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The Growth of B.C. Unionism: Nineteenth to Early Twentieth Century

There are records of coal miners striking in B.C. as early as 1849 as Fort Rupert opened mining. These strikes were very militant and workers expressed a "disposition to riot", a characteristic considered typical by the province's employers through the 19th and 20th century. Formal organization began at the Dunsmuir Mines in 1870-1 and 1877 with the creation of the Miners Protective Society, Perhaps a sense of community, as well as working conditions prompted organization. Dunsmuir soon put a stop to the Society, expelling miners and their families from their homes and bringing in the militia.

Crafts workers began to organize as early as 1862 when the first printers' organization came into being in Victoria. As the railroad extended to British Columbia Chinese workers were brought in by the CPR to work on construction. The issue of Oriental labour versus white labour came to the fore in 1883, becoming a pivotal issue in the labour movement for more than four decades. The strategy of workers' organizations was to demand the expulsion of Chinese workers and to exclude them from union protection, rather than fight for equal citizenship and union membership. This constituted a knee-jerk response to the employers' manipulation of Oriental workers, who were without rights in Canada, as strike-breakers and employed at substandard wages. They were at times used to break down.

In the 1880s-1890s the Knights of Labour, an international industrial union since 1862, came into being in British Columbia. It had grown from its initial origins as a secret society, opening to include women and in the U.S., Black workers. The Knights organized both "mixed" assemblies (representing all trades) and trade assemblies. Its members preferred political action and cooperatives to strike action, campaigning for the shorter workweek and education for workers. Shops as small as ten people could join to form a local, although in B.C. some locals exceeded one thousand members. There was a differential membership scale for women and men; the former paid fifteen cents to join, the latter one dollar. Workers also paid into a cooperative fund and local dues. To organize an assembly cost twenty dollars, female organizers received five of these dollars, men ten.

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In Canada the Knights were active in ~~the~~ <sup>national and local</sup> Trades and Labour Congress<sup>es</sup> which drew together crafts unions and KOL assemblies. By the 1890s the Knights were in decline as workers opted for unionism that provided the means for direct confrontation and negotiation with the employer, and organization by trade.

One legacy of the Knights, a rabid anti-orientalism was to remain with the new trade union organization. <sup>Letters to the TLC conventions propounded the need for oriental exclusion, defining the issue of the 1890s was the fight for the oriental people as a less-than-human scourge, responsible for all of the province's evil; nine hour day; this engaged the railway unions, International Typesetters Union and the labour councils. In urban centres, trades, organized such as the tailors and printers organized.</sup>

Even in this early period B.C. union tended to be regional, rather than national, in <sup>both</sup> ~~the~~ concerns and structures. Railway unions grew up around the fight for the 9 hour day. Both crafts and industrial workers, such as miners, dominated cities. Vancouver, Victoria and Nanaimo developed as the organized centres of the province. Labour councils (were established) and a provincial congress in 1890.

Between 1890-1895 the Vancouver TLC popularized the idea of workers' cooperatives, a notion that was to arise consistently in strike situations in this early period. In 1892 the unions had reached a threshold where all trades which could be unionized without major conflict, had been. By 1895 industrial organization bloomed. One statement to <sup>the</sup> Eastern labour movement <sup>said</sup> ~~saying~~, "Even Indians are taking to unionism". Fishermen began to build a union, the <sup>again</sup> problem was the extreme race division: Japanese fishermen were asked for support but not permitted to organize with the whites or as a separate local and Chinese workers in the canneries were unorganized. Initial labour solidarity in the Fraser River Fishermen's strike turned to race conflict and defeat.

The Western Federation of Miners developed as an International union in the 1890s as American and European socialist ideas streamed into B.C. <sup>brought by</sup> ~~with~~ new immigrants.

District Six incorporated not only traditional unionism but demands for an 8 hour day, a union paper, ~~libraries~~, lectures, <sup>research</sup> a bureau <sup>to compile</sup> statistics <sup>on</sup> wages, and unemployment figures. These elements <sup>reflected</sup> ~~combined~~ into a characteristically strong regional working class <sup>remained uninterrupted</sup> ~~was not interrupted~~ culture that ~~was not interrupted~~ until the mass media ~~was~~ won ideological <sup>control in the post WWII era.</sup>

Miners' organization was continually busted by the companies, leading ~~these influential workers~~ <sup>these influential workers</sup> ~~influence~~ to favour political soultiong for labour as well as industrial ones.

Labour politics developed early and rooted itself fast in the ~~west~~ <sup>west</sup> province. Between 1897 ~~1897~~ - 1902 the Knights of Labour dominated the Trades and Labour CONgres of Canada. The AFL based unions pulled out. By 1902 ~~they~~ they rejoined with renewed strength and expelled the KOL, who shortly after ~~it~~ <sup>had</sup> became a tradition not a reality. In 1903 the VTLC joined the national body. ~~Industries~~ <sup>had</sup> Industries slumped in the recession but had survived ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> crafts ~~and~~ <sup>with</sup> craft unionism rebuilt. ~~itself~~. By 1903 there was a boom in mining, construction and fishing and the number of union members in the provinve grew to 15,000. By 1906 there was full employment and nowhere in Canada was the "labour question" ~~so~~ <sup>so</sup> ~~dominant~~ <sup>dominant</sup> prominent, and class sentiment ~~so~~ <sup>so</sup> ~~bitter~~ <sup>bitter</sup>, "...Strikes rose between 1902-1906 and employees became increasingly organized, creating an employers' association ~~led~~ <sup>led</sup> headed by B.C. Tel owners. ~~It~~ <sup>It</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~headed~~ <sup>headed</sup> by B.C. Tel owners. ~~It~~ <sup>It</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~headed~~ <sup>headed</sup> by B.C. Tel owners.

A strange political combination developed in the B.C. union movement. An intense and ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> militant left-wing radicalism linked itself with a violent anti-Orientaliam. These racist beliefs were reinforced by a series of strikes, where Oriental workesr were ~~made~~ <sup>made</sup> pitted against whites by ruthless employers and immigration ~~laws~~ <sup>laws</sup>. ~~As~~ <sup>As</sup> the labour movement matured a rift began to emerge hetwen various left-wing forves and craft unionism. Some groups within the social~~ist~~ <sup>ist</sup> current began to reject racism and opt for organization fo all workers regardless of race. The IWW rook this stance and the later One Big Union movement actively denounce~~d~~ <sup>d</sup> racism.

During this period the United Mineworkers of America began to move into Westsern Canada, competing with the Western Federation of Miners. The International Workers of the World appeared providing at first, a unified front of industrial unionism, but then, through internal division, a far more anarchistic, direct action ~~orientation~~ <sup>orientation</sup>, one that appealed to the unemployed, more transient sectors of the industrial workforce and to unskilled ~~work~~ <sup>their</sup> workess. In ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> first years in B.C. the Wobblies made little inroads, because the major industries were already organized and ~~organized~~ <sup>organized</sup>. ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> first industry which required organization, was a hard nut to crack. ~~They~~ <sup>They</sup> did successfully unionize Native woodworkers. Woodworkers were individualistic, hired on contract and extremely isolated. In 1911-1913 the IWW ~~organized~~ <sup>organized</sup> the ~~industry~~ <sup>industry</sup>, with the help of the socialist

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leaning VTLC. They were able to win major breakthroughs in conditions and wages for loggers. The IWW ~~was~~ won all workers except for miners to its banner in Nelson. The IWW both allied with mainstream unions and competed against them with raids. Their ideas no doubt influenced both men and women who were organizing at this time.

In 1911 the B.C. government brought in the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. This legislation allowed for a conciliation board to be set up during which there would be a cooling off period, with workers remaining on the job. This concession was perceived as a result of the successful and militant struggles for closed shops that ~~had~~ had been waged and operated as defacto union recognition by the government. However, unions opposed the notion of a cooling off period fearing the loss of initiative in a strike situation,

<sup>Western</sup> The ~~Canadian~~ Federation of Miners moved into the United Mineworkers of America becoming District 28 on the Island. <sup>merged?</sup> During 1912-1914 they engaged Canadian Collieries in a massive struggle. The ~~trigger~~ trigger to the strike was safety issues, ~~but~~ but the strike involved ~~deeper~~ deeper issues of control of the workplace. The bosses signed up Chinese strikebreakers who were ~~threatened~~ threatened with deportation. The long term implications of the union movement's lack of endorsement of union ~~rights~~ and citizenship rights for Oriental workers had come home to roost. The strike erupted in major confrontations against company offices and strikebreakers <sup>strikers</sup> Bowser's Seventy-Two were brought in and 256 ~~and~~ and supporters arrested. The Miners' Liberation League was established and <sup>the</sup> fight to free imprisoned miners united the labour movement and women's groups.

→ could be spelled out more clearly

→ where on the Island? would be interesting to know, perhaps

This was a time of growing unity and strength for the B.C. labour movement. The B.C. Federation of Labour united all but the I.W.W. and rail brotherhoods. Crafts unions grew with a spurt in construction. The boom of the early '10s collapsed as Canada moved into World War I. International markets evaporated leaving in their wake high unemployment. In 1915 there were riots on breadlines in Vancouver. As union membership fell with lay-offs, workers resorted to legislation and political alternatives to meet their needs. Labour candidates endorsed women's suffrage, an end to assistance immigration, the establishment of a workers' compensation board, and eight hour day and public relief works.

Western labour was well-organized and radical; it was able to win a far-reaching influence within the Trades and Labour Congress. One of B.C.'s central concerns was that the government would bring in conscription. Unions feared that the conscription of labour would logically follow in the wake of the conscription of soldiers. Union rights would be bypassed by wartime labour legislation. This fear of weakened bargaining rights combined with the belief that this was a war for imperialist spoils not for human liberty.

Before the outbreak of the war the Western unions were able to win an anti-conscription position within the TLCC. The BCFL, VTLC, ~~Victoria~~ <sup>Victoria</sup> TLC and the NWTLC all opposed conscription/ National policy favouring women's suffrage and the workers' compensation also passed. By the beginning of the war the TLCC had retreated from its anti-war stance. The B.C. labour movement experienced an 83% rise in membership, as war industries developed.

Discussion of the direct action general strike tactic had gone on for some time in the province's labour movement. If the government imposed conscription unions argued that they should walk off the job. However, the actual level of support amongst the rank and file for such action was inadequate to back the tactic.

Parallel to this discussion of strike action was the escalation of independent labour politics. Labour candidates, running on an anti-war programme polled minimal votes in the 1917(?) election. This was seen as partly the fault of women, limited suffrage had been granted to the wives of soldiers. These

not too clear what the economic background is. Was there a boom later in WWI?

women supported ~~the~~ conscription because<sup>e</sup> they wanted to bolster the war effort overseas to protect their husbands. The fact is that many people voted for the war effort, not only this new group ~~of~~ of women voters. In 1918 Mary Ellen Smith was returned as an independent labour candidate and the first woman in a provincial legislature. Within the political arena, labour increasingly divided between those who favoured the Socialist Party of ~~Canada~~ Canada with its growing support for the Bolshevik Revolution, and those who favoured a more traditional ~~labour~~ parliamentary labour party. Whatever camp people were in, the Russian Revolution served as an inspiration to working people as did the growing wave of protest in Western Europe. The issue of decent wages tied to wartime inflation and the removal of anti-~~union~~ left legislation became increasingly important issues in the province. While union rights, <sup>(such as the right to organize</sup> had been given ~~the government strikes and lock-outs~~ (the federal government banned strikes and lock-outs, a certain leway to facilitate wartime production, <sup>and</sup> radical organizations, ~~were banned~~ with extensive prison sentences attached to violations.

The first Vancouver General strike occurred in 1918. Ginger Goodwin, a former vice-president of the labour congress had met his death at the hands of the special police, who combed the hills outside of Comox looking for draft resisters. Goodwin had chosen to refuse service. The police apparently shot him ~~without~~ without warning. Both his conscription (Goodwin had t.o.) and his death led to outrage on the part of B.C. workers. On Fri. August 2, 1918 tradesmen and industrial workers walked off the job for one day (24 hours). While many working people supported the strike, returned soldiers rioted ~~and~~, attacking the <sup>VTL</sup> labour temple. Soldiers ~~battered~~ battered union leaders. At one point <sup>soldiers they</sup> forced Victor M. Degly, the pres., out onto a window ledge. He narrowly escaped death, crawling back in. When the soldiers rallied to push him out the window again, the VTL's telephone operator blocked their way, protecting him with her own body. The soldiers, perhaps humiliated by this woman's courage, retreated.

The second general strike took place a year later, in sympathy with the Winnipeg strike. Strikers in Winnipeg ~~were~~ were defending postal workers union right, the right to collective bargaining and a living wage. When the government threatened to fire ~~postal~~ postal workers and use the militia against Winnipeg, Vancouver threatened to strike. ~~The~~ ~~xxxxxx~~

to strike. Vancouver struck not only against the use of the militia and for reinstatement of the workers but for a comprehensive political programme.

Demands included the 6 hour day and the nationalization of major food reserves to prevent hoarding. Some 10,000 workers <sup>went</sup> on ~~strike~~.

The union decided not to exclude women workers in the first strike.

In the second strike, the strike lasted a month; from the beginning to the end of June. Most workers who returned to their <sup>jobs</sup> ~~to~~ did not experience victimization; the exception was the only women's union allowed to join the <sup>strike</sup> ~~strike~~. The telephone workers local.

SEE General strike stuff

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Minimum Wages for women workers. It was they who had established laws which penalized men <sup>who</sup> raped or seduced young women with two years imprisonment, while cattle rustlers faced fourteen years in jail. It was they who treated their women employees with less respect ~~than~~ than that given prostitutes and forced ~~them~~ them into "starvation, suicide or shame" ~~because~~ because of indecently low wages.

The Winnipeg strikers began to administer necessary services to insure the well-being of working class communities. A food committee was established to "feed union men and women". Milk delivery and access to food ~~was~~ disappeared as workers in those sectors remained off the job. The strikers first convinced the city to ~~set~~ set up food and milk depots. They then decided that it was more efficient if the Teamster drivers actually continued with ~~deliveries~~ deliveries as they had before the strike, but under workers' control. ~~This way they~~ This way they <sup>were</sup> able to insure that the limited supplies of bread and milk reached young children, nursing mothers, the sick and the elderly. These actions cut across the Committee of 1000's hysterical reports of starving children and won the <sup>dying older people,</sup> unionists support from housewives. <sup>Similarly, when hydro lines were downed by a storm, electrical workers restored power, reminding the public that it was "the jobs of the women, men on strike to carry out vital services to the community"</sup> Women strikers experienced harrassment from their bosses on the picket line. <sup>community</sup>

~~According to the~~ According to the bulletins, Bertha Newman was a "fragile young girl". Mt. H.L. MacKinnon the husky owner of MacKinnon Co. Ltd. "so marred the little girl that she had one arm in a sling for a week", when she picketed outside the Coca Cola Building where MacKinnon worked. The "little girl" was courageous enough to take MacKinnon to court and win her case. The description entails genuine sympathy for this woman, but it also calls on feminine fragility ~~and~~ vulnerability to win public empathy.

Female strikers were wise in their use of tactics. The Winnipeg telephone operators had been on strike the year before. At that time the company had hired the "daughters of the wealthy" to work as strikebreakers. When the operators walked out in 1919 they pulled all the fuses out of the <sup>equipment and</sup> switchboards, including the PVX, insuring that Winnipeg was without telephones for the duration of the conflict.

Unorganized workers, ~~both~~ both women and men, joined the strike out of conviction. The union movement ~~used~~ used this opportunity to appeal to workers to join a union. This appeal was directed at women in the public sector. Government charwomen at the Tuxedo Hospital earned all of \$1.16 per day. After carfare was deducted the women had all of \$1.06 for food, clothing and rent. The bulletin believed ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> it was "high time" that they formed a union. The article exclaims: "One dollar and sixteen cents a day for scrubbing floors and then the bosses profess not to know the cause of labour unrest." Only a living wage could allow workers access to education, housing, general culture and "~~healthful~~" "healthful amusement".

~~Housewives~~ Housewives were also active in their ~~support~~ support for the strike. The Ways and Means Committee of the Women's Labour League set up ~~up~~ took over the dining room of the Strathcona Hotel with the full support of management. They set up an eatery where "girl" strikers could eat. ~~Recognizing~~ Recognizing that women's low wages ~~and~~ lack of strike funds meant that they were impoverished the women ~~could~~ could eat free of charge, while male strikers were welcomed but asked for a <sup>full</sup> donation or payment. The kitchen continued successfully until ~~Mr.~~ Mr. W.J. Christie, a local financier, forced the women out by threatening to foreclose on the hotel's mortgage. The women moved to a new location. *Women supporters & strikers helped to establish relief for striking workers.*

High hopes for an early settlement faded and the strikers found themselves with massive public support, but little resources and intense repression from the ~~militia~~ militia.

~~Government forces~~ Leaders of the strike were arrested and held in prison. A Mrs. Armstrong was held for three days, charged with "inciting to disorder" and committed for trial. It is clear that the government believed that women's role was important enough to warrant repression.

After six weeks, despite sympathy strikes in other cities, the strikers were forced to back down and return to work. While many union were able to protect

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Several weeks into the Vancouver strike an important conference took place in Calgary. While the Western Conference was initially only to prepare for a radical stance at the TLC, it in fact, resulted in a breakaway: the creation of the One Big Union. <sup>rupture</sup> The ~~break~~ centred on the debate between industrial and craft unions, with the ~~West~~ West representing the radical industrial spirit and the Centre, the ~~craft~~ conservative craft traditions. The OBU was aggressive in its organizing stance, inclusive in who it chose to organize; it developed a decentralized structure, with recall and referendum procedures <sup>voting</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>in regards to</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>high elections</sup> leaders or major decisions.

The Lumberworkers Industrial Union was the most successful affiliate. Through their organization loggers made significant improvements in camp conditions. Industrial <sup>as did the Van. TLC, Prince Rupert TLC and District 6 of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Wkrs.</sup> unions, teamsters and some trades joined, ~~Employers blacklisted OBU members;~~ they refused to negotiate with the union. Members found themselves in the difficult position of belonging to both International unions and the OBU. The Internationals were able to negotiate with the employers because <sup>contractual</sup> they ~~was familiar~~ <sup>holdings</sup> had previously ~~established~~ <sup>found that in</sup> established relationships with them. ~~Many Unionists had~~ <sup>found that in</sup> dual memberships, ~~in order~~

\* By 1920 the OBU had 41,000 members in ~~Canada~~ Canada; of these 29 locals were in British Columbia ~~and~~ with 19,064 members.

to work ~~they found that~~ they had to leave the OBU and honour their international union card.

Through early 1920 the OBU sustained its momentum. The economy was strong and unionists were caught between struggles to establish new gains and the growing factionalism within the labour movement. Disillusion had set in after the defeat of the Winnipeg general strike. The traditional craft unions and internationals regrouped in 1919, forming a new Vancouver labour council in August.

It encompassed 9 unions with a membership of 5,000 by the end of 1920. It was led by trade unionists who had long-respected records: Helena Gutteridge, Bert Showler and McVity. <sup>It focused on</sup> ~~It focused on~~ political lobbying, the development of the Federated Labour Party, and work with returned men to cut across the anti-union sentiment which had so dominated this group. It revived the racist traditions ~~with~~ of anti-Orientalism

~~had~~ been which had temporarily buried by the industrial unions. Both labour groups were in conflict, yet ~~ne~~ both were more radical than their counterparts in Central Canada.

In late 1920 the Lumberworkers International Union left the OBU over structural and monetary differences. In the eastern coal fields, the OBU competed with the UMWA and lost the battle because of employers recognition of the International. The economy lost its momentum by the end of the year. Craft workers were first hit. There were 6,000 unemployed in Vancouver alone. Cambie Street Parade Ground became a relief camp. The OBU was successful in organizing the unemployed. Both working class political parties, the Socialist Party and the Federated Labour Party also worked with this group.

The new VTLC launched a massive and popular anti-Oriental campaign throughout B.C. They believed that it was Oriental immigration which had created a lack of jobs for native Canadians. They helped to create the Asiatic Exclusion League which toured B.C. debating the Socialist Party. The latter argued that workers all over the world and country were hard hit by inflation, the problem was not race or immigration but (job creation) and profits. The craft unions and internationals refused membership to ~~the~~ unemployed workers in their trades. Again they ran into conflict with the industrial left-wing movement who argued that unions had a responsibility to look after their unemployed ~~in~~ members as well as those paying dues and at work. Despite the appeal of these politics to large sectors of the province's working people, the OBU was unable to sustain its base, succumbing ~~to~~ to internal division and pressure from employers.

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~~Housewives~~ Housewives were also active in their ~~support~~ support for the strike. The Ways and Means Committee of the Women's Labour League set up took over the dining room of the Strathcona Hotel with the full support of management. They set up an eatery where "girl" strikers could eat. ~~Recognizing~~ Recognizing that women's low wages ~~lack~~ lack of strike funds meant that they were impoverished the women ~~could~~ could eat free of charge, while male strikers were welcomed but asked for a <sup>full</sup> donation or payment. The kitchen continued successfully until ~~Mr.~~ Mr. W.J. Christie, a local financier, forced the women out by threatening to foreclose on the hotel's mortgage. The women moved to a new location. *Women supporters & strikers helped to establish relief for striking workers.*

High hopes for an early settlement faded and the strikers found themselves with massive public support, but little resources and intense repression from the ~~militia~~ militia. ~~Government forces~~ Leaders of the strike were arrested and held in prison. A Mrs. Armstrong was held for three days, charged with "inciting to disorder" and committed for trial. It is clear that the government believed that women's role was important enough to warrant repression.

After six weeks, despite sympathy strikes in other cities, the strikers were forced to back down and return to work. While many unions were able to protect

their members against reprisals, retail store owners refused to reinstate striking "girl" clerks. Unions gathered funds to help the women fight, for, "This union came out to support the other strikers. Now they are locked out." Unfortunately, (experiencing extreme victimization, this pattern, of weaker, younger unions, with female members was to repeat itself in the Vancouver sympathy strike.

There is far less evidence of women's involvement in the Vancouver strike, which ran through June of 1919. There are ~~several~~ several reasons for this. Women were fewer in number and more isolated in Vancouver than in Winnipeg. Their unions had faced great instability; women would organize, (recognition, union hiring and conditions, and then lose their new conditions and their union because of employer and harrassment, high turnover, ~~in male industries~~ in male industries ~~Unions~~ dominated the labour scene in Vancouver. The strike leadership did not want to challenge government authority by shutting down essential services, choosing rather to cripple the economy. They also exempted newer, female-dominated unions from the strike, in part because they provided services and because they were afraid that they women were "too new to unionism". This retail clerks, laundry workers, hospital workers, and hotel and restaurant employees were to remain at work. Telephone operators were also to remain at work until the strike needed them as an additional pressure on the government. When scabbing was organized against the striking street car workers and civic workers were threatened with firing by city council, the ~~strike~~ strike committee called the newly reorganized telephone operators' local into the fray.

These women became ~~the~~ the labour heroines of the Vancouver strike. The <sup>original</sup> demands of the Vancouver workers were far reaching. They fought not only in defense of the strike in Winnipeg, but for the nationalization of major utilities, a six hour work day to cut across post-war unemployment and for the right to collective bargaining, closed shops and living wages. Unfortunately, in the face of government opposition the strike soon became a struggle to defend ~~the~~ striking workers against victimization.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ As June came to a close most workers were able to return to work without harrassment. However, the telephone company threatened to demote striking supervisors and senior operators. All but five workers at the phone exchange had walked off the job, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ locking ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ the doors and throwing thier keys ~~in~~ behind them. The returned workers would face not only loss of ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ status and wages but would also be forced to work with strikebreakers the company <sup>had</sup> hired. The operators released the rest of the general strikers from their defense, stating that they "could fight the discrimination matter ~~by~~ themselves". ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Company linesmen and technicians stayed out with the operators for an additional ~~two~~ two weeks. The workers finally ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ returned without winning protection for the ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ women. Company ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ harrassment and the inability of the weakened union to defend the women led to the loss of the operators' local after several years. The women had won the respect of the labour movement: "The action of the telephone girls in responding to the call for a general strike has placed them in a class by themselves amongst workers in this province". ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ would have ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ been wiser on the part of the "hello girls" and certainly on the part of the stronger industrial unions to stay out until the women could return to work without penalty.

When reviewing these early strikes it is important to understand that condtions then and now are not the same ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Unions had few economic resources, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ the tradition of women's organization was not as firmly implanted as to-day and both Winnipeg and Vancouver misjudged the length of time that would be needed to win these strikes. However, the importance of public support, union administration of essential services, ~~and~~ the protection of workers threatened with Job loss, ~~and~~ the responsibility of the entrie trade union movement to defend all those who participate in or supprt the strike, ~~and~~ <sup>the involvement of those who work within the home, and</sup> the need for a realistic and developed strategy ~~and~~ may well be key compnents to a successful general strike in 1983.

Several weeks into the Vancouver strike an important conference took place in Calgary. While the Western Conference was initially only to prepare for a radical stance at the TLC, it in fact, resulted in a breakaway: the creation of the One Big Union. <sup>rupture</sup> The ~~break~~ centred on the debate between industrial and craft unions, with the ~~West~~ West representing the radical industrial spirit and the ~~Centre~~, the ~~craft~~ conservative craft traditions. The OBU was aggressive in its organizing stance, inclusive in who it chose to organize; it developed a decentralized structure, with recall and referendum procedures <sup>voting</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>in regards to</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>high elections</sup> leaders or major decisions.

The Lumberworkers Industrial Union was the most successful affiliate. Through their organization loggers made significant improvements in camp conditions. Industrial <sup>as did the Van. TLC, Prince Rupert TLC and District 6 of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Wkrs.</sup> unions, teamsters and some trades joined. Employers ~~blacklisted~~ OBU members; they refused to negotiate with the union. Members found themselves in the difficult position of belonging to both International unions and the OBU. The Internationals were able to negotiate with the employers because they ~~are familiar~~ <sup>contractual</sup> had previously established relationships with them. ~~Many~~ <sup>holdings</sup> ~~Unionists~~ <sup>found that in</sup> had dual memberships, ~~in order~~

\* By 1920 the OBU had 41,000 members in ~~Canada~~ Canada; of these 29 locals were in British Columbia ~~and~~ with 19,064 members.

to work ~~they found that~~ they had to leave the OBU and honour their international union card.

Through early 1920 the OBU sustained its momentum. The economy was strong and unionists were caught between struggles to establish new gains and the growing factionalism within the labour movement. Disillusion had set in after the defeat of the Winnipeg general strike. The traditional craft unions and internationals regrouped in 1919, forming a new Vancouver labour council in August. It encompassed 9 unions with a membership of 5,000 by the end of 1920. It was led by trade unionists who had long-respected records: Helena Gutteridge, Bert Showler and McVity. <sup>It focused on</sup> ~~It focused on~~ political lobbying, the development of the Federated Labour Party, and work with returned men to cut across the anti-union sentiment which had so dominated this group. It revived the racist traditions ~~which~~ of anti-Orientalism which

~~had~~ been which had temporarily buried by the industrial unions. Both labour groups were in conflict, yet ~~ne~~ both were more radical than their counterparts in Central Canada.

In late 1920 the ~~L~~umberworkers International Union left the OBU over structural and monetary differences. In the eastern coal fields, the OBU competed with the UMWA and lost the battle because of employers recognition of the International. The economy lost its momentum by the end of the year. Craft workers were first hit. There were 6,000 unemployed in Vancouver alone. Cambie Street Parade Ground became a relief camp. The OBU was successful in organizing the unemployed. Both working class political parties, the Socialist Party and the Federated Labour Party also worked with this group.

The new VTLC launched a massive and popular anti-Oriental campaign throughout B.C. They believed that it was Oriental immigration which had created a lack of jobs for native Canadians. They helped to create the Asiatic Exclusion League which toured B.C. debating the Socialist Party. The latter argued that workers all over the world and country were hard hit by inflation, the problem was not race or immigration but (job creation, and profits). The craft unions and internationals refused membership to ~~the~~ unemployed workers in their trades. Again they ran into conflict with the industrial left-wing movement who argued that unions had a responsibility to look after their unemployed ~~an~~ members as well as those paying dues and at work. Despite the appeal of these politics to large sectors of the province's working people, the OBU was unable to sustain its base, succumbing ~~to~~ to international division and pressure from employers.