with Grand Trunk officials and, on 18 August, more than eight months after beginning his investigation, submitted a condensed summary of his findings and recommendations to President Hays. On the insistence of company officials, Barron had modified his original findings. He now recommended against the reinstatement of twenty-five men, and made no recommendation at all in the

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<sup>74</sup> King to Barron, 12 June 1911, KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9214; BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 67.

<sup>75</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 67.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

case of fifty-eight others, either because they had not bothered to appear before him, or had been re-hired and then dismissed for cause. This left 142 men to be reinstated.<sup>78</sup> But even this did not satisfy the company officials. They promised to reinstate only ninety-one men; the remainder would not be reinstated "under any condition" regardless of the judge's recommendations, they declared. These ninety-one men, however, would most certainly be reinstated by 2 September, company officials promised.<sup>79</sup> Yet 2 September came and went, with only twelve or fourteen of these men returned to work.<sup>80</sup> The Grand Trunk had once again reneged on an agreement.

#### The 1911 Federal Election

The failure of the Barron Investigation had serious political implications for Labour Minister King. By early September a federal election campaign was well under way, and King's Conservative opponent in his riding of Waterloo North had begun to exploit the Grand Trunk settlement as an election issue.<sup>81</sup> King became increasingly concerned, fearing that this issue, when added to the already explosive national issue of reciprocity with the United States, would deprive him of his seat. Hoping to offset Conservative propaganda, therefore, he

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Also "Summary [of cases investigated by Judge Barron]," KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9247.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Also Berry and Murdock to King, 30 August 1911, KP, J1, Vol. 16, pp. 14969-14970.

<sup>80</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 68.

<sup>81</sup> On King's campaign problems in 1911, see Terence A. Crowley, "Mackenzie King and the 1911 Election," Ontario History, LXI (December, 1969), 181-196.

turned to the grand officers of the ORC and BRT for support. The grand officers could scarcely reject King's request for aid, since an attack upon King on this issue was a direct attack upon them as well. This point was driven home by J. Harvey Hall, who had entered the campaign in Waterloo North on the side of the Conservatives. Presidents Lee and Garretson publicly endorsed King, and instructed Murdock and Berry to take to the hustings on King's behalf.

Vice-President Berry, however, left most of the active campaigning to Murdock, perhaps because he had begun to have certain doubts about King's sincerity. Other Canadian trade unionists had become discontented with King by this time, and as early as May, Berry had considered it a distinct possibility that King might "bunco" the brotherhoods on the reinstatement question.<sup>82</sup> In any case, despite the official support he received from the brotherhoods and other labour organizations, King was defeated. The Grand Trunk strike was probably a factor.<sup>83</sup> The Laurier government went down as well, although the Grand Trunk strike obviously had much less to do with this defeat than the major national issues of reciprocity and the naval question. Prime Minister Laurier tendered his resignation on 6 October 1911, and the Conservative ministry of Robert Borden was sworn in a few days later.

<sup>82</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 743.

<sup>83</sup> Crowley believes that King "exaggerated" the importance of the Grand Trunk strike as a campaign issue. Crowley, *op. cit.*, p. 195. The London, Ontario, Industrial Banner, however, declared in its October 1911 issue that the strike was a "big factor" in the election, and that "the late strikers were never satisfied with the actions of the government in the settlement that was effected.... Hundred of railwaymen who had always voted Liberal voted Tory for one reason, and one reason only." Of the biased and inaccurate account in H.S. Ferns and B. Ostry, The Age of Mackenzie King; the Rise of the Leader (London, 1955) the less said the better.

Borden's new Minister of Labour was Thomas W. Crothers, a lawyer from St. Thomas, Ontario. He was not given his post because of any particular expertise in labour matters, but because of his standing within the party and because his section of Ontario was entitled to a cabinet minister. Nor were labour unionists in Canada certain that a man as "gentle-mannered and good-natured" as he was known to be could be depended upon to stand up for the interests of labour in parliament. Yet Crothers had certain qualifications for his job which were not immediately apparent. He enjoyed an independent position within the party, and owed Borden no favours. Indeed, he had been involved in an attempt to have Borden replaced as party leader two years earlier. Moreover, as one of the oldest men in the cabinet, at 61, he could afford to be more outspoken if need be than his young and ambitious predecessor had been.<sup>84</sup> A few days after taking office, he promised Berry and Murdock to do everything he could to straighten out the reinstatement muddle "to the satisfaction of the men..."<sup>85</sup> The two vice-presidents seem to have taken little stock in this promise at the time.

#### The Defeat of the Joint Committee

In the meantime, in any case, the conductors' and trainmen's joint committee on the Grand Trunk had decided to suspend their attempts to work through the government, and had begun negotiations for

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<sup>84</sup>Heath N. MacQuarrie, "The Formation of Borden's First Cabinet," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, XXIII (February, 1957), 95; Toronto Daily Star, 7 April 1910.

<sup>85</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 68.

an alliance with the railroad's firemen and engineers. These efforts achieved limited success in early December when the firemen (at the urging of BLF President Carter) agreed to 'assist' the conductors and trainmen if they encountered further difficulties with management.<sup>86</sup> The firemen, however, would not agree to federate themselves formally with the conductors and trainmen, and the engineers were even more reluctant to commit themselves to any form of united action, but the joint committee was encouraged.<sup>87</sup> They decided to approach President Hays once more, in an effort to solve the reinstatement problem. They also wanted assurances from Hays that the company would adhere to its agreement to introduce CPR rates and rules on 1 January 1912. This was by no means certain, in view of the reluctance which the company had already shown to honour the terms of the 1910 strike settlement.<sup>88</sup>

The meeting with Hays took place on 18 December. Hays was in a conciliatory mood, and assured the committee that the CPR rates and rules would go into effect on 1 January 1912, as promised. Moreover, he promised action on the reinstatement problem, asking the committee to submit a list of specific cases of non-reinstatement to General Transportation Manager Brownlee for consideration. The committeemen found this very encouraging, and submitted the required list immediately. They

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

asked for a meeting to talk the list over, and this was arranged for 22 January.<sup>89</sup>

In early January, however, the committee was faced with jolting evidence that Hays' reasonableness had been merely a passing phase, and that he had not yet forgiven the strikers of 1910. Shortly after the new year, in accordance with the new rules which had just gone into effect, the company posted seniority lists of its train and yard service employees at terminals along the line. The list showed that the company had placed the strike-breakers and the few men who had remained 'loyal' during the strike at the top of the lists, ahead of the ex-strikers whose seniority was based solely on their length of service since the strike. Moreover, because the ex-strikers had not been reinstated in order of seniority, some employees with twelve to thirty years' service were far down the list.<sup>90</sup> Company officials assured the men that there would be no mass reshuffling of positions to take into account the revised seniority standings.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, this action could easily be interpreted as a further violation by the company of its promise to place the men "back in their former positions" within three months after the strike. Moreover, this action directly affected the ORC-BRT committee and the rest of the returned strikers in a way that the reinstatement problem had not, and it was an apprehensive committee, therefore, which met Brownlee on 22 January. The committee

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

discovered, however, that Brownlee lacked sufficient authority to deal with the new seniority problem. There was a further delay, then, until the committee could arrange a conference with Howard G. Kelley, Grand Trunk Vice-President in charge of operations, who had the necessary authority to discuss all the outstanding differences between the company and its conductors and trainmen. The conference was scheduled for Montreal on 17 February.<sup>92</sup>

On 16 February, Vice-President Murdock visited Judge Barron in Stratford to get some ammunition for the next day's meeting in Montreal. Barron was sympathetic. He provided Murdock with a list of 138 men he had recommended for reinstatement, and he also offered to go to Montreal himself if the committee or the company asked him to. Murdock immediately despatched Barron's list to the committee by special delivery.<sup>93</sup>

But Murdock had wasted his time. The seniority issue had been the last straw for the battle-weary committeemen. Stunned by this latest demonstration of Hays' vindictiveness, they had decided to abandon the struggle to force the company to adhere to the July 1910 strike settlement. The written agreement which emerged from their meeting with Kelley on 17 February represented an almost unconditional surrender. Kelley made only one minor concession: the ex-strikers regained the seniority among themselves which they had had before the strike. But the

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 70, 71.



committee not only conceded to the company that the strike-breakers and 'loyal' employees should retain their seniority over the returned men, but consented to accept this agreement as a final settlement of all "the various questions at issue," including reinstatement and the back-pay question.<sup>94</sup> The promise of support from the Grand Trunk firemen was forgotten completely, and the list of names which Murdock and Barron had put in the committee's hands was tossed aside. The CPR chairman of the committee said of Barron's list that

the deeper we went into Judge Barron's report the worse we were confused and the more information we received from Judge Barron, the worse off we were, and we threw his old report in the waste paper basket and settled the matter on honor and justice and fair treatment....<sup>95</sup>

'Honor' and 'justice' were translated into a mere verbal commitment by the company to take back ten of the 138 men who were still unreinstated. The committee accepted this as "full satisfaction of their claims in that regard...."<sup>96</sup>

The committee members were well aware that their actions of 17 February could be interpreted as a sell-out of their unreinstated fellow workers — a sacrifice of the "Outs" for the "Ins", as President Lee bitterly described it later.<sup>97</sup> — And John Maloney, the BRT chairman

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 71; BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1912," p. 396. Some employees had still not received the retroactive wages promised in the original strike settlement.

<sup>95</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 72.

<sup>96</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1912," p. 396.

<sup>97</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 72.

of the committee, admitted that it was "too bad we had to compromise to such an extent...."<sup>98</sup> Yet the committee's capitulation is easy enough to understand. Neither the brotherhood grand officers nor the Canadian government had given the former strikers any real help since the strike, nor was there any indication that the situation would improve. The only thing to do was to submit to Hays, and hope for merciful treatment.

President Hays, however, had not yet finished with the ex-strikers. On 29 February, the company issued a circular (No. 67) which stated, first, that the 1 January increase in wages to the CPR level would be revoked on the company's branch lines, effective 1 April.<sup>99</sup> This action affected 151 men, and fell hardest on the returned strikers, since many of them had been re-employed on the branch lines after the strike.<sup>100</sup> In addition, Circular No. 67 also "eliminated from the schedule" two of the recently instituted CPR work rules. These rules had specified the number of conductors and trainmen required for passenger trains and yard crews, and had prevented the company from reducing operating staff beyond a certain minimum.<sup>101</sup> To some extent, these changes could be defended on the grounds of economic necessity and legal right, and Hays and his officials attempted to do so. They contended that the new branch line wages had been much higher than

<sup>98</sup> ibid.

<sup>99</sup> ibid., p. 73.

<sup>100</sup> Toronto Globe, 20 March 1912, House of Commons, Debates, 1912, p. 6756.

<sup>101</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 73.

'anticipated, and that it might be necessary, at times to reduce train crews beyond the specified minimum on unprofitable runs. Moreover, the CPR rules permitted the company to alter rates and regulations upon giving thirty days notice.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, Circular No. 67 was a clear violation of the spirit of the 1910 strike agreement, and broke a specific promise made to the ex-strikers less than three months earlier.

The thoroughly-cowed joint committee, however, had not the slightest intention of renewing their battle with Hays. Indeed, their response to attempts by their grand officers to circumvent the circular showed that they were almost completely under Hays' thumb by now. Immediately after the circular's appearance, Vice-Presidents Berry and Murdock, as well as Presidents Lee and Garretson, advised committee chairmen John Maloney and Robert Kelley to convene the committee in order to prepare an application for a board of conciliation and investigation under the terms of the IDIA. The establishment of the board, the grand officers pointed out, would have the immediate effect of preventing the company from altering the existing wages and working conditions until the hearings were completed.<sup>103</sup> But neither Kelley nor Maloney responded to this advice, and they ignored strongly-worded telegrams from American headquarters as well. Berry and Murdock were forced to convene the committee themselves, by wiring each of the committeemen individually, and ordering them to meet in Ottawa in mid-March. Even then, only a

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*; Hays to Judge Mabee, Chief Commissioner of the Board of Railway Commissioners, 27 February 1912, R.L. Borden Papers, OCA212, pp. 81906-81907.

<sup>103</sup> *BRT Proceedings*, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 74.

bare quorum of the committee showed up at the meeting, and they were in a sullen mood. Maloney, for example, took Murdock and the other grand officers to task for "interfering with the Grand Trunk situation...." The vice-presidents explained why they thought an IDIA investigation was necessary, and said that J.G. O'Donoghue, the union representative on the 1910 IDIA Board, had recommended this course. The committee, however, was not impressed, and voted twenty ~~o~~ nine against the investigation. Some of them explained later to Murdock that the "Grand Trunk officials would not like the committee to take such action." Instead, the committee voted to adjourn to Montreal "for the purpose of entering into negotiations with Grand Trunk officials." Disgusted, Murdock and Berry decided to wash their hands of the whole matter.<sup>104</sup>

#### Hays' Last Victory

The collapse of the joint committee, however, had left the reinstatement question up in the air. Berry and Murdock therefore visited Ottawa a few days after the Circular No. 67 fiasco to find out whether Labour Minister Crothers had been sincere in October when he had promised to straighten out the reinstatement mess "to the satisfaction of the men...."<sup>105</sup> They found Crothers in a belligerent mood. In November, he had written Hays for a copy of Judge Barron's report, since there was nothing on the matter in the Labour Department's

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-77.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

files,<sup>106</sup> but had been informed by Hays that the report, "having been made for my personal information, is not available for publication." Furthermore, "the company has taken into its service all employees concerned in the strike, in regard to which it was considered there were any obligations on the part of the company."<sup>107</sup> Hays was just as infuriatingly stubborn in subsequent correspondence and, by March 1912, Crothers had had quite enough of polite diplomacy.<sup>108</sup> After talking the matter over with Berry and Murdock, he decided to try force.

Crothers' plan was to threaten to block the passage through Parliament of a Grand Trunk money bill (a private bill, No. 130) unless the men were taken back. He obtained promises of support from other Members of Parliament, including Minister of Railways Frank Cochrane, who apparently had had enough of Hays by this time as well. On 22 March, Crothers appeared before the Commons' Railway Committee in connection with Bill 130. He said,

My predecessor ... did his best to get these men back. I have done the same, without success. I have a letter from Mr. Hays denying that he ever made such an agreement, and another in which he declares that he never asked Judge Barron to make an investigation. What are you going to do with a man like that? ... What are we going to do about it when we have no means to force them [sic]

<sup>106</sup> There is a copy of the August 1911 report in the King Papers, 34, Vol. G13, file 81, C9247-9273. In cleaning out his files after his defeat in 1911, King seems to have given little thought to the problems of his successor.

<sup>107</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1912, pp. 6568-6569.

<sup>108</sup> See Toronto Globe, 23 March 1912.

to carry out their agreement? The only weapon is to refuse the company's requests when they come before us for legislation. Every one of these men must be reinstated. We must get them all back. 109

The Railway Committee was entirely sympathetic to Crothers' plea, and listened coldly to Wainwright's claim that all the men had been reinstated. Frank Cochrane, for example, declared sharply, "that is not my information." After considerable discussion, the bill was allowed to go through the Committee only "on the understanding that it will not pass in the House unless the company reinstates its men." 110

Crothers held several meetings with Grand Trunk executives between 26 and 28 March. Neither side would give way. Crothers remained unmoved by the company's arguments, and maintained that he would stop Bill 130, as he had promised, unless he received concrete proof that the company intended to reinstate the men. True to form, and undoubtedly in accordance with Hays' instructions, the company officials were equally unyielding. Finally, the day before Bill 130 was to appear in the House, Vice-President Wainwright decided that Crothers could not be stopped by conventional means, and wired a company agent in Montreal to get John Maloney to come to Ottawa immediately. Sam Berry of the ORC got wind of Maloney's visit to Ottawa just in time to meet Maloney and the ORC committee man A. E. Sheppard when they arrived in Ottawa the next

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid.; House of Commons, Debates, 1912, p. 6571.

111. BC Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1911," p. 78.

days Berry advised them of the position we had taken and the success we hoped for....," and told them "we expected they would maintain this position." Maloney and Sheppard then left to see Wainwright.<sup>112</sup>

Berry was whistling in the dark. After lunch at the Rideau Club, Wainwright took the two committeemen to see John A. Currie, M.P. (the sponsor of Bill 130) and Prime Minister Borden. Maloney and Sheppard did not disappoint Wainwright. They told Borden that they did not want Bill 130 obstructed, because the agreement of 17 February 1912 had settled all the outstanding differences between the company and the men, including the reinstatement question. The two men made a favourable impression on Borden, who described them in the House the next day as "exceedingly reasonable men."<sup>113</sup> He had been watching the proceedings from the sidelines to this point. Now he decided to step in and put a stop to things.

By this time, Crothers must have realized that his attempt to pry concessions out of Hays had failed. He was determined, however, to show Hays that his threat to block Bill 130 had not been a hollow one. The prorogation of Parliament was imminent, and he believed it might be possible to block the bill until the fall session. That evening, when Bill 130 came up before the House, Crothers deliberately used up most of the hour allotted to private bills by giving a detailed summary of the 1910 strike and all that had happened since. His hopes of talking the bill

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 79; House of Commons, Debates, 1912, pp. 6763, 6766.

to death, however, were dashed by Borden. In answer to a question by Currie, after Crothers had finished speaking, the Prime Minister assured the House that private bills would be the "first order" of business the next day.<sup>114</sup>

The Grand Trunk had thus stopped Crothers completely. The next day, after listening to Crothers and his supporters castigate the Grand Trunk for its "utterly shameless disregard" of the strike settlement, Borden dealt the death blow to his Labour Minister's power play. He explained very carefully to the House that "the committee of the men" on the Grand Trunk had settled the question of reinstatement to their complete satisfaction on 17 February. Moreover, he added, should Parliament still want to take action on the matter, it should not do so in a manner which would hinder Canadian development, but should consider investigation under the Inquiries Act, or perhaps special legislation compelling the company to honour the strike settlement. Bill 130 was thereupon reported, read the third time, and passed.<sup>115</sup> The defeat of the joint committee in February had paid the Grand Trunk an unexpected but welcome dividend.

The Bill 130 affair was the last and most dramatic episode in the Grand Trunk's year and three-quarters long struggle to avoid being bound by the settlement which had ended the 1910 strike. One by one, the Grand Trunk had whittled away the more annoying features of the settlement: first, the obligation to re-employ disloyal workers;

<sup>114</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1912, pp. 6563-6574, 6578; Toronto Globe, 30 March 1912.

<sup>115</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1912, pp. 6766-6769; Toronto Globe, 1 April 1912.



second, the promise to pay retroactive wages (although some retroactive wages had been paid); third, the most expensive consequences of the wage increases of 1912; and fourth, the restrictions placed upon the size of train crews. Perhaps most important of all, the company had come close to establishing as a principle the right to ignore or modify agreements with the ORC and BRT whenever it chose to. In short, what might have been called a qualified victory for the strikers in 1910<sup>116</sup> had come to resemble a defeat by April 1912,<sup>117</sup> and this was signified by the submissiveness of the ORC-BRT joint committee. Taken altogether, this was no mean achievement for the company, accomplished as it was despite government displeasure and public criticism, and the principal factor was unquestionably the stubborn and devious character and personality of Charles M. Hays. Hays could not have devised all the tactics used by his subordinates to subvert the strike settlement and undermine the morale of the brotherhood committees. Nor is there any evidence that anyone in the company had worked out a coherent plan. But Hays' subordinates undoubtedly knew what he wanted, and knew that he would back them up. Hays must therefore be given most of the credit for the conditions in relation to the strike settlement that existed in April 1912.

But what was the cost of all this to Hays? John Currie, the sponsor of Bill 130, was a man whose business experience and military

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<sup>116</sup> London Industrial Banner, September 1910.

<sup>117</sup> The 1910 strike "was largely a victory for the company," the Toronto Globe suggested on 20 March 1912.

background should have disposed him favourably toward a man in Hays' position.<sup>118</sup> Yet, on 30 March, Currie told the House:

I do not justify the conduct of the president of the Grand Trunk railway, Mr. Chas. M. Hays. If I were asked to say what the discussion of the last few days in this House means, I should say that it simply means that the president of the Grand Trunk railway has lost his usefulness as far as Canada is concerned, for both the workmen and the parliamentarians, both Grit and Tory, seem to have lost faith in him.<sup>119</sup>

Just two weeks later, Hays was dead. A passenger on the Titanic, he died along with many others when it sank on 14 April 1912, and with him went the Grand Trunk's inflexible opposition to the strike settlement of 1910. "As a result of his death and the consequent change in management," President Lee of the BRT wrote later, "the situation on the Grand Trunk Railway relative to the settlement that was made when the strike was called off in 1910, commenced to improve."<sup>120</sup> Crothers continued to put pressure on the company, although he was handicapped somewhat by the agreement made by the brotherhood committees in February 1912. As he told Lee in June 1912, however,

When dealing with the company I distinctly took the position that we would not be bound by the agreement entered into with the general committee in February last, and insisted upon standing upon the original agreement of 1910.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>118</sup> See J.K. Johnson (ed), The Canadian Directory of Parliament 1867-1967 (Ottawa, 1968), p. 147.

<sup>119</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1912, pp. 6763-6764.

<sup>120</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1912," p. 396.

<sup>121</sup> Crothers to Lee, 11 June 1912, in Ibid.

Hays' successors could see little point in continuing to oppose the reinstatement of the strikers of 1910 in face of this government pressure. There were relatively few unreturned men by now, in any event — perhaps 120, scattered here and there along the Grand Trunk's main and branch lines<sup>122</sup> — and to re-hire them would cause but slight inconvenience, and would remove a minor but constant source of friction. By the end of 1912, President Lee was able to report that

matters have smoothed out very nicely on that line [the Grand Trunk] considering the fact that conditions were so very unsatisfactory during the period from the close of the strike and up to and including the early months of 1912. I am advised that nearly all the men recommended for reinstatement by Judge Barron have been returned to their former positions except possibly in the case of some men who were physically unfit to resume railroad work.<sup>123</sup>

And a correspondent to the *Railroad Trainman* reported about the same time from Brockville (where feelings had run especially high during the strike) that two local trainmen, who had been "kept from work wrongly for two years" were back in their former positions. The correspondent continued, "There is no hard feeling between the company and the men as the smoke of battle has cleared away, and the last axe is now being put under the sod."<sup>124</sup> By the end of 1912, in fact, Crothers had

<sup>122</sup>Gideon Robertson, draft recommendation, disposition of pensions case, 15 August 1921, p. 2, Flavelle Papers, MG30, B4, Vol. 70, File 322(a).

<sup>123</sup>BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1912," p. 396.

<sup>124</sup>Railroad Trainman, December 1912, p. 1080. The representative on the joint committee from the BRT lodge in Brockville was one of the few who supported Murdock's recommendation for an IDIA Board of Investigation in March 1912. BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's

achieved almost complete success in getting the company to live up to the terms of the strike settlement. He had persuaded company officials not only to settle the retroactive pay question, but also to provide restitution — three months' wages — for those who had been kept out of work since 1910.<sup>125</sup> There was only one exception to this story of success — one which no one seemed to notice at the time — the pensions lost by the strikers.

#### The Forgotten Men

The story of the pension issue is one of negligence and procrastination. For over ten years, both the federal government and the brotherhoods either ignored the problem, or did not consider it important enough to require action. This neglect began and ended with Mackenzie King. During the strike, King had expressed "disgust" at company plans to take away the men's pensions and, after the strike, recommended to Laurier that special legislation be brought in to restore the men's pensions. Laurier rejected this solution to the problem, because it might set a "dangerous precedent," but agreed that the strikers had a strong case.<sup>126</sup> At this point, however, King took a long-planned trip to Europe and, on his return, apparently found it inexpedient to pursue the matter further for fear of complicating the

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Annual Report, 1911," p. 76. It is not clear why the conductors and trainmen in Brockville were more militant than (for example) in Stratford.

<sup>125</sup>House of Commons, Debates, 1920, p. 1128.

<sup>126</sup>Laurier to King, 11 August 1910 (confidential), LP, Vol. 639.

already difficult reinstatement problem. Expediency soon hardened into policy. In the House of Commons, in February 1911, King explicitly denied that the government had any obligation to secure the restoration of the strikers' pensions, inasmuch as this question had not been part of the strike settlement, but "was a separate matter altogether."<sup>127</sup> This statement apparently reflected King's official views for the remainder of his term as Minister of Labour.

By 1911, in any case, the pension issue had receded safely into the background. At the 1911 ORC convention, J. Harvey Hall scarcely mentioned pensions in his wide-ranging attack on Berry, Garretson and King, and did not make the pension question part of his indictment of the ORC Grand Division officers.<sup>128</sup> Pensions were not an issue during the 1911 election, nor did the otherwise indefatigable Crothers pursue the issue in 1912, making only a passing reference to it during the House debate on Bill 130.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, when the ORC-BRT joint committee adjusted the seniority question with Grand Trunk Vice-President Kelley in February 1912, no mention was made of pensions in the agreement.

By 1914, however, an increasing number of the strikers of 1910 were reaching retirement age. Some of these men had worked on

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<sup>127</sup>House of Commons, Debates, 1911, pp. 3377; 3393. This was one of the few mentions of the pension question in the Spring 1911 session of the House. The Opposition was more interested in the reinstatement issue.

<sup>128</sup>ORC Proceedings, 1911, pp. 708-709.

<sup>129</sup>House of Commons, Debates, 1912, p. 6571.

the Grand Trunk for forty to fifty years, yet the company steadfastly refused to give them pensions on the grounds that they had left the company during the strike, and therefore did not meet the requirements of the pension regulations which called for fifteen years "continuous service."<sup>130</sup> While these men strongly believed that they had a real grievance, the brotherhood committees on the Grand Trunk were still in the company's orbit, and refused to help them, alleging that the problem was not within a brotherhood committees' jurisdiction, since there was no agreement between the brotherhoods and the company respecting pensions.<sup>131</sup> The would-be pensioners thereupon appealed over the heads of the committees to their dominion legislative representatives, Murdock for the BRT, and L.L. Pelletier for the ORC, a sensible decision, since political pressure had worked in the case of reinstatement. Since the majority of the men involved were conductors, Pelletier played a more active role than Murdock in the first attempt to get the men their pensions back.<sup>132</sup>

Yet Pelletier accomplished very little, probably because wartime problems gave neither the brotherhoods nor the Canadian

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<sup>130</sup> J.W. Flavelle to Meighen, 9 November 1921, Flavelle Papers, MG30, B4, Vol. 70, File 322(a); The Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada; Pension Department; Rules and Regulations as to Pension Fund, Pursuant to Act of 1906-7 of the Dominion Parliament; Chap. 89, Edw. VII; Effective January 1st, 1908, in KP, J4, Vol. C13, file 81, C9317-9331.

<sup>131</sup> W.D. Robb, "Memorandum," 8 November 1921, Flavelle Papers, MG30, B4, Vol. 70, File 322(a).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.; Gideon Robertson, draft recommendation, disposition of pension case, 15 August 1921, Flavelle Papers, op. cit. J. Harvey Hall was dead by this time.

government much time to spare for an issue which, after all, affected a relatively small number of men — perhaps eighteen or twenty at any one time (although the total since 1910 would, of course, be considerably larger).<sup>133</sup> It was not until 1917 that Pelletier succeeded in pushing the grievance as far as the Grand Trunk Board of Directors in England, and managed to arrange a conference with Board Chairman A.W. Smithers. This, however, proved to be a dead end, as Smithers categorically denied that it was possible for him to change the rules and regulations governing pensions, because the company pension department, complete with rules and regulations, had been established by an Act of Parliament in 1907. The question was shelved for the time being.<sup>134</sup>

After the war, the brotherhoods began to take an active interest in the problem again. At the ORC and BRT conventions in 1919, resolutions were adopted urging greater activity on the matter by both the grand officers and the Canadian government. These resolutions were submitted to Prime Minister Borden, and to other cabinet ministers and M.P.'s.<sup>135</sup> This had the desired result. In 1920, during the debate in the House of Commons on the proposed government takeover of the Grand Trunk, John Currie (who had been the sponsor of Bill 130 in 1912)

<sup>133</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1920, p. 1124.

<sup>134</sup> Gideon Robertson, draft recommendation, op. cit. Unknown to the employees at the time, however, the Board of Directors had in fact altered some details in these 'unchangeable' regulations, effective 1 January 1917. Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> "Petition from Canadian delegates 36th Session ORC to Prime Minister Borden; J.D. Reid, Minister of Railways; G.D. Robertson, Minister of Labour; J.E. Armstrong, M.P., Chairman of the Railway Committee of the House of Commons," Borden Papers, RLB23; BRT Proceedings, 1919, p. 279.

moved that the pensions of the strikers of 1910 be "made good" as part of the takeover. Mackenzie King, now leader of the Opposition Liberals, leapt eagerly into the debate to support the motion, suffering, in the process, the increasingly familiar indignity of having his motives and logic expertly dissected by Prime Minister Arthur Meighen. The motion failed to carry, but King clearly felt that he had discovered a good, if minor, political issue.<sup>136</sup> As the 1921 federal election drew near, he promised to restore the strikers' pensions if the Liberals received a majority.<sup>137</sup>

The Meighen government was in deep political trouble in 1921, and even the few votes which might be affected by the pension issue could not be ignored. In August 1921, Meighen had his Minister of Labour, Gideon Robertson, provide him with an analysis of the dispute,<sup>138</sup> and in September he wrote Sir Joseph Flavelle, Chairman of the Board of Management of the Canadian National Railways, to request that this problem of "major importance" be "attacked and solved," because "the history of the entire affair persuades me that it cannot be ignored and that an obligation exists."<sup>139</sup> Flavelle, however, had little love for labour unions. He rejected Meighen's request in a long and detailed memorandum: the strike settlement had not mentioned pensions, and

<sup>136</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1920, pp. 1122, 1556-1562.

<sup>137</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1923, p. 14.

<sup>138</sup> Gideon Robertson, draft recommendation, op. cit.

<sup>139</sup> Meighen to Flavelle, 16 September 1921, Flavelle Papers, MG30, B4, Vol. 70, File 322(a).



neither had the agreement of February 1912; pensions were not a right on the Grand Trunk, but a benevolent reward for faithful service; the men had understood that they would lose their pensions by striking, and had struck anyway; the pension fund, in any case, was designed to prevent strikes; finally, the 1910 strike was only one of a number of major and minor strikes on company lines since 1876 — some thirty-five in fact — and the company could not afford to set a precedent for a flood of additional claims.<sup>140</sup>

It was thus left for Mackenzie King to redress "this wrong of twelve years standing" (as an official biographer put it) when he became prime minister in 1921.<sup>141</sup> It is quite possible, indeed, that James Murdock was induced to become King's Minister of Labour partly by a specific promise to solve the problem (although the prospect of a cabinet post probably appealed to Murdock's ambitious nature in any case). King moved quietly, and the threat of enabling legislation was delicately brought forward during his negotiations with company officials, who were now more vulnerable to government pressure than before nationalization — and less able to strike back.<sup>142</sup> By the end

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<sup>140</sup> Flavelle to Meighen, 9 November 1921, Flavelle Papers, MG30, B4, Vol. 70, File 322(a).

<sup>141</sup> Norman McLeod Rogers, Mackenzie King (Toronto, 1935), p. 44.

<sup>142</sup> King to Flavelle, 22 April 1922 (copy), Flavelle Papers, MG30, B4, Vol. 70, File 322(a).

of 1922; the men had their pensions back,<sup>143</sup> and the last remains of the Grand Trunk strike of 1910 were finally laid to rest.<sup>144</sup>

#### Farewell to the Eastern Association

The Grand Trunk strike of 1910 had its origins in the Eastern Association's wage movement of 1909-1910. The failure of the strike therefore pointed up the difficulties inherent in applying this American-made technique to Canada. Regional movements of this type had been designed in the United States to meet the requirements of American legislation: as Richardson has pointed out, the regions covered by the Western, Eastern, and Southern Associations "were concomitant with the regions set up for rate purposes by the I.C.C...."<sup>145</sup> The writ of the Interstate Commerce Commission, of course, did not extend into Canada, where rates were regulated (after 1903) by the Board of Railway Commissioners. As a result, one basic rationale of the regional associations — that the railroads in any given region could afford to pay standard wages because they charged standard rates — made no sense at all in the Canadian setting, where a different rate structure pertained. The argument of uniformity could thus have no appeal to Canadian railroad managers, and they refused to be impressed by the sight of American railway companies falling into line one after another in the spring of 1910.

<sup>143</sup> House of Commons, Debates, 1923, p. 4.

<sup>144</sup> But not forgotten: although he had been slow to recognize the importance of the pension problem, King did not hesitate to take full credit for having solved it during the federal election campaign of 1925. London Advertiser, 21 October 1925.

<sup>145</sup> Richardson, Locomotive Engineer, p. 364.

There was another legal problem as well. The Erdman Act in the United States had permitted the mass settlement of the Eastern Association's claims on some fifty American railways by one board of arbitration in May 1910.<sup>146</sup> Canadian law, and specifically the IDIA, had prevented Canadian trainmen and conductors from taking part in this mass settlement, and, equally important, had also prevented a similar mass conciliation of the dispute on Canadian railways. The U.S. association system, in other words, could not work in Canada, nor could there be any 'Canadian Association'.

These lessons were not lost on Canadian members of the brotherhoods. In 1912, the Eastern Association met to consider a new wage movement similar to that of 1910. The ORC committees on the Grand Trunk, the Central Vermont, and the Intercolonial did not bother to attend the meeting, nor did the BRT committee on the Central Vermont. Moreover, when the Association's schedule was voted upon by the general Canadian membership, it was rejected on the Grand Trunk and Central Vermont. Finally, although the CPR, the Intercolonial, and the TH&B membership accepted the Association's schedule, the joint committees on those roads made no attempt to take part in the subsequent wage movement.<sup>147</sup>

The lessons of the 1910 strike were apparently not lost on the other brotherhoods either. In 1912, for example, the BLF undertook an "Eastern Concerted Wage Movement," but this did not include Canadian railroads. BLF negotiations for new contracts on Canadian

<sup>146</sup> Robbins, Railway Conductors, pp. 102-103.

<sup>147</sup> BRT Proceedings, 1913, "President's Annual Report, 1912," pp. 383-384, 386-387.

railroads in 1912 were conducted on an individual basis, independently from the concerted wage movement. President Carter deplored this "segregation of our membership along international lines..." and suggested the creation of a Canadian Federated Board to deal with the problem.<sup>148</sup>

The end of our period, in other words, saw the brotherhoods in Canada marking time on the question of the most effective way of dealing collectively with the managements of Canadian railways. Very shortly, however, the World War would provide another solution (again originating south of the border), the establishment of national Boards of Adjustment for all Canadian railways.<sup>149</sup> But this solution, of course, was not apparent in 1914, and goes beyond the time limit for this study.

#### Conclusion: A Question of Survival

Presidents Lee and Garretson, men with long experience as labour executives, understood very well that large corporations could destroy labour unions if they wished. This was why they had intervened after the first week of the Grand Trunk strike, and agreed to a settlement which gave the strikers very minimal gains. Garretson could recall only too well the Burlington strike of 1888 "where 100

<sup>148</sup> BLF, Reports of Grand Lodge Officers, 1913, "President's Report," p. 29, "Summary of Work of Protective Department," pp. 6, 12; Firemen's Magazine, January 1914, p. 107.

<sup>149</sup> See Maxwell Flood, Payment Systems and their Development in the Railway Running Trades (Ottawa, 1968), pp. 59-61.

per cent of the men stood, and no man got back."<sup>150</sup> Survival of their organizations on the Grand Trunk was thus uppermost in their minds in late July 1910, and reinstatement of all the strikers was their only non-negotiable demand on Hays.

As the aftermath of the strike demonstrated, however, they acted in vain, for the ultimate outcome was virtually what they had feared the most, the destruction of their organizations on the Grand Trunk: by April 1912, the ORC and BRT committees on the Grand Trunk had been thoroughly emasculated and had become little more than 'company unions'. Perhaps J. Harvey Hall was right: it might have been better to fight the strike to a finish.

Yet, it is difficult to believe that this would have made any real difference. Aside from the inability of the leadership of the international brotherhoods to cope with a truly stubborn Canadian management, there were two other important factors in the Grand Trunk's ultimate victory which would have been unaffected by any ending the strike might have had: first, the Canadian government had no coherent policy with respect to the legitimacy of union contracts; and second, Canadian railway labour was sadly divided — Hays did not even have to face the combined pressure of all four brotherhoods, let alone the other unions on the Grand Trunk. Fate, of course, intervened to deprive Hays of his life and the Grand Trunk of its victory. Before he died, however, Hays had exposed some of the fundamental weaknesses of the labour movement on Canadian railways.

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<sup>150</sup> ORC Proceedings, 1911, p. 757.

## CHAPTER XII

### CONCLUSION

The Grand Trunk strike notwithstanding, the history of the international railway brotherhoods in Canada before 1914 was a story of success. In terms of growth, progress was slow at first and, in 1880, fifteen years after the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers became the first railway union in Canada, less than 500 Canadian railroaders were brotherhood members. But growth accelerated after 1880, as first the engineers and firemen, and then the conductors and brakemen extended their operations, with no effective opposition from management or rival unions, into every part of Canada served by railways. Within ten years, the brotherhoods had over 4,000 members in Canada, and had firmly established their sway over the men in their trades in the Dominion. The Canadian membership continued to increase, moreover, during the troubled nineties, doubling by 1900, and providing a solid base for the almost exponential growth which took place during the boom years after the turn of the century. In 1914, the brotherhoods had over 25,000 members in Canada.<sup>1</sup> In terms of growth, the brotherhoods were among the most successful labour organizations operating in

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<sup>1</sup>The membership figures for 1880, 1890 and 1900 are estimates based upon a variety of brotherhood sources, principally monthly journals and convention proceedings. The figures for 1914 are from the Department of Labour, Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1914, pp. 191-192. See Appendix, Graph 1.

Canada during the period 1865-1914. They had the largest number of locals of any labour group through much of the period and, even in 1914, after the rest of the Canadian labour movement had passed through a decade and a half of unprecedented growth, still accounted for almost twenty percent of the union locals in the Dominion.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the brotherhoods' growth in Canada had been relatively unaffected by the serious depressions of the last half of the nineteenth century, in contrast with many other national and international unions operating in the Dominion.

The success of the international brotherhoods in Canada may also be gauged by the ease with which they drove off or absorbed rival organizations. In the seventies, the lone Canadian branch of the first firemen's organization, the International Union of Locomotive Firemen, withered away without a trace shortly after the BLF entered Canada in 1877. In the early eighties, the ORC easily routed a challenge from a Canadian trainmen's union at St. Thomas, Ontario, and was apparently never seriously threatened in the Dominion by its great American rival of the late eighties, the Brotherhood of Railway Conductors. In the same decade, the newly-formed Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen (later the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen) swallowed up the older Conductors' and Brakemen's Benevolent Association of Canada. The most serious threats to the hegemony of the brotherhoods in Canada came in the decade after 1892. The first was the challenge presented in 1893 by the industrially-organized and radical-tinged American Railway Union, followed in 1901, by its spiritual successor,

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<sup>2</sup>Babcock, "A.F. of L. in Canada," pp. 121-124.

the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees. The ARU, however, did most of its damage to the brotherhoods in the United States, leaving the Canadian wing of the brotherhoods almost untouched, while the UBRE made the triple error of taking on two Canadian railway companies and the Canadian governing elite. With friends like the CPR, the Canadian Northern Railway, and the government, the brotherhoods could scarcely lose to the UBRE, and emerged from the struggle more firmly entrenched in Canada than before. In the meantime, they had disposed of the nationalist Canadian Order of Railway Men and, after 1903, faced no serious challenges to their authority in Canada from within the labour movement.

The brotherhoods' success in organizing the Dominion was almost matched by their success in the field of labour-management relations, since they generally gained much of what they wanted from management without having recourse to strikes. Part of this success, of course, was the result of making moderate and reasonable demands. But railway managements also respected the strength of the brotherhoods, and knew that brotherhood strikes could be costly, even if the brotherhoods lost. Contract bargaining was sometimes bitter and protracted, yet the brotherhoods fought only three 'official' strikes in Canada before 1914, winning two, on the Grand Trunk in 1876-77 and on the CPR in 1892. The difficult situation on the Grand Trunk in 1910-12, moreover, was eventually straightened out to the satisfaction of the brotherhoods after the death of the headstrong and eccentric president of the company, Charles M. Hays. By this time, the men in the running trades had become the 'aristocrats' of Canadian labour, a title conferred upon them by



other working men who were envious of their high wages, job security and strong organization.<sup>3</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the international railway brotherhoods did a satisfactory job as collective bargaining agents for their Canadian members in the years before World War One.

Indeed, some of the brotherhoods' success in this field rubbed off on the rest of the work force on Canadian railways. The successful strikes of the CPR telegraphers in 1896 and the machinists in 1899 undoubtedly owed much to the brotherhood victory of 1892, and to the unwillingness of some of the brotherhood rank-and-file to see their fellow workers denied what they themselves had achieved. The actions of brotherhood officials during the trackmen's strikes of 1899 and 1901, however, showed that the brotherhood hierarchy was never primarily concerned with aiding Canadian railway workers in general in disputes with management, but only with preserving and protecting the position of the brotherhoods. This was part of a general pattern of aloofness and lack of concern for the problems of others, especially the unskilled and less fortunate. The brotherhoods remained outside of the major labour federations in both Canada and the United States, and tended to be unpopular with labourites of a genuinely reforming frame of mind.

The brotherhoods were somewhat less successful in their relations with the Canadian government than they were in the field of collective bargaining. There were some real achievements, such as the

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<sup>3</sup>Flood, Payment Systems, p. 1..

re-establishment of the BLE on the Intercolonial in 1882, the various successful defences of brotherhood insurance plans, and the re-drafting of the Railway Labour Arbitration Bill in 1902-1903. Yet against these successes must be set the failure to persuade the Laurier government either to amend the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act in 1907, or to fulfill its obligations to the Grand Trunk strikers in 1910. These failures can be partially excused on the grounds that the federal government was not as vulnerable to pressure from labour as was the management of a corporation. At the same time, however, the brotherhoods were partly to blame for the divisions within the labour movement which sometimes made combined pressure upon the government difficult or impossible. In other words, the brotherhoods sometimes paid for Eugene Debs' failure to unify them in the early nineties, and for their policy of independence from the rest of the labour movement.

Perhaps the greatest success of the brotherhoods in Canada before World War One was in the sphere of internal administration, since the brotherhoods, despite their American centre of gravity, never faced a serious threat of secession from their Canadian members. Even though there were relatively few Canadians in the brotherhoods (just over seven percent of the brotherhoods' total membership in 1914),<sup>4</sup> it was important to retain their loyalty because the brotherhoods could not afford to permit the existence anywhere in North America of a substantial pool of unorganized, low-wage railway labour.<sup>5</sup> As a

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Labour, Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1914, pp. 191-192.

<sup>5</sup> This was true for both Canadians and Southern blacks, even though the two groups were treated very much differently by the brotherhoods.

consequence, they developed a policy of 'recognizing' Canada, usually by appointing or electing Canadians to official positions in the Grand Lodge or Grand Division. Before 1900, these positions were generally secondary and part-time, and were intended primarily to 'honour' Canada and please the Canadian members.

After 1900, however, growing anti-Americanism in Canadian society, and signs of nationalism within the Canadian labour movement led the brotherhoods to extend and modify this recognition policy by providing for new, high-level, full-time Canadian grand officers to minister to the needs of Canadian railroaders and demonstrate that they were not subject to American domination. This move was sometimes justified on the practical grounds that the Canadian membership had grown large enough to warrant a measure of autonomy, although other North American regions with even larger memberships were not treated in a similar fashion. The new Canadian autonomy, however, was more apparent than real. All important decisions (including all Canadian ones) still had to be ratified by the periodic conventions of the Grand Lodges and Divisions, which also elected the Vice-Presidents for Canada, and authorized the appointment of Dominion Legislative Representatives. Since these conventions always had American majorities, and were usually dominated by their chief executives who (before 1914) were always Americans, the real power still remained in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>On the way the convention system functioned in North American trade unions, see Van Tine, Making of the Labor Bureaucrat, pp. 116-126. See also Crispo, International Unionism, pp. 58-60.

The new Canadian autonomy after 1900 was thus largely an illusion. Indeed, the new position of Canadian Vice-President served to place Canadian railroaders in a kind of colonial relationship to the American brotherhoods, because the Canadian Vice-President possessed what amounted to vice-regal status: he was elected by Americans and took orders from an American president; he could thus scarcely be expected to support policies which favoured Canadians at the expense of Americans if he wanted to retain his office or advance within the brotherhood hierarchy.<sup>7</sup> Sam Berry's experience at the 1911 ORC convention in a case in point. His loyalty to President Garretson and the Grand Division during the Grand Trunk strike controversy meant his re-election as Vice-President for Canada, despite what appears to have been fairly extensive opposition from the Canadian membership. His reward for this kind of reliability was the presidency of the Order in the 1930's.

The Grand Trunk strike showed very clearly where Canadians stood in the brotherhood hierarchy before World War One: the interests of the brotherhoods as a whole always came first, while the interests of individuals or groups (Canadians or otherwise) were always less important. Presidents Garretson and Lee intervened in the strike in July 1910 with the primary intention of preserving the position of their organizations on a major railroad — everything else was secondary. They were quite prepared, therefore, not only to forego an immediate raise in wages to CPR levels and sacrifice the strikers'

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<sup>7</sup> See Crispo, International Unionism, pp. 53-54, 68.

pensions, but also to repudiate the authority of the Vice-Presidents for Canada to accomplish this. In short, the international brotherhoods were usually willing to give concessions to Canadians when this did not threaten to diminish their power, or when these concessions served to increase their effectiveness and prestige. On the other hand, when Canadian particularism threatened their strength or authority, "the segregation of our membership along international lines"<sup>8</sup> was something to be feared.

By 1914, however, the position of the brotherhoods in Canada was relatively secure, and there was little likelihood that they would be torn asunder by the international border, or driven off Canadian railways. The establishment of the post of Canadian Vice-President, and the achievements of the brotherhoods in the fields of labour-management relations and government lobbying provided sound reasons for this. Yet there were additional reasons for the strong position of the brotherhoods in Canada. First, the fragmentation of the labour movement in the running trades into separate organizations (which was otherwise undesirable because it sometimes prevented a united front in disputes with management) helped to bind Canadian railroaders to the international brotherhoods by committing them to a model of organization which was unsuitable for an independent national movement: separate Canadian brotherhoods for each trade would undoubtedly have produced individual units too small and weak to survive confrontation with management. Secondly, Canadian railroaders in general at this time found nationalism

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<sup>8</sup>BLF Proceedings, 1913, "President's Report," p. 29.

irrelevant as far as the labour movement was concerned. A national union could do little for them that an international one could not and, moreover, as in the case of the Canadian Order of Railway Men, or the Canadian Federation of Labour, might be too conservative or too management-oriented to function adequately as a bargaining agent. As a result, the only serious threats to the hegemony of the international brotherhoods before World War One came from unions which were also international: the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees and (to a lesser extent) the American Railway Union.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, when all is said and done, the brotherhoods succeeded in Canada for one overriding reason: their Canadian members were convinced that no other type of organization, whether national, industrial, radical or ultra-conservative, could do a better job for them than the brotherhoods did. And, as long as they felt this way, the Canadian-American border was a flimsy and insubstantial barrier to the brotherhoods' continental ambitions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, founded in 1908, is often cited as an example of a successful all-Canadian railway union. The CBRE, however, was at first merely 'dual' to the international unions affiliated with the AFOFL, and did not reject internationalism as an ideal until after World War One. Babcock, Gompers in Canada, p. 117; Greening and Maclean, Never Easy, pp. 70-72.

<sup>10</sup>See Babcock, "A.F. of L. in Canada," p. 430.

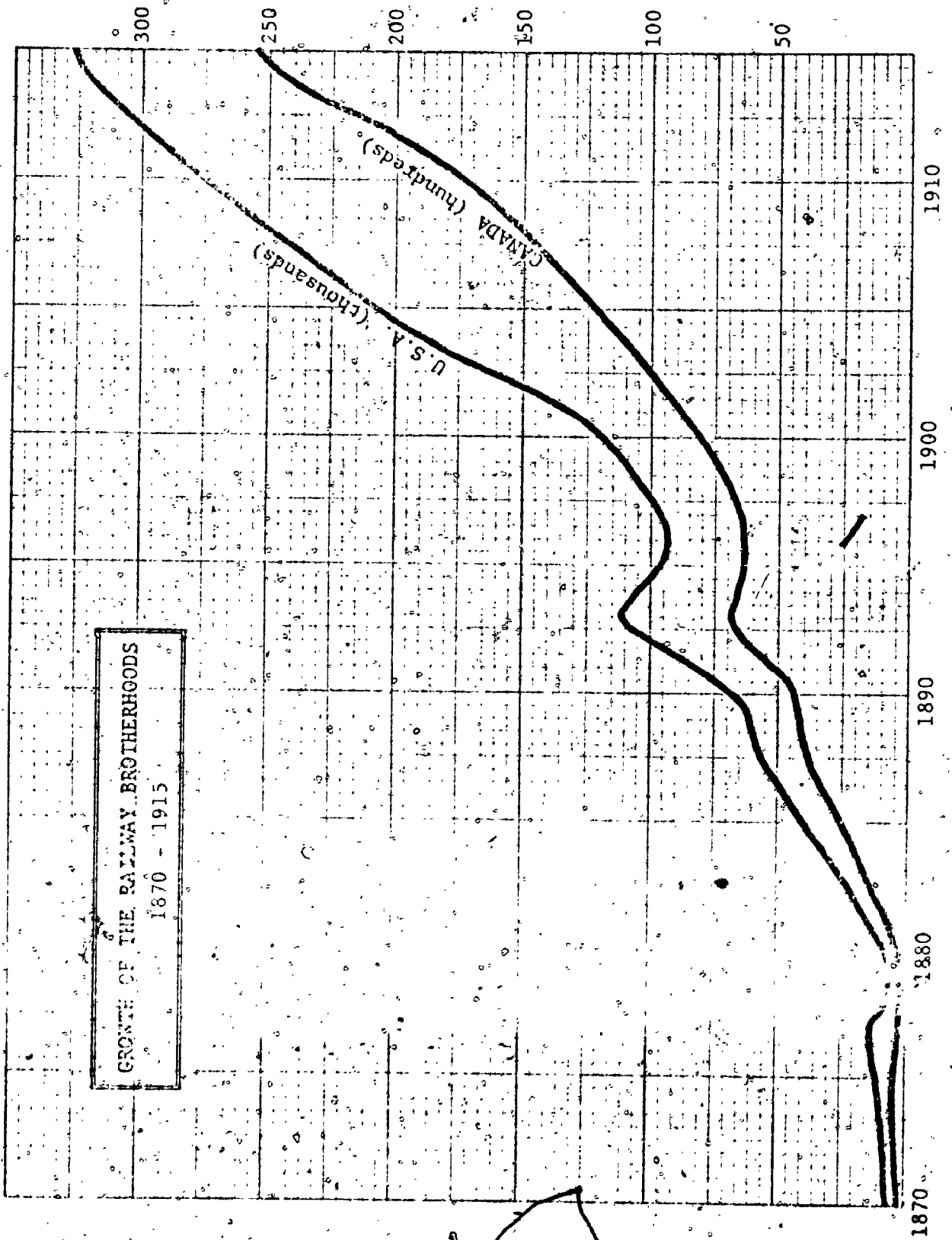
## APPENDIX

### GRAPHS ILLUSTRATING MEMBERSHIP GROWTH IN THE RAILWAY BROTHERHOODS BEFORE WORLD WAR ONE

#### Source of Data

The bulk of the membership figures for the BRT, BLF and BLE comes from convention proceedings of the three organizations and occasional references in their monthly journals. For the annual membership of the ORC between 1872 and 1913, see Robbins, *Railway Conductors*, p. 18. Membership figures for the BLE between 1897 and 1914 were provided by John F. Sytsma, General Secretary-Treasurer of the BLE. After 1911, complete membership figures for all four brotherhoods appear in the annual *Report on Labour Organizations in Canada*. These sources, of course, vary in reliability and do not provide complete data for the whole period, especially for the Canadian membership. Some Canadian membership figures, then, were estimated, usually by assuming that there was a relationship between the number of members and the number of lodges or divisions. In other words, if Canadian lodges or divisions made up seven percent of the total number of divisions, it was assumed that Canadian membership was seven percent of the total.

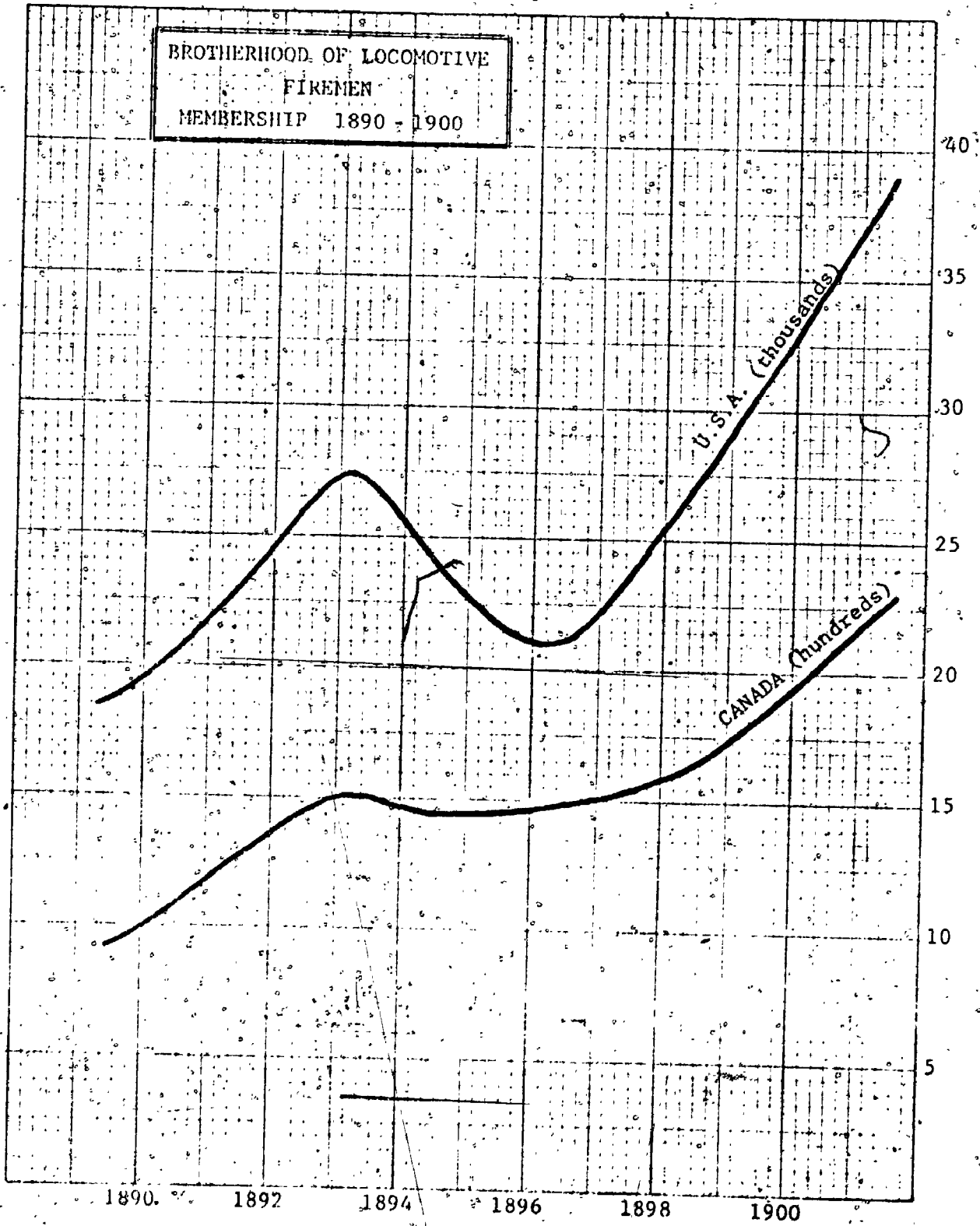
GRAPH 1



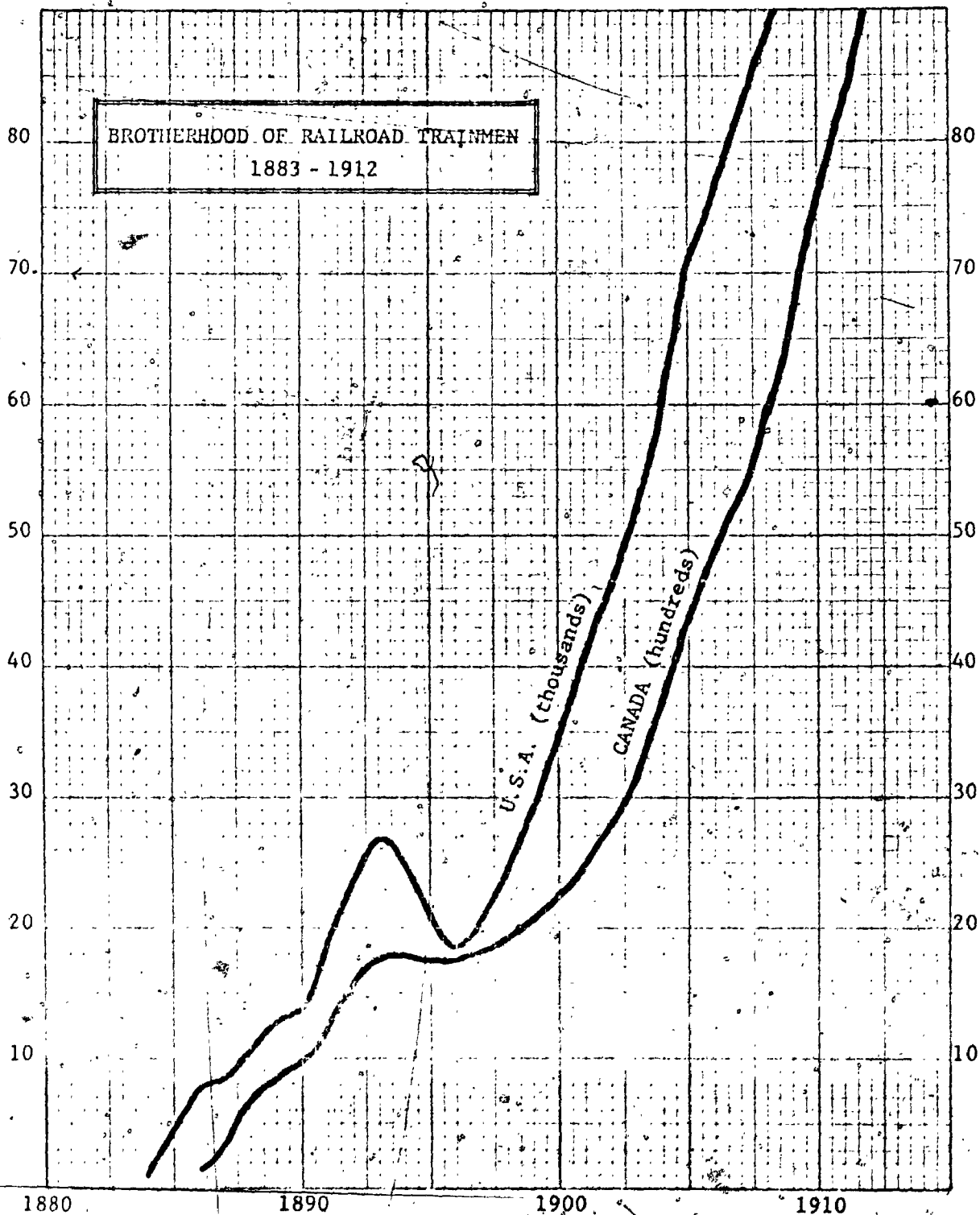
GROWTH OF THE RAILWAY BROTHERHOODS  
1870 - 1915



GRAPH 2

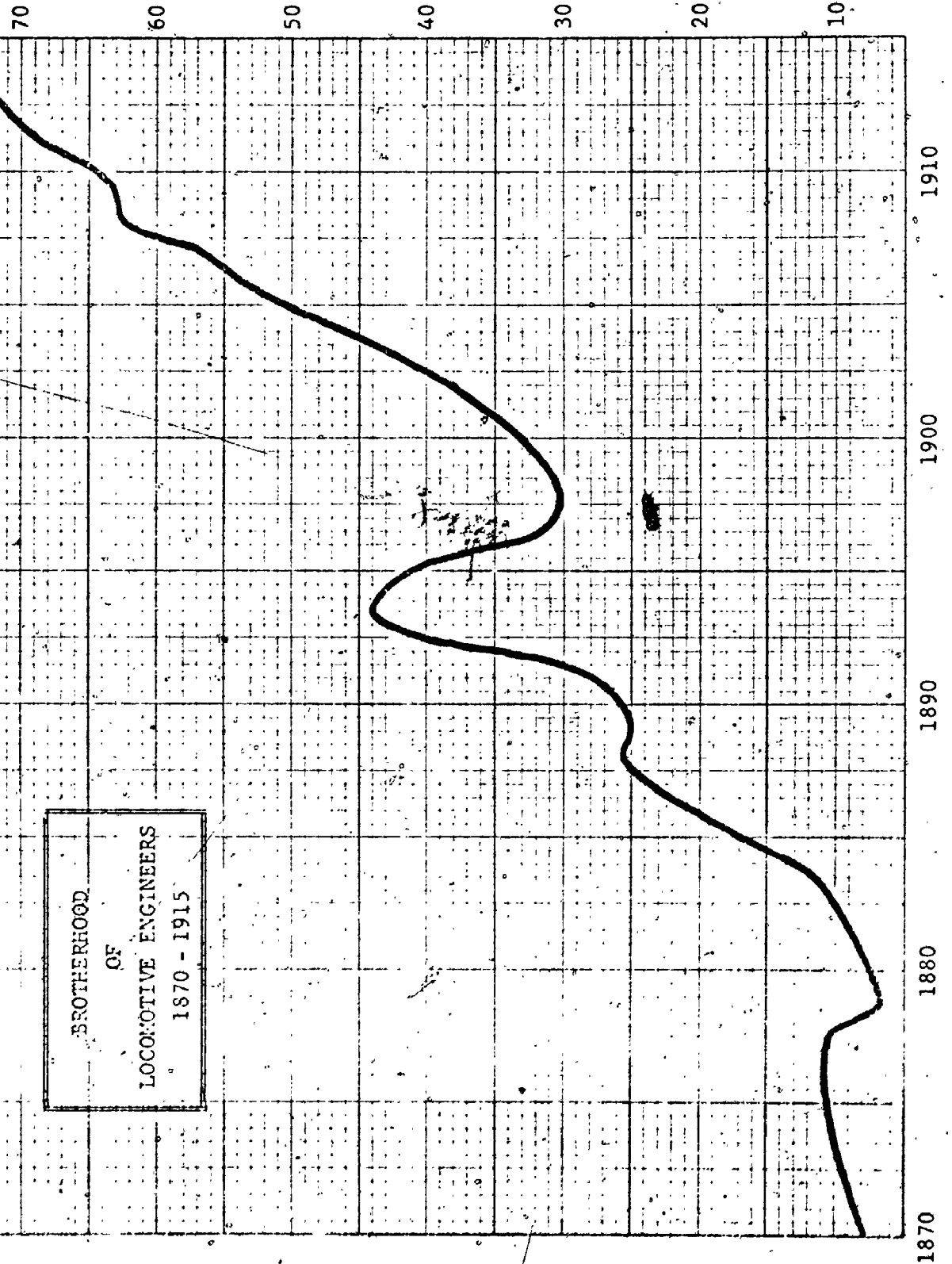


GRAPH 3



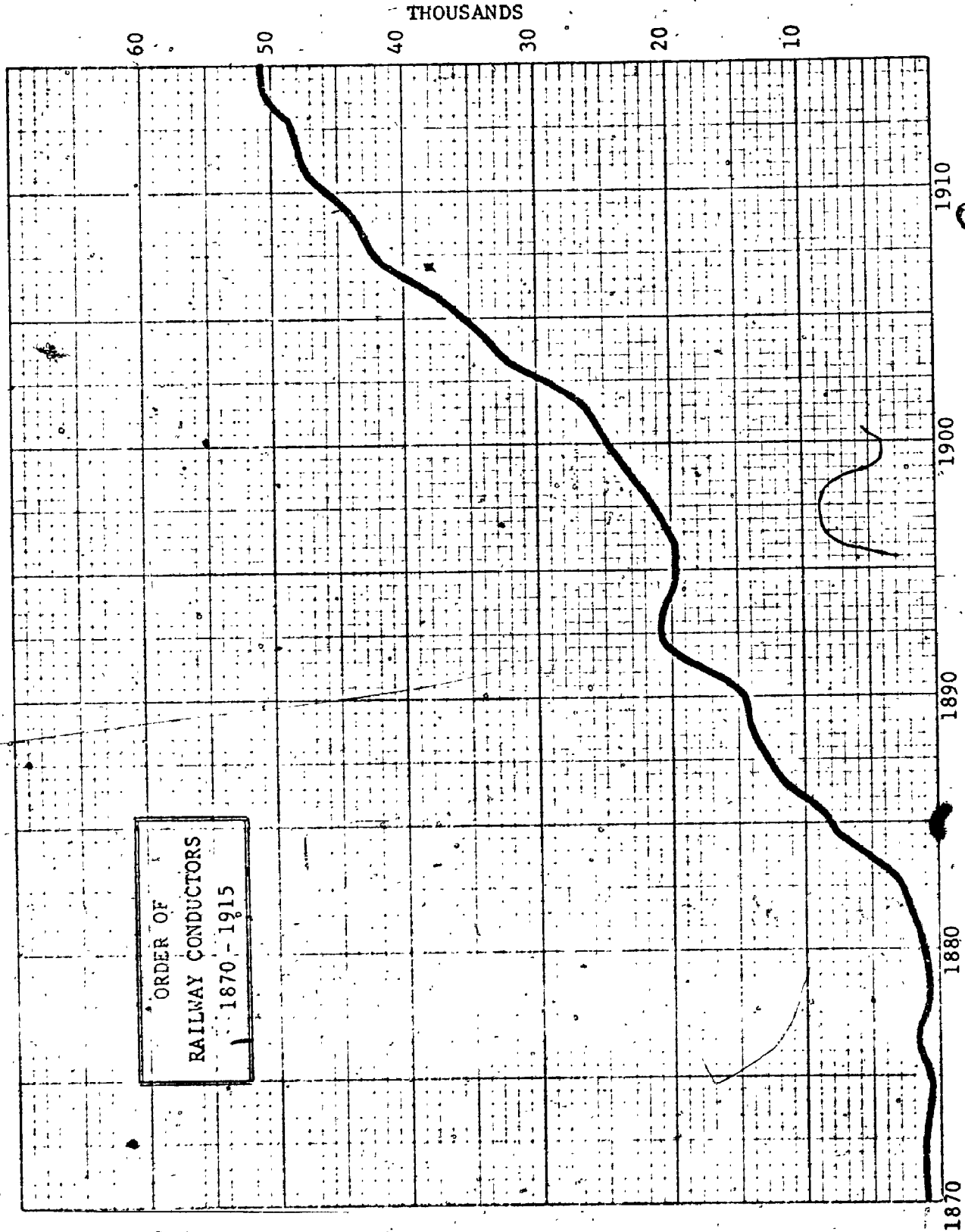
GRAPH 4

THOUSANDS



BROTHERHOOD  
OF  
LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS  
1870 - 1915

GRAPH 5



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Since almost none of the office files or correspondence of the railway brotherhoods have survived for the period covered by this study, the brotherhoods' convention proceedings and monthly journals provided this study with its factual core. This material was supplemented by a number of other sources, among them the Canadian labour press and the daily newspapers. Canadian daily newspapers are an excellent source for the history of the Canadian labour movement before World War One, and frequently supplied data available nowhere else. Several documentary collections at the Public Archives of Canada also proved useful, especially the papers of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mackenzie King, and the letterbooks of the Intercolonial Railway. Except for the Intercolonial Railway, little material relevant to the Canadian labour movement seems to have survived from the files of Canadian railways for this period, with the possible exception of the Canadian Pacific Railway, whose files — aside from the letterbooks of W.C. Van Horne — remain closed to researchers.

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#### 1. Journals

The titles of the brotherhoods' journals varied somewhat over the time period in question. For a complete listing of the variant forms, see Bernard G. Naas and Carmelita Sakr, American Labor Union Periodicals; A Guide

to their Location (Ithaca, 1956). The following titles are representative.

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Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. Locomotive Firemen's Magazine. 1876-1924.

Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. Railroad Trainmen's Journal. 1886-1914.

Order of Railway Conductors. Railway Conductor's Monthly. 1884-1914.

2. Convention Proceedings

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Proceedings. 1866-1914.

Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. Proceedings. 1874-1916.

Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. Proceedings. 1884-1925.

Order of Railway Conductors. Proceedings. 1868-1913.

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