

**THAT '70S STRIKE SUPPORT: LABOUR, FEMINISM, AND THE LEFT IN THREE
ONTARIO STRIKES, 1972-1979**

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

That '70s Strike Support: Labour, Feminism, and the Left in Three Ontario Strikes, 1972-1979

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This thesis examines three Ontario strikes during the 1970s: the Dare Foods, Ltd. strike in Kitchener, Ontario, 1972-1973; the Puretex Knitting Company strike in Toronto, 1978-1979; and the Inco strike in Sudbury, 1978-1979. These strikes highlight gender issues in the Canadian food production, textile, and mining industries in the 1970s, industries that were all markedly different in size and purpose, yet equally oppressive towards working women for different reasons, largely based on the regional character of each city the strikes took place in. In Kitchener, the women's movement worked closely with the Dare union local and the left to mobilize against the company and grappled with the difficulties of framing women's inequality within the labour movement. At Puretex, immigrant women workers were subject to electronic surveillance as a form of worker control, and a left-wing nationalist union needed to look outside of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) for allies in strike action. At Inco, an autonomous women's group formed separate from the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) but struggled to overcome a negative perception of women's labour activism in Sudbury. Ultimately, these strikes garnered a wide variety of support from working women and feminist groups, who often built or had pre-existing relationships with Canadian and American trade unions as well as the left-wing milieu of the 1970s. This thesis uses these strikes as case studies to argue that despite the complicated and at times uneven relationship between feminism, labour, and the left in the 1970s, feminist and left-wing strike support was crucial in sustaining rank-and-file

militancy throughout the decade and stimulating activist careers for women in the feminist movement, in unions, and on the left.

Keywords: Canada, Ontario, labour, feminism, left-wing, history, working-class, 1970s, strike, support, alliance, militancy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Acronyms	vii
Introduction: Class, Labour, and Gender in the 1970s	1
Chapter 1: Strike Support in Historical Context	32
Chapter 2: The Dare Foods Strike, 1972-73	53
Chapter 3: The Puretex Knitting Company Strike, 1978-79	88
Chapter 4: The Inco Strike, 1978-79	124
Conclusion	156
Bibliography	166

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BC&T – Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers’ International Union
CAIMAW – Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical, and Allied Workers
CCF – Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
CCLH – Canadian Committee on Labour History
CCU – Canadian Congress of Unions
CCPA – Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
CDP – Canadian Driver Pool
CIO – Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLC – Canadian Labour Congress
CPC – Communist Party of Canada
CTC – Canadian Textile Council
CTCU – Canadian Textile and Chemical Workers’ Union
CUPE – Canadian Union of Public Employees
CUPW – Canadian Union of Postal Workers
EICO – Electronic Instruments Company, Inc.
FEPC – Fair Employment Practices Committee
ILFW – International Leather and Fur Workers
ILGWU – International Ladies’ Garments Workers’ Union
Inco – International Nickel Company
IWDC – International Women’s Day Committee
LA27 – Ladies’ Auxiliary 27
LRB – Labour Relations Board
MCCW – Minneapolis Central Council of Workers
MCS – Manpower Consultative Services
NDP – New Democratic Party
NFB – National Film Board

OCSW – Ontario Committee on the Status of Women
OFL – Ontario Federation of Labour
OHRC – Ontario Human Rights Commission
OLRB – Ontario Labour Relations Board
OWW – Organized Working Women
RCSW – Royal Commission on the Status of Women
SEIU – Service Employees International Union
SER – standard employment relationship
SORWUC – Service, Office, and Retail Workers’ Union of Canada
SWW – Saskatchewan Working Women
TWUA – Textile Workers’ Union of America
UAW – United Auto Workers
UBW – United Brewery Workers
UCWA – United Construction Workers of America
UEW- United Electrical Workers
USWA - United Steelworkers of America
WHW – Women Helping Women
WLL – Women’s Labour League
WSS – Wives Supporting the Strike Committee

INTRODUCTION: Class, Labour, and Gender in the 1970s

Introduction

Labour unions are a fundamental means through which the working-classes mobilize, protect, and provide for themselves, their families, and the communities they live in. Union leaders and union members are therefore on the front lines when it comes to disputes between labour and management and are thus the first to respond to attacks on workers and injustices in the workplace. Strikes, pickets, boycotts, demonstrations, marches, acts of sabotage, and lawsuits, are just some examples of what people in unions can do in order to engage employers and the state in their fight for rights, equity, better pay, and benefits. Since the inception of the first trade unions several centuries ago, it has been their goal to safeguard workers from exploitation, precarity, and poverty.

While unions are the fundamental unit of labour organizing, successful organizing is not achieved single-handedly. Likewise, industrial disputes are not simply between unions and employers. Instead, this battle extends to the working class more broadly, capital, the state, and a multitude of actors mobilized by or alongside of unions. These actors, including feminists, wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, independent leftists, students, concerned citizens, and many others, are the focus of this thesis. Historians have never denied the invaluable support that such groups have provided the labour movement, but studies that focus on the organizing drive, mobilizations, and perspectives of such groups are few and far between.

This thesis examines three Ontario strikes during the 1970s: the Dare Foods, Ltd. strike in Kitchener, Ontario, 1972-1973; the Puretex Knitting Company strike in Toronto, 1978-1979; and the Inco strike in Sudbury, 1978-1979. These strikes highlight gender issues in the Canadian food production, textile, and mining industries in the 1970s, industries that were all markedly

different in size and purpose, yet equally oppressive towards working women for different reasons, largely based on the regional character of each city the strikes took place in. In Kitchener, the women's movement worked closely with the Dare union local and the left to mobilize against the company, and grappled with the difficulties of framing women's inequality within the labour movement. At Puretex, immigrant women workers were subject to electronic surveillance as a form of worker control, and a left-wing nationalist union needed to look outside of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) for allies in strike action. At Inco, an autonomous women's group formed separate from the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) but struggled to overcome a negative perception of women's labour activism in Sudbury. Ultimately, these strikes garnered a wide variety of support from working women and feminist groups, who often built or had pre-existing relationships with Canadian and American trade unions as well as the left-wing milieu of the 1970s. This thesis uses these strikes as case studies to argue that despite the complicated and at times uneven relationship between feminism, labour, and the left in the 1970s, feminist and left-wing strike support was crucial in sustaining rank-and-file militancy throughout the decade and stimulating activist careers for women in the feminist movement, in unions, and on the left.

Strike support has never occurred in isolation. The form that strike support has taken has depended not only on the individuals or organizations who provided it, but the period in which it took place. The political, economic, and social developments of the 1970s therefore need to be understood and appreciated in order to fully understand the kinds of strike support that manifested in Ontario during the decade. The 1970s saw the breakdown of the post-war Fordist accord, which had shaped the landscape of labour in Canada after the Second World War for the better (at least, in the minds of many unionized workers,) as well as the erosion of the Keynesian

welfare state, with wage-freezing and a scaling-back of welfare and benefits becoming a serious threat to the stability of unionized workers. The women's movement, reinvigorated by a newer generation of feminists joining the ranks of liberal and socialist feminists in the 1960s, continued to grow and mobilize around a range of women's issues. Similarly, the New Left and the growing student and youth movements saw a similar upward trajectory, with young people and university students joining their radical leftist (often Marxist) professors in demonstrations against colonialism in the Third World, the war in Vietnam, and the use of nuclear weapons/energy. These ideologies and movements, despite the differences across gender, class, and ethnic lines, converged on the labour movement and shaped how it mobilized. In turn, the labour movement left its mark on its allies, oftentimes adding a more acute class analysis to the mobilizations of the New Left and drawing the attention of feminist activists to the plight of working-class women.

This introduction locates these strikes within the established literature on labour and women's history. Any attempt to synthesize the literature of both disciplines, however, would result in an exhaustive overview of decades-worth of scholarship. Therefore, the works, authors, and ideas presented in this introduction were selectively chosen from a broader collection of academic work for being the most influential in shaping this thesis. I have structured this introduction to address the four major debates surrounding my thesis: class, labour, gender, and the significance of the 1970s. Though many of the works discussed here cover more than just these four topics, and indeed make compelling arguments beyond the scope of this thesis, I will focus particularly on how they inform a discussion of the relationship between class, gender, and history.

Class Analysis and the State

First and foremost, this thesis is about the working class: their lives, their relationship to their communities, and the ways workers have negotiated their identities within their workplaces and with the state. As such, this thesis draws on a definition of class as defined by historian E.P. Thompson which sees class as a “historical relationship” that is “determined by the productive relations into which men are born or enter involuntarily.”¹ Thompson insisted that class was, above all, a relationship, and his work emphasized “the agency of working people” in carving out their own identities, politics, and ways of life as they negotiated inevitable class antagonisms with a ruling class itself. This process was not homogenous, but pluralistic and divided, as was the working-class.² In this way, Thompson rejected much of the “prevailing” understandings of class which he believed tried to “mathematically” calculate the activities and formations of working-class peoples and apply “laws” to their culture and means of organizing.³ Thompson, like Marx, sought to contextualize class as a historical relationship, while emphasizing working-class agency, which he felt contemporary Marxist economic and sociological studies had decentralized.⁴

One of Thompson’s contemporaries, Ralph Miliband, though also a Marxist, saw some shortcomings in Marxist analysis of his time, specifically analyses of the role that the state played in mediating (or aggravating) class antagonisms.⁵ Like Thompson’s work on class, Miliband argued that the state’s involvement and complicity in capitalist society was part of a

¹ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 9-10.

² Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 12-13.

³ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 10-13.

⁴ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 10.

⁵ Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 6. According to Miliband, the work of Antonio Gramsci was the only exception to such “deficiencies,” but aside from Gramsci, Miliband argued that “Marxists have made little notable attempt to confront the question of the state in light of concrete social economic *and* political *and* cultural reality of actual capitalist societies,” and that any attempt to do so merely oversimplifies the complex relation between capital and the state.

historical pattern, intensifying in the post-war period of Keynesian economics and the welfare state.⁶ In essence, Miliband maintained that the state-regulated economies of many countries after the Second World War were still “authentically capitalist societies,” wherein the needs of the market far outweighed that of working-class producers.⁷ Like Thompson, Miliband also called for increased attention to how the working class resisted the hegemony of the ruling class. To Miliband, the ruling class was “possessed of a high degree of cohesion and solidarity, with common interests and common purposes which far transcended their specific differences and disagreements,” and as such any kind of elite analysis would inevitably overshadow the more important project of understanding how the subjects of the ruling class resisted.⁸

The project of outlining how the state and capital were complicit in restraining the working class was carried on by Miliband’s student Leo Panitch, who argued that rather than working on “behalf” of capital, the state enjoyed a “relative autonomy” from the ruling class.⁹ Panitch refined Miliband’s theory of the capitalist state by recalling Marx’s observation that, historically, “the state was by no means immune from the pressure of classes other than the bourgeoisie.”¹⁰ Specifically drawing on Marx’s discussion of the English Factory Acts and the “state-regulated” work-day reductions, Panitch observed that the state held the dual responsibility of making the markets amenable to capital while regulating any brewing working-class rebellion.¹¹ In his later work with Donald Swartz, however, Panitch observed that the state was more concerned with accommodating capital than it was with maintaining the legal right of

⁶ Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, 9.

⁷ Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, 11.

⁸ Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, 48.

⁹ Leo Panitch, “The Role and Nature of the Canadian State,” in Leo Panitch, ed., *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 4.

¹⁰ Panitch, “The Role and Nature of the Canadian State,” 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

workers to collectively bargain and strike. During the global economic crisis of the mid-1970s, “the ongoing efforts of capital to restructure itself” spurned “continued demands from employers for new concessions on wages and work rules from workers.”¹² In Canada, this resulted in a series of state-sanctioned attacks on the working-class such as wage freezes, jailtime for militant union leaders, the “use of back-to-work legislation” and the suspension of unions’ right to strike.¹³ Panitch and Swartz also observed that state-backed repression of the working-class continued beyond the 1970s, with Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney’s “wage freezes across the federal public sector” during the 1980s and the Ontario New Democratic Party government’s “rerun” of such policies in the 1990s.¹⁴ Panitch and Swartz thus declared that the 1970s marked “the end of the era of free collective bargaining in Canada,” and signalled the beginning of a period wherein capital relied more on state austerity to coerce working-class “subordination” than negotiations of rights and freedoms allowed by PC-1003.¹⁵

As the case studies in this thesis will demonstrate, however, in the 1970s the relationship between the working class and the state was complicated. Despite the noticeable collusion between capital and the state in repressing workers’ agency, the state did at times possess a “relative autonomy” from the ruling class. Some cases may obscure this fact, for instance, the Dare Foods strike in Chapter 2, where an employer’s ability to coax the state into passing injunctions against striking workers is shown to be easy, thus providing evidence of Miliband’s

¹² Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract*, (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993), 4.

¹³ Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms*, 3.

¹⁴ Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms*, 4.

¹⁵ Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms*, 5. Order in Council PC-1003, which was heavily based on the “Wagner model of industrial relations” in the United States, was enacted by the Liberal government of William Lyon Mackenzie-King during the Second World War, and required employers to bargain collectively with labour unions. Donald Wells identifies the various features that are shared between, and separate from, the Wagner model and PC-1003 in “Origins of Canada’s Wagner Model of Industrial Relations: The United Auto Workers in Canada and the Suppression of “Rank and File” Unionism, 1936-1953,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 2, 20, (1995): 193-225.

and Panitch's arguments that the state has been an important power broker for capitalist repression. In other cases, however, such as the use of legal mobilization by labour forces in the Puretex strike covered in Chapter 3, the state has the potential to support the kind of working-class agency that Thompson emphasized. This relationship did become further complicated in Canada by the Fordist accord (or post-war settlement) of the 1940s, which did not build "an institutional mechanism for the integration of [trade] unions into state policy" like other "Western capitalist European states" did, and therefore left Canadian unions without the power to "act as agencies of social control over the wage demands of their members."¹⁶ As Panitch notes, the social programs of the welfare state were designed to assuage wage inequalities and poverty, ensuring that unions had no political power to impart "a policy of wage restraint."¹⁷ Despite this, it can still be said that the state works in the interest of capital, though it allows room for some working-class resistance against employer repression.

This thesis conceptualizes the Canadian state as both a hindrance to and an asset of working-class mobilizing. On the one hand, the state can present serious impediments to class organizing, as is seen in Chapter 2 when Dare receives an injunction from the state to limit pickets and a handful of strikers go to jail for disobeying it. On the other hand, the state can work positively for the working-class when properly mobilized by labour. Chapter 3 provides two examples of this: first, it demonstrates that small arbitrations between union and employment lawyers could win important victories for the working-class; second, it shows that individual MPs could advocate for workers in the Ontario Legislature and attempt to limit exploitative management practices such as surveillance.

¹⁶ Panitch, "The Role and Nature of the Canadian State," 21-22.

¹⁷ Panitch, "The Role and Nature of the Canadian State," 22.

Labour History and Working-Class Culture

The main focus of this thesis is on how the working class has made social changes within their workplace, their community, and their social lives. In some cases, these changes were precipitated by trade union activism and union-led strikes, but in other cases, mobilizations *outside* of the union led by working-class peoples and their allies proved equally important. This thesis therefore takes into account not only the *working* lives of the working class, but the working-class culture outside of the workplace that shaped the lived experiences of working people. It follows in the tradition of labour history established in the 1980s and 1990s by Bryan Palmer, Greg Kealey, and the later work of Craig Heron (among others.)¹⁸ As Palmer has aptly described, “labour historians... are a fragmented and fractious lot,” and are “anything but the monolithic cliques they are often perceived to be.”¹⁹ As such, any attempt to locate this thesis within the literature on working-class history will be inherently selective. That said, a few historiographical patterns can be identified, namely the analytic attempts by the aforementioned historians to account for a “working-class culture.”²⁰

Working-class culture can be best described as the “fraternal societies, sporting associations, neighborhood life, ritualistic behaviour, and family” that inform the lifestyles,

¹⁸ Other authors who fit into this stream of working-class history include Allen Seager and the members of the Working Lives Collective, of whom Veronica Strong-Boag, Elaine Bernard, Keith Ralston, Andrea Smith, and others were also a part of. Their illustrated 1985 collection entitled *Working Lives: Vancouver, 1886-1986* showcased the lived experiences of workers in Vancouver both on and off the job, focusing on how race and gender influenced their everyday lives and how saloons and the family were key to how they internalized their experiences. Similarly, John Bullen’s 1986 article in *Labour/Le Travail* entitled “Hidden Workers: Child Labour in the Family Economy in Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Ontario” emphasized the role of the family as a economic unit, but also contributed to the growing academic discussion of the role of working-class children in the labour force. Another author of note is Carmela Patrias, whose 1994 monograph *Patriots and Proletarians: Politicizing Hungarian Immigrants in Inter-War Canada* focused on Hungarian immigrants to Canada and how their association with informal ethnic associations in Canada helped politicize them as “class-conscious proletarians.”

¹⁹ Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Re-thinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1990*, 2nd Edition, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), 11.

²⁰ Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, 13.

politics, ideologies, religions, and lived experience of the working class.²¹ Contemporary labour scholarship generally accepts the important relationship between the experiences of working people on the job and their lives outside of work, but this has not always been the case. In fact, labour histories written before the 1970s often focused exclusively on “workers’ institutions” (which were almost exclusively trade unions or workers’ guilds) as well as “politics, and episodic confrontations,” the most common of which (and perhaps the most overstated) in the literature is the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.²² Additionally, these labour histories “assumed implicitly” that the 20th century was the only period worthy of study due to the emergence of tremendous union strength and working-class solidarity.²³ Palmer and his contemporaries sought to redress the omission of working-class lives in labour history by looking beyond the shop-floor and into the homes, taverns, and neighborhoods of working-class peoples, as well as by drawing academic attention to the nineteenth century and the forms of working-class organization that took place in the latter half of that century, namely the success of the Knights of Labor.²⁴ By doing so, working-class historians in this vein exposed their work to criticisms from historians who charged them with overly-politicizing historical narratives in order to “denounce the repressiveness of the Canadian state and its agents in business,” as well as “drive out all those who did not follow the [newly] mandated approach” to social history.²⁵

Nonetheless, Palmer and his contemporaries soldiered through the myriad²⁶ criticisms of their new approach to working-class history and ultimately produced some foundational works in

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, 15.

²⁵ J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 1998), 60-61.

²⁶ Aside from Granatstein, Palmer has identified Michael Bliss and Kenneth McNaught as historians critical of the current course of social history. See: Michael Bliss, “Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*. 26, 4, (1991): 5-17. For a brief discussion of Kenneth

the discipline that presented important explorations of the relationship between working lives and working culture. One poignant example is Gregory Kealey's *Workers and Canadian History*, a collection of essays that provide an overview of interpretive debates in working-class history that took place over the span of his academic career.²⁷ Despite Kealey's modest claim that his collection "traces only one historian's intellectual development," *Workers and Canadian History* proved to be an expansive text in the study of labour history. The book covered a variety of historical topics, ranging from "work control and the labour process" to the fraternal solidarity formed in working-class communities by the Knights of Labor,²⁸ to debates about the discipline (the first two chapters are extensive reviews and assessments of H.C. Pentland and Stanley Ryerson's contribution to the emergence of Canadian labour studies.)²⁹ Though, it did not address gender and ethnicity.³⁰ As a result, Kealey's collection was counter-posed to the "sustained attack" on social history that occurred in the 1990s, led primarily by J.L. Granatstein in *Who Killed Canadian History?* one that called for a return to military, political, and diplomatic history, which Palmer, Kealey, and their other contemporaries attempted to move beyond.³¹

Similarly, Craig Heron has articulated the importance of understanding the relationship between "the world of paid work," which trade unions operated almost exclusively within, and "the unpaid domestic sphere," and more broadly speaking, the public and service sectors that

McNaught's criticisms of the new social history, see Bryan D. Palmer, "Canada's "1968" and Historical Sensibilities," *The American Historical Review*, 123, 3, (2018): 773-778.

²⁷ Gregory S. Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), xvii

²⁸ Taken from the table of contents in Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History*, viii

²⁹ Ibid. Kealey also briefly touches on this in the preface.

³⁰ Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History*, xvii.

³¹ Ibid.

went un-unionized until only very recently.³² His later works used a cultural lens to reveal key features of working-class life that had gone undocumented in political and institutionally-inclined histories of class. In *Booze: A Distilled History*, Heron demonstrated how the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol (be it privately or in bars, taverns, or saloons) was a common facet of working-class life, and thus a useful lens through which to understand the relationships between “economic development, labour relations, consumer practices, family life, the dynamics of work and leisure, the formation of social classes,” and (among many other things covered in his extensive 500-page monograph) “the relationship between the moral and material dimensions of capitalist society.”³³ *Booze* successfully demonstrated that where, when, and what working people drank was crucial in “establishing” their class, gender, and ethnic “identities.”³⁴ Similarly, his work on the Labour Day festivals with Steven Penfold has demonstrated that the Labour Day celebrations of old manifested in localized ways that represented a multiplicity of working-class experience. Heron and Penfold observed that “Marxist and Catholic workers’ movements in some regions of Canada mounted serious cultural alternatives” to the exclusive Labour Day festivities organized by skilled craftworkers.³⁵

Heron made similar claims to Palmer and Kealey about how the relationship between unionized workers and the working class more broadly was to be conceptualized, the most telling of which was his belief that “its history [could not be found] only by looking into [union] offices and convention halls.”³⁶ This thesis continues in the vein of labour history established by Bryan

³² Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History*, 2nd Edition, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Ltd. Publishers, 1996), xi.

³³ Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003), xi.

³⁴ Heron, *Booze*, 11.

³⁵ Craig Heron and Steven Penfold, *The Workers’ Festival: A History of Labour Day in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005,) xiv-xv.

³⁶ Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, xii.

Palmer, Greg Kealey, Craig Heron, and others that sees the labour process and working-class culture as fundamentally interlinked. This thesis recognizes the important relationship between union and extra-union activism. This will be especially apparent in Chapter 4 when discussing the 1978 Inco strike in Sudbury. There, the hard-bargaining tactics of the United Steel Workers ensured that the contract agreed upon in 1979 was fair for all its workers. Meanwhile, the autonomous wives' committee that formed in response to the strike - and in some ways the gendered foundations of Sudbury as a masculine mining town - prevented the Sudbury community from collapsing in on itself by providing invaluable tactical, economic, and moral strike support.

Gendered Revisions to Labour History

Specifically, this thesis examines the experience of working-class women within and outside of the trade union movement. As certain revisionist currents in the histories of class and labour have shown, the term 'working class' is nebulous, and needs refining in any analysis, historical or otherwise. There is no singular working-class experience, since a litany of intersections such as gender, race, ethnicity, geography, language, religion, and age are strong determinants of how class will be experienced by individuals. Works by scholars such as Lynda Yanz, Bettina Bradbury, Joan Sangster, and Meg Luxton have demonstrated the results of feminist research frameworks when applied to working-class women.

This historical re-evaluation of women's relationships to their paid and unpaid work occurred shortly after the number of women working for pay and enrolled in unions increased exponentially after the Second World War. By the 1980s, these studies had identified a series of important observations about women and work that have informed feminist labour histories to this day. In 1983, Lynda Yanz and David Smith noted that "women were integrated into the

waged work force to an extent that was inconceivable thirty years ago,” yet still faced a number of “disadvantages” despite making up almost half of the unionized workforce.³⁷ Yanz and Smith identified a few reasons for the underpaid, precarious, and insecure work of women in the 1980s, most notably the fact that women were usually “segregated” into “work ghettos,” made up of clerical work, service work, and the “caring professions,” as well as the fact that maternity leave was not guaranteed until unionized women fought for the right after becoming employed.³⁸ By focusing on the experiences of working-class women, Yanz and Smith (as well as other feminist historians in the 1980s) reached the conclusion that “women’s position in the labour force is a product of... contradictory pressures,” and that the relationship that women had to their paid work in the 1980s was markedly different from that of the past.³⁹

As such, women’s “attachment” and dependency on wage work in the 1980s came to be understood as a fairly recent historical phenomenon.⁴⁰ Women had long worked for wages outside of the home, but typically only until marriage or children. During the post-war period, it became more common for married women and mothers to continue working outside of the home in order to contribute necessary wages to the family economy, as a sole income proved increasingly unsustainable by the 1960s. The mass influx of married women and mothers into the workforce after the Second World War did not guarantee them the same benefits as their husbands and male coworkers, however. The standard employment relationship (SER) was imagined as the archetypal ‘male’ relationship to paid work. It guaranteed “an indeterminate

³⁷ Lynda Yanz and David Smith, “Women at Work in Canada,” in Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz, eds., *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement*, (Brampton: Charters Publishing Co. Ltd., 1983), 16. At the time of publication, *Union Sisters* cited that “over forty percent of the labour force” were women and noted that this figure was “still climbing.”

³⁸ Yanz and Smith, “Women at Work in Canada,” 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Yanz and Smith, “Women at Work in Canada,” 17.

employment contract, adequate social benefits that [complemented] the social wage, the existence of a single employer, reasonable hours, and employment... in a unionized sector.”⁴¹ However, the SER existed primarily for male workers – and not all male workers at that – and had to be fought for by women to achieve it for themselves. “Women’s committees, caucuses, and conferences” were formed by working women in order to make unions more representative and accommodating of their needs.⁴² Resistance to and acceptance of feminist policies in unions and the workplace varied by industry. On the one hand, retail industry unions were sometimes run by management, and women faced the threat of dismissal for even being in contact with unionists.⁴³ The service industry, on the other hand, proved “unorganizable” since attempts to unionize restaurants or bars were unsuccessful prior to the 1970s.⁴⁴

Compounding such issues, however, were external factors created by the economy. Julie White has rightly drawn attention to this in her study of women in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW,) writing that “the economic context of the 1970s [in particular] contributed to a contentious relationship between a union determined to protect its members’ jobs and improve pay and conditions and a management under economic pressure to cut costs.”⁴⁵ In order to gain representation and benefits from their unions, women thus had to overcome not only male-centric union policies as exhibited by the SER, but a Fordist economy under stress which led some unions to limit the benefits they felt they could provide their membership. This was not always the case, however, as exemplified by the Common Front mobilizations in Quebec during

⁴¹ Judy Fudge and Leah Vosko, “Gender, Segmentation, and the Standard Employment Relationship in Canadian Labour Law, Legislation, and Policy,” *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 22, 2, (2001): 273-274.

⁴² Julie White, *Mail and Female: Women and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers*, (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc., 1990), 1-2.

⁴³ Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 198-201.

⁴⁴ I elaborate upon this further in my discussion of Julia Smith’s article on SORWUC.

⁴⁵ White, *Mail and Female*, 60.

the 1970s, which argued for increased wages and benefits for all union members despite economic pressures. But in most cases, women workers had to confront a largely male union structure that did not represent their needs.

Feminist historians thus began to make connections between the “social construction of gender in Canada’s past” that limited women’s work in previous decades and the unequal valuation of their labour in the 1980s.⁴⁶ Attention was drawn to the roles of wives, mothers, and homemakers that women held prior to the mid-20th century, with some historians going so far as to claim that “to ignore the family is to eliminate one of the most important bridges between women’s history and working-class history.”⁴⁷ One such historian, Bettina Bradbury, argued that class had to be “[reconceptualized] to include...those who reproduce [labour power], ideologically and materially, and those who are largely dependent on the wages of others,” and that the home and family had to be understood as the primary sites of women’s work for much of their history.⁴⁸ According to Bradbury, the family and the home as the key units of analysis revealed “the ideal division of labour,” which was a male breadwinner who worked for wages, and a domestic wife who cooked, cleaned, cared for the children, and budgeted the family’s income.⁴⁹

The implications of Bradbury’s approach were explained by Joan Sangster as “providing an important opening for feminist research, by rejecting... the emphasis on formal institutions, and calling for studies of the family, community, and leisure.”⁵⁰ Just as Palmer and other labour

⁴⁶ Bettina Bradbury, “Women’s History and Working-Class History,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 19, (1987): 25.

⁴⁷ Bradbury, “Women’s History and Working-Class History,” 25.

⁴⁸ Bradbury, “Women’s History and Working-Class History,” 40-41.

⁴⁹ Bradbury, “Women’s History and Working-Class History,” 32.

⁵⁰ Joan Sangster, “Feminism and the Making of Working-Class History: Exploring the Past, Present, and Future,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 46, (2000): 136.

historians attempted to decentralize the role of trade unions as the sole unit of historical focus, the goal of feminist labour history was to “explore working-class history as women lived it, altering the concentration on male realms of work and politics.”⁵¹ And, as Bradbury demonstrated, the “ideal” division of labour – a male breadwinner and a domestic wife – was upheld as a lingering ideology even after women joined the workforce. Their work was deemed less valuable, and as a result, they were paid less, and enjoyed far less job security and benefits than their male co-workers. Sangster, while maintaining the feminist orthodoxy that the home and the workplace were intricately connected for women, demonstrated how their new-found paid employment after the Second World War was contested ideologically. As she describes, the 1970s were a “renaissance” of political activism that coincided with the opening of universities to young women, “a resurgence of interest in social history and Marxist writing,” New Left activism that radicalized post-war youth, and a “keen interest” in historically “oppressed groups” who were fighting for rights during the decade.⁵² Young women in particular were thus exposed to ideologies and political philosophies that promised them equality and newfound opportunities, prompting them to use their unions (or student associations or women’s groups, depending on their social location) to fight for their rights.

Using unions as a tool for feminist activism, however, was a complicated endeavour. Traditionally led and populated by male workers, trade unions “rarely addressed the specific concerns of women,” and were deemed by some feminists as inherently “sexist structures” with masculine “work cultures” that were exclusive and unaccommodating of female participation.⁵³ Compounding this issue was the reality of the double-day for women, since their paid

⁵¹ Sangster, “Feminism and the Making of Working-Class History,” 133.

⁵² Sangster, “Feminism and the Making of Working-Class History,” 129.

⁵³ Meg Luxton, “Feminism as a Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 48, (2001): 70-71.

employment did not exempt them from their responsibilities at home. Many working women therefore worked their day job for wages, only to return home and perform unpaid domestic duties as well. Though unions were built primarily by working men, they still had the potential to transform the workplace for working women. Meg Luxton has argued that “union-based, working-class feminism... has been a key player in the women’s movement, the labour movement, and the left since the late 1960s and early 1970s,” due to “working-class and socialist feminist activists [developing] a strong feminist presence in the labour movement and a significant working-class orientation in the women's movement.”⁵⁴ Like Sangster, Luxton made the connection between the increasing political activism of the 1970s and the influx of women into unions. She concluded that “union women formed organizations to help them fight inside the labour movement to improve women's situations.”⁵⁵ Pointing to organizations such as Organized Working Women (OWW) and individuals like Madeleine Parent, Luxton argued that the women’s movement had allies within and outside of the organized labour movement, and that despite this never being an “easy alliance,” feminists could often rely on a number of allies to aid them in their fight for rights on the job.⁵⁶

This thesis also assumes that the relationship between paid work and domestic work is essential to how women understand their gendered experiences of labour. In Chapter 4, it will be shown that members of the Wives Supporting the Strike committee, an autonomous women’s group that provided support to striking steelworkers in Sudbury, had to overcome the expectation that they continue their domestic duties despite their desire to provide more involved forms of strike support. It also examines the alliance between feminism, the labour movement, and the

⁵⁴ Luxton, “Feminism as a Class Act,” 64.

⁵⁵ Luxton, “Feminism as a Class Act,” 72.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

left, and attempts to highlight how such relationships were integral to the success of many labour mobilizations. Chapters 2 and 4 both demonstrate how groups like the OWW were key players in providing strike support, and Chapter 3 elaborates on the effectiveness of strike support provided by left-wing nationalists like Madeleine Parent. In all chapters, working women are the central figures of analysis, and the broader goal of this thesis is to understand how working women and feminists were uniquely poised to provide invaluable forms of strike support.

The Historical Significance of the 1970s

Additionally, this thesis will look at a series of strikes in Ontario that occurred during the 1970s. Each strike was shaped by the social, economic, and political climate of the decade, the nuances of which need to be briefly addressed in order to fully understand the context in which each strike took place. Though the literature on the historical significance of the 1970s is scattered throughout multiple academic disciplines and publications, recent American monographs by Jefferson Cowie and Lane Windham have revived the debate in America, while the work of Canadian labour and feminist historians such as Heather Jon Maroney, Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, Margaret McPhail, Joan Sangster, and Ian Milligan have been supplemented by recent Canadian graduate theses. In particular, this body of literature has generated noteworthy debate about the labour movement and class during the period, namely whether or not the 1970s marked a decline in class consciousness and trade union militancy. This thesis inserts itself into this debate by arguing that the 1970s indeed witnessed a sustained bout of militancy by the labour movement, the feminist movement, and their allies.

This debate has been especially vigorous in the United States. Writing almost a decade ago, American historian Jefferson Cowie suggested that the 1970s marked the decline of the working-class resiliency that had animated post-war industrial relations. Though he conceded

that the first half of the decade was notable for its “hope and possibility,” he argued that the economic crisis of 1974 “reduced” the once “vibrant organizing drives” to a mere “trickle.”⁵⁷ In fairness, he did not dismiss the decade outright as insignificant, as he took serious issue with the then-popular historical thinking about the 1970s as “half post-1960s and half pre-1980s,” arguing instead that the 1970s “served as a bridge between epochs,” a transitional period between the mass insurgency and resistance of the 1960s and the rise of neoconservatism and neoliberal economics in the 1980s.⁵⁸ Admittedly, however, Cowie’s view of working-class militancy in America during the 1970s remained noticeably pessimistic. By his assessment, “the fragmented nature of the labor protests – by organization, industry, race, geography, and gender – failed to coalesce into a lasting national presence. The mainstream labor movement failed in its major political initiatives.”⁵⁹

Conversely, recent historical work has asserted the exact opposite. Lane Windham, in response to Cowie, has instead argued that “the 1970s were far from ‘the last days of the working class,’” and were instead “the first days of a reshaped and newly energized American working class.”⁶⁰ Windham’s main point of departure with Cowie is her analysis of the impact of the 1974 economic crash. While Cowie sees it as the beginning of global capitalist austerity against unions, social services, and the working class, Windham has suggested that it should instead be understood as “the birth of a new economic divide,” one that encouraged working people to push back against frozen and stagnating wages and demand their dues.⁶¹ Like Cowie, Windham did

⁵⁷ Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*, (New York: The New Press, 2010), 11-12.

⁵⁸ Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*, 11.

⁵⁹ Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*, 18.

⁶⁰ Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labour’s Door: Union Organization in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 3.

⁶¹ Windham, *Knocking on Labour’s Door*, 5.

observe the beginning of a “union decline,” but was careful to not equate it with any kind of failure or retreat of the working class.⁶² Instead, Windham observed that many trade union activists “were active in welfare reform groups, prison reform, neighborhood and civic groups, strikes, and union democracy movements,” suggesting that rather than abandoning a life of class activism altogether, many American workers pursued alternate means by which to achieve reform.⁶³ To demonstrate this, Windham examined the “conjuncture... between the civil rights, women’s rights, and labor movements” in America and found that the formation of (fragile) alliances between different social movements accounted for the changed context of working-class resistance.⁶⁴

Windham’s interpretation of labour militancy in the period closely follows that of Dorothy Sue Cobble. Writing about women’s work in America during the 1970s over a decade before Windham, Cobble argued that “the transformation of women’s work occurred as much in response to pressure from below as from above.”⁶⁵ Cobble observed that, like in Canada, feminists attempted to insert themselves into union politics with varying degrees of success, but beyond this, they “also turned to the courts” to “test the limits and language of new antidiscrimination laws,” or even “broke entirely with the labour movement” and resorted to grassroots activism within “all-female associations defined as much by gender as class.”⁶⁶ Describing the relationship between the women’s movement and the labour movement in America during the 1970s, Cobble wrote that the political and ideological “tensions” that existed

⁶² Windham, *Knocking on Labour’s Door*, 6.

⁶³ Windham, *Knocking on Labour’s Door*, 7.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 206.

⁶⁶ Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 206-207.

“between activists and organized labour diminished somewhat.”⁶⁷ Far from suggesting that either movement was fractured by the economic crisis of the decade or the myriad ideological divides between feminist and labour groups, Cobble instead argued that “labor feminists now looked to unions as vehicles for their reform aspirations,” and that “the old feminism had learned from the new.”⁶⁸ Her work is supported by other studies, including Dennis Deslippe’s *Rights, Not Roses*, which demonstrates that “rank-and-file women were central to the... emergence of gender equality” in American unions by the 1970s.⁶⁹ Deslippe complements Cobble’s study by adding that the 1970s saw women take on leadership positions in some American unions which in turn “saw” working women’s “concerns gain prominence.”⁷⁰ Like Cobble, and later Windham, Deslippe also highlighted “unionists’ contributions to the campaign for equality” led by women, arguing that working women and “union women” were far from “invisible in the emergence of second-wave feminism.”⁷¹

The Canadian interpretation of the 1970s has not been so divisive. Left-wing ideologies and organizations have been a part of the Canadian labour movement since its foundation. In the post-war period, this integration was articulated through the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the social-democratic party that won the provincial legislature of Saskatchewan during the 1940s and has since reached prominent third-party status in Canada as the New Democratic Party (NDP.) Other communist-led unions were present throughout the history of the Canadian labour movement, though they fell under heavy siege during the Cold War. As such, militant labour organizations and radical feminist agendas have typically enjoyed

⁶⁷ Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 207.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Dennis A Deslippe, “*Rights, Not Roses*”: *Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-1980*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 196.

⁷⁰ Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*, 191.

⁷¹ Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*, 1.

some form of political support from a strong political Left in Canada. Beyond this, there has been a penchant in Canadian historical writing for examining militancy *beyond* the confines of labour and opening studies of the period to examinations of partnerships between labour and its allies. The alliance between labour and feminism has been one such area of study that has garnered much attention. Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail have argued that the women's movement "expanded the range of issues it addressed" in the 1970s, and that one such issue was the role and nature of women's paid work.⁷² The result was an alliance between trade unions and feminists based on the common ground that both movements "were trying to raise women's issues within their [respective] movements."⁷³ One result was the founding of groups like OWW and its Saskatchewan equivalent SWW, which were committed to uniting women of different unions and building class and feminist consciousness within its ranks.⁷⁴ Another result was the sustained militancy of rank-and-file working-class feminists who were present, vocal, and at times in charge of strikes. The striking Fleck women in 1978, for example, "mobilized union women's committees and groups from the autonomous women's movement for picket-line and financial support," and in doing so demonstrated that feminist solidarity was strong enough to resist on its own.⁷⁵

Another alliance that Canadian scholarship has adequately addressed is that between labour and the New Left. During the Texpack strike of 1971, "Wafflers and left groups" often shielded

⁷² Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 54.

⁷³ Adamson et al., *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 77.

⁷⁴ Adamson et al., *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 77-78.

⁷⁵ Heather Jon Maroney, "Feminism at Work," in Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton, eds., *Feminism and Political Economy: Women's Work, Women's Struggles*, (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1987), 94.

strikers from assault or arrest while on the picket line.⁷⁶ Drawing on the testimony of one striker who “found the police very scary,” Joan Sangster argued that “having committed picketers” that risked arrest or harm were “important assets” on the Texpack picket line.⁷⁷ Additionally, Sangster demonstrates that the New Left had the capacity to aid working-class women in mobilizing along feminist lines. Sangster notes that “Texpack was followed very soon by a number of better organized alliances between feminists and striking workers on the picket line,” though as will be seen in Chapter 2, framing mobilizations within feminist politics is no easy task.⁷⁸ Similarly, Ian Milligan demonstrated in his study of the Artistic Woodwork strike of 1973, that “hundreds” of students of the New Left stood on the picket line along with Artistic strikers and “the left wing milieu of Toronto” (made up of “rank-and-file militants” and “activists from a plethora of political groups”) to “fight the evils of capitalism.”⁷⁹ These New Left supporters were instrumental in keeping the strike alive as the number of Artistic workers available to picket “dwindled to a handful.”⁸⁰ Additionally, New Left protesters also helped to maintain the media’s attention on the strike to ensure that it remained in public consciousness.⁸¹ As Ian Milligan notes, the plight of immigrant workers was of particular interest to the Artistic strikers, and the sustained media attention the New Left garnered to their cause ensured that the rights of immigrant workers remained on labour’s agenda.⁸²

⁷⁶ Joan Sangster, “Remembering Texpack: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Militancy in Canadian Unions in the 1970s,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 78, (2006): 57. Wafflers were leftists, feminists, and youth activists associated with the Waffle, an organizing body within the New Democratic Party during the 1970s.

⁷⁷ Sangster, “Remembering Texpack,” 57.

⁷⁸ Sangster, “Remembering Texpack,” 60.

⁷⁹ Ian Milligan, “The Force of All Our Numbers:” New Leftists, Labour, and the 1973 Artistic Woodwork Strike,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 66, (2010): 37-38.

⁸⁰ Milligan, “The Force of All Our Numbers,” 38.

⁸¹ Milligan, “The Force of All Our Numbers,” 40.

⁸² Milligan, “The Force of All Our Numbers,” 70.

The proclivity of Canadian scholarship to address the regional and local character of its provinces has also yielded affirmative results for the militancy argument. In 1972, B.C. elected the NDP to power, bringing with it a strong socialist bent to provincial politics. Benjamin Isitt has argued that the “alliance of the Old Left CCF tradition, blue-collar and white-collar workers, marginalized social groups, and upwardly mobile members of the urban middle class” built into the B.C. NDP made it “well positioned to harness” the “discontent” of working-class peoples in Canada brewing on the eve of financial collapse.⁸³ In this way, B.C., more than any other “North American jurisdiction,” came closest to imitating the “European patterns” of class representation in state politics, and as a result was more inclined to incorporate the goals of organized labour into its political agenda.⁸⁴ Though Isitt cautioned that there was a “more ambiguous” historical “record” of B.C.’s NDP in the 1970s, their victory was nonetheless indicative of the influence of a militant left in Canada, as its ascension effectively represented “the protest party” becoming “a *status quo* party.”⁸⁵ Like the United States’ Democratic Party, Canada’s NDP had a working-class and left wing agenda infused into its system of party politics. Writing about the deindustrialization of the auto industry in Canada in the United States between 1969-1984, historian Steven High revealed that the Canadian state maintained a “sustained interest” in the job loss that would occur due to the widespread closing of auto plants, whereas the state “played little or no [such] role in plant closings” in the United States.⁸⁶ Drawing attention to the archival

⁸³ Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 195.

⁸⁴ Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 196.

⁸⁵ Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 201-202. Isitt notes that while the B.C. NDP campaigned on promises of worker protection, rights, and equality, they were not immune to the economic crisis of the 1970s. As a result, they too were required to resort to back-to-work legislation and wage controls, which Isitt argues “heightened antagonisms” between the “increasingly professionalized NDP bureaucracy” and “the New Left, feminism, environmentalism, and sections of labour.”

⁸⁶ Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America’s Rust Belt, 1969-1984*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 18.

records of campaigns around deindustrialization in Canada and the United States, High commented that government and trade union records showed a multitude of actions taken by Canadian auto workers to engage the state in their fight, whereas the United States had to rely on a more localized and less “national community” when faced with deindustrialization.⁸⁷ High’s study demonstrated that the Canadian state was more amenable to engagement by the working class when mobilizing around key labour issues.

These works have been supplemented by recent graduate theses covering the 1970s. Julia Smith, for example, has demonstrated that grassroots feminist organizing in the 1970s resulted in effective (albeit temporary) unionization drives for women in the service industry. In her case study of two workplaces in British Columbia that were unionized by SORWUC (the Service, Office, and Retail Workers’ Union of Canada), Smith argued that SORWUC represented “an important example of an alternative approach to unionization,” one that was highly “critical of the gendered structure and practices of the existing labour movement and its failure to organize unorganized workers.”⁸⁸ Rather than accept what the highly bureaucratic labour movement and heavily biased provincial Labour Relations Boards (LRBs) offered them, a number of working women employed in the B.C. service industry took matters in to their own hands and organized themselves, by no means showing a defeat but instead a resiliency in an otherwise unforgiving labour climate. Similarly, Sean Antaya, in his case study of the New Tendency, an autonomist Marxist group that “sought to create alternative forms of working-class organizing in direct opposition to... the Old Left,” has demonstrated that a “rich struggle waged from below” shaped

⁸⁷ High, *Industrial Sunset*, 17-19.

⁸⁸ See: Julia Smith, “An ‘Entirely Different’ Kind of Union: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers’ Union of Canada (SORWUC), 1972-1986,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 73, (2014): 23-65. See also her MA thesis on the same topic: Julia Smith, “Organizing the Unorganized: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers’ Union of Canada (SORWUC), 1972-1986,” MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2009.

Canadian industrial relations in the 1970s, not, as Cowie would suggest in the American context, a retreat.⁸⁹

This thesis enters into the discussion of labour and left-wing militancy in the 1970s by offering three case studies of Ontario strikes in the period that were militant. Indeed, the economic crisis of 1974 imposed hardship on the working-class and changed the context in which workers could mobilize for change. Rather than causing a stagnation in union militancy, as Cowie would suggest occurred in the United States, the financial crisis did little more than result in a momentary re-evaluation of how to grapple with the new capitalist agenda. Many opportunities for partnership, alliances, and teamwork with other social movements were available, and several important partnerships, chiefly between the labour movement and the feminist movement, were formed in this period which have lasted into the modern day.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured around a series of case studies. Beyond describing a significant Ontario strike in the 1970s, each chapter highlights an important alliance made between organized labour, feminism, and the left-wing milieu of the 1970s. Chapter 1 outlines a brief history of strikes, strike support, and labour alliances in Canada in order to contextualize the historical continuities and divergences that become apparent in this relationship during the 1970s. In Chapter 2, I examine a strike that occurred at the Dare Foods, Ltd. cookie and dry pastry plant in Kitchener, Ontario in 1972, where the majority-female workforce refused a dismal offer from the company during collective agreement negotiations. The Dare struggle offers a cautionary tale: the strike was ultimately successful (as was the mass boycott of Dare

⁸⁹ See: Sean Antaya, "Struggling for a New Left: The New Tendency, Autonomist Marxism, and Rank-and-File Organizing in Windsor, Ontario During the 1970s," MA Thesis, Trent University, 2018.

products) due to the number of allies the Dare strike managed to attract, but a number of central issues of the strike – namely, the underpaid, mistreated, and exploited female workforce – fell by the wayside, and have not been adequately addressed in detail by historical accounts of the strikes.

In Chapter 3, I examine a strike at the Puretex Knitting Co. plant in Toronto, Ontario, which produced men's garments, and where the installation of nine closed-circuit TV cameras were installed to place the female workers under surveillance due to suspicion of theft. The Puretex workers' union, the Canadian Textile, and Chemical Workers' Union (CTCU) led by Madeleine Parent, won the scorn of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) for their radical left-wing nationalist politics, and as a result, had to mobilize allies *outside* of the mainstream labour movement. The CTCU's most prominent allies were labour-feminist groups such as OWW, and a left-leaning lawyer with politics that aligned with Parent's and the CTCU's organizational affiliation, the Canadian Congress of Unions (CCU.)

In Chapter 4, I discuss the many forms of strike support provided by the Wives Supporting the Strike Committee (WSS) during the Inco nickel mine strike in Sudbury in 1978. The WSS as an autonomous wives' committee and *not* a women's union auxiliary (which had marked much of union women's strike support prior to the 1970s) allowed the WSS to appeal for the support of many important ally groups such as OWW and the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC.) The WSS also took the lead on several community events that acted as morale boosters and protests, while ensuring the community did not collapse while the majority of the city's workforce was unemployed. As will be seen, however, feminist politics proved to be a divisive matter for the WSS. Partnership with the IWDC, for example, proved to be problematic for some of the more conservative members of the WSS, due to the mainstream

feminist support of abortion and sexual freedom. Furthermore, as some members of the WSS became more radical, the conservative women in the committee found it difficult to reach agreements on the future of the group. Regardless, the formation and activity of the WSS proved to be a transformative experience in the lives of its membership and launched some highly successful feminist and labour-oriented careers.

This thesis utilizes materialist-feminism as its theoretical framework. As described by Rosemary Hennessy, materialist-feminism “accounts for the sexual division of labour and the gendered formation of subjectivities” by combining the theoretical approaches of “historical materialism, Marxist and radical feminism, as well as postmodern and psychoanalytic theories of meaning and subjectivity” in order to characterize and transform women’s lives under capitalism.⁹⁰ Indeed, elements of a Marxist political economy, and even historical materialism, are evoked at certain points throughout this thesis, though usually as a point of criticism in line with Hennessy, who argued that “Marxism had not adequately addressed women’s exploitation and oppression.”⁹¹ As such, one of the primary goals of this thesis is to understand the structures, institutions, individuals, and means by which women have been oppressed by capitalism, and the ways in which their work – paid or unpaid - had gone largely unwritten in Canadian history until very recently. To accomplish this, I examine the work, workplaces (outside of or within the home,) wages, families, and lived experiences of working-class women during the period, exploring the material circumstances of women’s lives that profoundly shaped their well-being and framed the lived experience of gender. This thesis is thus opposed to the “refusal to acknowledge the historical dimensions” of working-class femininity under capitalism that

⁹⁰ Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham, “Introduction: Reclaiming Anticapitalist Feminism,” in Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham, eds., *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women’s Lives*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 7.

⁹¹ Hennessy and Ingraham, “Introduction,” 7.

emerged out of post-modernism in the 1980s.⁹² Instead, it aims not only to understand how working-class women in Ontario changed their lives for the better in the 1970s, but how such transformation can be useful for women fighting for a better life under capitalism *today*. This is perhaps the most crucial dimension of materialist-feminism, because as a means of acquiring “emancipatory critical knowledge,” it aims to not only explain the world, but change it.⁹³ Additionally, materialist-feminism’s underlying assumption that patriarchy and capitalism are not only related, but responsible for the oppression of women labouring under capital is also assumed here.

A variety of sources make up this thesis, and not only inform its materialist feminist underpinnings, but speak to the various experiences of actors involved in these militant strikes. Sources gathered from the popular press, ranging from *The Globe & Mail* to student newspapers published by student unions at York University, the University of Toronto, and Waterloo showed how the strike was perceived nationally, provincially, and locally, and by many members of ‘the public,’ such as students, local businesses, and politicians. Archival sources from Library and Archives Canada, the Ontario Archives, and the City of Toronto archives, such as union and feminist organization papers, legal arbitrations, court transcripts, newspaper clippings, and personal collections, provided a multiplicity of materials, many of which were useful for constructing timelines of the strikes and getting an overview of the many major players involved in each dispute. Even more helpful were specialized archival collections, such as the materials donated by the United Brewery Workers (UBW) and Dare itself to the University of Waterloo, and the personal archives of Frank Park, Kent Rowley, and Madeleine Parent available at Library

⁹² Hennessy and Ingraham, “Introduction,” 9.

⁹³ Hennessy and Ingraham, “Introduction,” 4.

and Archives Canada. The sources found here are invaluable, as they provided first-hand accounts, interviews, and personal letters that filled in the finer, personal details of each strike. Equally helpful in this regard were the personal reflections published by strikers in journals, magazines, books, and memoirs, particularly in the Sudbury strike, which can be found in *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement* by Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz, *Community Organizing: A Holistic Approach* by Joan Kuyek, and *Mining Town Crisis: Globalization, Labour, and Resistance in Sudbury* by David Leadbeater. One M.A. thesis cited in Chapter 4, “Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender: Wives Supporting the Strike, Sudbury, Ontario, 1978-1979,” by Susan Vanstone, was particularly helpful for acquiring oral histories and testimonies from women involved in the Inco strike. Likewise, Laurentian University sociologist Henry Radecki conducted two studies in the early 1980s that attempted to measure the social change experienced by families in Sudbury after the Inco strike. Both studies, one of which is cited directly in Chapter 4, are invaluable sources, for they contain almost 650 interviews with miner’s wives. Digital sources and documentaries not only provided powerful and important images of some of the strikes, but also made other actors and voices accessible. *CBC Digital Archives* contains myriad news reports, interviews, and press coverage of key events in the Puretex strike, while Martin Duckworth, Joyce Rock, and Sophie Bissonnette’s 1980 documentary *A Wives’ Tale* captures the thoughts, voices, and transformation of the women in the WSS. Similarly, *Maria*, a CBC TV drama written by Rick Salutin and directed by Allan King, provides an authentic glimpse into the lives of Toronto textile workers during the 1970s. Though a fictitious dramatization inspired by a number of strikes in the industry throughout the decade, *Maria* accurately showcases the material circumstances that shaped women’s lived experiences with work and the home in a period of increasing liberation and freedom for

working women. All of the sources that make up this thesis speak to not only the lived experiences of working-class and feminist women, but the ways in which they rejected and transformed the oppressive structures that shaped their working lives.

Lastly, this thesis makes a case for the continued study of labour allies as well as calls for more Canadian perspectives on labour militancy in the 1970s. In so doing, I hope to make clear the number of ways in which the feminist and labour movements in Canada can work together productively in the 21st century as the politics of both social movements become increasingly more polarized and contested.

CHAPTER ONE: Strike Support in Historical Context

Introduction

Before delving into the 1970s, it is important to understand how strike support has evolved over the course of Canadian labour history. Inevitably, the ways that strike support manifested itself in the 1970s was contingent upon how labour allies were mobilized in the past, but also how new forms of organizing emerged in the decade. This chapter is an attempt to explain why a diverse number of ideological groups came together as allies to mobilize alongside the working class in the 1970s, and why such partnerships looked different in previous decades. The legacies of previous forms of strike support left an important roadmap for continuity in the 1970s, but there were also divergences, and as such, it is important to understand how the relationship between labour, feminism, and the left has changed (but also remained the same) throughout Canadian history.

Before strikes and labour alliances in the 1970s can be properly understood, however, popular images and perceptions of strike support from the past need to be addressed. Today, it is uncertain whether or not a popular image even really exists, particularly among young people and students. Simon Black, a Labour Studies professor at Brock University, recently argued that it is difficult in 2019 “to find good labour content in Canadian schools,” and has similarly observed that the information available to students on such topics is generally “poor.”¹ Likewise, the current education director for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) has suggested that there is little understanding of how unions provide for workers outside of their

¹ “Sorry, Canada: Schools Aren’t Doing Enough to Teach Students Workers’ Rights and Labour History,” *PressProgress*, 3 September 2018, <https://pressprogress.ca/sorry-canada-schools-arent-doing-enough-to-teach-students-workers-rights-and-labour-history/>

day-to-day administrative duties.² A recent labour history conference organized in October 2018 by the Canadian Committee on Labour History (CCLH) hosted a number of presentations by academics who expressed difficulties in educating students and the public about the Canadian labour movement's history. John Henry-Harter expressed that presentism as a pedagogical tool for teaching labour studies has imposed a utilitarian agenda on the way the past has been interpreted, and Andrea Samoil spoke about the difficulties of educating young Albertan workers about their militant history when “the efforts of veteran activists and leaders” dominated public consciousness, leaving little room for the voices of rank-and-file workers.³ While it is likely too early to deduce what – if any – popular perceptions exist in the minds of students and young workers about strikes and strike support in 2019, there have been some pervasive images in the past that are worth addressing.

Labour cinema is also responsible for constructing popular images of strike support. In 1954, *Salt of the Earth* depicted a Latin American woman, Esperanza, whose husband Ramon works in the mines of Zinc Town, New Mexico. When Ramon goes on strike, Esperanza and the Zinc Town women attempt to form a women's committee to aid their striking husbands. Initially, the union is hesitant to include the committee in strike action, but by the end of the film, Ramon thanks Esperanza and the committee for their help in winning the strike. Later, in 1979, Lorraine Gray's documentary *With Babies and Banners: The Story of the Women's Emergency Brigade*

² Ibid.

³ These thoughts were expressed by each respective presenter at the recent CCLH conference in October 2018 entitled “Re-Working Class: A New Agenda for Canadian Labour and Working-Class History.” The abstracts for the Henry-Harter and Samoil presentations can be found at: <https://stmcollege.ca/media/pdf/CCLH%20CONFERENCE%20PROGRAM-STM%202018.pdf>. My own experience as a Graduate Teaching Assistant speaks to this as well. I often find discussions of class and union organizing difficult to conduct with students without drawing on popular or contemporary images of strikes, such as the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, or more recent strikes that have had a direct impact on the student body, such as the 2018 York University strike.

used archival footage and oral history interviews of women involved in the Flint, Michigan General Motors sit-down of 1937. The women of the United Auto Workers' (UAW) Emergency Brigade, as the women's auxiliary came to be known, like the Zinc Town women, formed when their husbands struck against their employer. As one former Emergency Brigade member recalls, "[women were] always tied to kitchen, nursery, and home. The men could walk off from it and go to the union hall [or the beer garden], but the women couldn't get away from it," making them hesitant to "bite the hand that feeds."⁴ *Salt of the Earth* and *Babies and Banners* presented contemporary audiences with images of strike support and union-community solidarity that were widely praised as not only accurate, but definitive accounts of the kind of strike support that feminists could provide for the labour movement. In an early review of *Babies and Banners* in 1978, leftist film writer Gary Crowdus wrote that it distinguished itself from similar films of the time like *Union Maids* and *Harlan County, U.S.A.* by providing young leftists and feminists with role models.⁵ Similarly, one editorial in *The Guardian*, commemorating the 60th anniversary of *Salt of the Earth* in 2014 wrote that the film "treated, uniquely for the time it was made, questions of race and class as inseparable from those of gender," and that "the film proved to be an exercise in solidarity as much as a manifesto for the importance of solidarity."⁶

Indeed, the films were important landmarks in labour cinema and rightfully deserve their continued praise and remembrance. They are important because they displayed an optimistic and hopeful image of strike support that has remained strong in labour movement consciousness in

⁴ *With Babies and Banners: Story of the Emergency Women's Brigade*, directed by Lorraine Gray, (United States: New Day Films, 1979).

⁵ Gary Crowdus, "Reviewed work: *with babies and banners* by Anne Bohlen, Lyn Goldfarb, Lorraine Gray," *Cineaste*, 9, 1, (1978): 45.

⁶ Sukhdev Sandhu. "Salt of the Earth: Made of labour, by labour, for labour," *The Guardian*, 10 March 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/10/salt-of-the-earth-labour-workers-blacklisted-filmmakers>.

both Canada and the United States. But these films, and the industrial disputes they showcased (real or fictional), displayed forms of strike support that were indicative of a particular time and place. Like all other historical phenomenon, strike support is largely determined by the country, region and period in which it takes place. As documented in Chapter 3, the plot of the CBC TV drama *Maria* plays out against the backdrop of the broader Toronto textile industry in the 1970s and situates the various male and female workers within the ethnic and gendered contexts that many immigrant workers faced in textile plants, namely exploitation and low pay. Similarly, *A Wives' Tale*, referenced in Chapter 4, effectively demonstrates the specific political and social contexts in which the 1978 Inco strike took place, which is a much different context than what is seen in *Salt of the Earth* and *Babies and Banners*.

The Historical Realities of Strike Support

It is therefore important to understand what strike support has looked like across the temporal and geographic histories of the Canadian labour movement. For the 19th century, a period wherein “the intensification of capitalist industrialization and technological change” in many industries pushed local guilds and craft unions to band together and “protest” the conditions of their work, it is challenging to illustrate a holistic picture of strike support.⁷ This is primarily due to the fact that unions on the scale of the Knights of Labor, for example, were novel for this period of Canada’s capitalist development, and as such, most accounts of the Knights or other such organizations tend to focus on the developments of the organization itself, and not its allies. And perhaps rightfully so, because prior to the Knights’ formation in 1880,

⁷ Bryan D. Palmer, “Labour Protest and Organization in Nineteenth-Century Canada, 1820-1890,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 20, (1987): 61-83. 67. Palmer uses “protest” as opposed to “strike” in order to distinguish between the smaller, localized mobilizations of workers’ unions before the “Great Upheaval” of the 1880s and the organized strikes that would be planned by larger, international unions later in the 19th century and early in the 20th century.

work protests by skilled and unskilled labourers alike increased in frequency due to the required “preconditions of the [capitalist] accumulation process being established,” which led not only to an “integrated home market” within Canada, but a “mass recruitment of labourers” in several key home industries, notably canal and railway building, but also “carpentry, tailoring, shoemaking, and masonry.”⁸ Additionally, the scattering of a number of skilled and unskilled labourers in mid-19th century Canada across multiple industrial projects ranging from the construction of the canal and rail systems to the “subordination to contractors” of various individual artisan craftsman ensured that “no community of common class interests” could be fostered within such a fractious and separated working class.⁹

As industrialization continued into the mid and late 19th century, however, skilled and unskilled workers alike found themselves dispossessed from their land, their trades in an increasingly precarious position, and in some cases, they became homeless and wageless.¹⁰ As a result, the international unionism represented by the Knights of Labor began to unify local chapters of unions and workers guilds across Canada, and stronger community solidarity was built within the working-class. The Knights welcomed men and women, French and English, Catholic and Protestant, and skilled and unskilled workers.¹¹ This organizational unity (though fragile and impermanent) strengthened the Canadian “working-class way of life,” which “had gradually come into being” before 1880 via “associational networks within the community, trade organizations, workplace customs, deeply held values, and cherished beliefs,” by sharpening

⁸ Palmer, “Labour Protest and Organization in Nineteenth-Century Canada, 1820-1890,” 66-67.

⁹ Bryan D. Palmer and Gaetan Heroux, “Cracking the Stone: The Long History of Capitalist Crisis and Toronto’s Dispossessed, 1830-1930,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 69, (2012): 17

¹⁰ Palmer and Heroux, “Cracking the Stone,” 17-19. Gregory Kealey also addresses this phenomenon in Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1860-1892*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

¹¹ Palmer, “Labour Protest and Organization in Nineteenth-Century Canada, 1820-1890,” 79.

class antagonisms and class consciousness through the use of “festivals, dinners, working-men’s balls, picnics, and parades,” which in earlier decades had “softened class antagonisms.”¹² Prior to the class culture created by the Knights of Labor, many of these activities actually presented companies as “paternalistic superiors, benevolent employers, [and] pillars of the community.”¹³ As Kealey and Palmer note, the community festivities listed above were not novel occurrences in working-class communities, but the “social polarization” created by the growth of the Knights represented “a departure from past ambiguities” of class and the “benevolence” of employers.¹⁴

These festivities were bastions of community solidarity in the period, to be sure, but little attention is given in Kealey and Palmer’s study to lesser-known community organizations that supported working-class and wageless peoples in other ways. Palmer’s more recent work has rectified this by examining the role of poor relief institutions like the Toronto House of Industry which, despite being a “carceral institution” that moulded wageless and dispossessed workers into ideal industrial labourers, played a key role in supporting workers outside of the Knights.¹⁵ The Knights’ success, therefore, lay in its ability to mobilize those who would have otherwise been excluded by the white, male, and skill-oriented trade unions of the time. Labour histories written in the 1990s however continued to rectify the oversight of community mobilization by “moving their focus away from the workplace and into the community” in order to flesh out what strike support looked like and who labour allies were in different historical periods of Canadian labour history.¹⁶

¹² Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900*, (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1987). Pages 289-291 discuss the means by which class consciousness was informed by the culture created by the Knights of Labor.

¹³ Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be*, 289-291.

¹⁴ Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be*, 291.

¹⁵ Palmer and Heroux, “Cutting the Stone,” 20.

¹⁶ Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 6.

Many of the labour histories that took this approach did so with a feminist research agenda and revealed important results about the kinds of support that working-class women could provide to the labour movement. For example, Linda Kealey, in *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920*, examined the role of working-class women in labour and the left from 1890-1920 through their participation in formal capacities such as “women’s auxiliaries and strike support,” and informal participation in both movements through “socialist party backrooms, journalism, and soap-box oration.”¹⁷ Kealey’s study demonstrated that, despite the stark opposition to women joining the labour movement and holding office in left-wing organizations at the turn of the century, women’s auxiliaries and women’s groups were key allies in organized labour’s fight against management. Through the construction of “Women’s Labour Leagues, label leagues, and women’s auxiliaries,” women in working-class communities created institutions to represent their gendered interests and aid their striking husbands, though they were distanced from union and left politics and not fully autonomous from the union.¹⁸

As working-class women used these newly-created organizations to aid their husbands and community, they also fought for the right to work alongside men and be involved in union politics. Through a series of long and protracted struggles that were compounded by the labour shortage during the First World War, women came to be employed and unionized alongside their husbands, albeit along heavily gendered lines, and not in any great number.¹⁹ By the 1920s, auxiliary work became the primary means by which women workers could provide strike support. At its core, however, women’s auxiliary work was heavily regulated by the union, and

¹⁷ Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause*, 3. I have changed the wording in some places, only to demonstrate that Kealey’s study examines formal and informal participation in labour and the left.

¹⁸ Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause*, 255.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the kinds of support such organizations could provide was limited by strict gender expectations of women workers. To address this, other forms of “separate organizing” emerged in Britain “exclusively for and by women” in the form of the Women’s Labour League (WLL.)²⁰ Though it retained close ties to the Labour Party and its left-wing officialdom in British parliament, the WLL formed in opposition to the male dominance of such organizations and adopted feminist principles to accommodate the inclusion of working women into organized labour’s ranks.²¹ By the 1920s, the WLL had an international presence, with Leagues established in Canada and the United States. In Canada, by the early 1920s, the Leagues were dominated by the Communist Party (CPC) which “sought to transcend their past” by “embracing a new social and sexual order that included the emancipation of women.”²² By 1929, 60 WLLs existed in Canada, and despite their close relation to the CPC, they remained “separate in [both] name and identity,” which, as Joan Sangster has argued, fostered “a membership that went beyond Party members and a structure that allowed a degree of local autonomy.”²³ The alliance – though shaky – between labour, the Canadian left, and the women’s movement strengthened in the 1920s.

The 1920s, characterized by “open-shop campaigns, growing nativist and racist activity, a government-led assault on radical organizations, and internal dissent” within labour and the left changed the context in which strike support could be provided.²⁴ One American perspective provided by Elizabeth Faue in her case study of women and community mobilizations in

²⁰ Christine Collette, *For Labour and for Women: The Women’s Labour League, 1906-1918*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 8.

²¹ Collette, *For Labour and for Women*, 4-7. These pages in particular contain a strong overview of what the WLL’s specific ideological divergences with the Labour Party were.

²² Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Inc., 1989), 26. Sangster provides another noteworthy example of the CPC’s feminist agenda in her discussion of its drive to “mobilize women in the home by setting up housewives’ auxiliaries,” which were established in the hopes that a “women’s revolutionary consciousness” (see pages 35-38 for this discussion.)

²³ Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, 45.

²⁴ Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 3.

Minneapolis from 1915-1945 demonstrated how the “mass suffering of the Great Depression” did not kill the labour movement and its supporters, but instead “revitalized working-class organization as men and women took the path of democratic participation” rather than submit under the crushing intensity of economic crisis.²⁵ As Faue has argued, the origins of social programs designed to help low-income citizens and the beginnings of wartime economic “mobilization” allowed strike supporters to retain their meeting spaces in “local arenas,” where they could plan their next support campaign, while simultaneously encouraging other labour allies to take to the streets, knowing they could be temporarily sustained by state relief yet conscious that economic ruin was a real possibility.²⁶ Faue therefore suggested that the 1930s saw the gendered lines on which women’s auxiliary strike support work was negotiated in previous decades was contested by women and other labour allies during the Depression, who were fighting for their support to be better integrated into union policy and brought out from the confines of the private sphere.

Aside from women’s strike support, the American left-wing milieu of the 1970s attempted to provide strike support of their own. Leading up to the Minneapolis Teamsters strike of 1934, Minneapolis Trotskyists formed the Minneapolis Central Council of Workers (MCCW) which “aimed to unite around a common agitation-programme the unemployed, local unions, and cooperatives, as well as the Socialist Party, the Farmer-Labor Party, and the Communist League

²⁵ Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle*, 4.

²⁶ Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle*, 3. An important historiographical note: Faue inserts herself in the literature between Mary Heaton Vorse, an American labour activist and author of *Labor’s New Millions*, and Charles Rumford Walker, an American historian and author of *American City*. Faue writes that “for Walker, the central stage of the [labour] movement was in the streets, which were an extension of the shop floor; for Vorse, it was in Pengally Hall... a community arena where women spoke publicly for the first time in their lives.” Faue follows Vorse’s interpretation and is more critical of Walker’s, but I argue that both interpretations of political activism during the Depression should be reconciled. Both interpretations are correct and warrant consideration, as the public mobilizations in the streets described by Walker were equally as important to the activist experiences taking place in “community arenas.”

of America” as allies of the working-classes against the open shop campaigns that characterized Minneapolis.²⁷ Forming these alliances were not easy tasks, however, since each group was guided by different goals. For example, the unemployment coalitions in Minneapolis led by American communists did not see the struggles of the jobless and striking workers as “identical.”²⁸ Nonetheless, militant mobilizations took place in Minneapolis, and as earlier works on the Teamsters by Art Preis and Farrell Dobbs have explained, the Teamster and left-wing-led labour confrontations in Minneapolis, as well as Toledo and San Francisco led to violent confrontations with police forces in the 1930s.²⁹ As these earlier works would suggest, a strong and militant left was in many ways a more prominent and effective ally to labour in the 1930s. Populated predominantly by men, the militant left could draw political attention to labour’s cause, whereas the support of women’s auxiliaries was limited due to the gendered lines within which their work and status was confined. Violent confrontation between the state and a militant working-class was not isolated to the United States. In 1933, a series of furniture strikes in Stratford, Ontario led to several workers and community-members overcoming the local police, requiring the armed forces to intervene.³⁰ The state’s use of military power to quell the Stratford strike undoubtedly garnered support for the strikers from organized labour, but it also ensured that the “pro-Liberal” press drew a wider public audience to the strikers’ cause.³¹ Public opinion of the Stratford mayor and the Conservative Perth MPP either resigned or were defeated after the

²⁷ Bryan D. Palmer, *Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers’ Strikes of 1934*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013), 62.

²⁸ Palmer, *Revolutionary Teamsters*, 62. Palmer identifies that the ideological sectarianism within the American left in the 1930s was one (among many) difficulties that the MCCW had to confront whilst attempting to mobilize “a broader united-front movement” in Minneapolis.

²⁹ See Art Preis, *Labor’s Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO*, (Carrollton: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1964); and Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Rebellion*, (Pathfinder Press, 1972) for detailed accounts of the Minneapolis strikes and others in the United States with strong left-wing and socialist involvement.

³⁰ Desmond Morton, “Aid to the Civil Power: The Stratford Strike of 1933,” in Irving Abella, ed., *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada, 1919-1949*, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1975), 84.

³¹ Morton, “Aid to the Civil Power,” 85.

strike, signalling a negative turn in perception towards the state's armed repression of class militancy.³²

Only four years later in Oshawa a similar confrontation between police and strikers was instigated when General Motors failed to recognize the newly-formed union's attempts to bargain with management. As Irving Abella argues, strikers and supporters also had to contend with the provincial government of Mitchell Hepburn, who despite supporting the Stratford strike years before, had "swung to the right" and denounced the Oshawa strike, going so far as to work with the police to quell any potential strike action.³³ Abella also notes that the media, a key ally and important determinant of the outcome in Stratford, was largely pro-Hepburn, with the *Toronto Telegram*, *Globe & Mail*, *Hamilton Spectator*, and the *Oshawa Times* taking up unusually anti-labour rhetoric.³⁴ Without these key allies on their side, the Oshawa strikers had to resort to more creative measures to win the day. With "not a penny of aid" available to the strikers from the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) or the UAW, "churches and neighbors" became the main financiers of the Oshawa strike.³⁵ Likewise, labour lawyers like J.L. Cohen acted as the union's legal buffer against the state and management, since unlike Stratford, Oshawa could not rely on provincial politicians to defend them.³⁶ Churches and sympathetic individuals were therefore proven to be important labour allies in the 1930s, especially when the militancy of labour feminists and left-wing organizations were limited by state force.

³² Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power," 88.

³³ Irving Abella, "Oshawa 1937," in Irving Abella, ed., *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949*, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1975), 125.

³⁴ Abella, "Oshawa 1937," 105.

³⁵ Abella, "Oshawa 1937," 121.

³⁶ Abella's discussion of J.L. Cohen is brief, but he is identified as the union's legal counsel.

By the 1940s and the end of the Second World War, the gendered lines of women's participation in the workforce softened but did not entirely erode. The Depression-era solidarity between unions, labour feminists, and other labour allies remained intact but was fragile. At the heart of this complex relationship was the postwar settlement between labour, capital, and the state, otherwise known as the Fordist accord, which “enshrined in [Canadian] law” the ability of organized labour to bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions with their employer, as mediated by the state.³⁷ The Fordist accord and the changes it precipitated within Canadian industrial legality was brought about due to extensive labour militancy marked by long strikes and large mobilizations of the working-class all over Canada. The most well-documented of these struggles was the Ford strike in Windsor, Ontario in 1945, the success of which “guaranteed” the “stability” of trade union power by instituting the Rand Formula (or “union check-off”) by requiring workers to pay regular union dues, and expanding on the legislation of PC 1003, which in 1943 required both employers and the state to recognize the right of trade unions to bargain with their employers.³⁸

All of this is to say that while the Fordist accord should have, *in theory*, provided for the totality of the working-class, it did not. As Craig Heron has aptly summarized, the “clear priorities” for the male-dominant trade union movement were “a living wage for male breadwinners, and an eight-hour day” as well as “union security” via legal recognition from employers and the state.³⁹ The union movement in the immediate post-war period was thus largely concerned with looking after itself and taking care of its own within the newfound industrial legality regime and was slow to adapt to the demands of working and unionized

³⁷ Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History*, 2nd Edition, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1996), 76.

³⁸ Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 76.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

women, immigrants, peoples of colour, and labour's allies from "working-class neighbourhoods," who "fed, entertained," and sustained many of the working-class strikes and protests of the 1940s.⁴⁰ Other prominent labour allies such as communists, socialists, and left-wing nationalists (along with their respective organizations) were under the repressive gaze of the Canadian state during the Cold War, and as a result, their ability to provide strike support to the working-class was "constrained" due to the "harsher penalties for violations" that any militancy on their part would incur.⁴¹ Communists were among those most targeted. Many unions taking a strong communist bent would often be expelled from official labour organizations. Even those who considered themselves socialists, like Madeleine Parent, would still face condemnation for their refusal to openly denounce communism. As mentioned previously in reference to *Salt of the Earth*, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), which Heron argued had "seized upon the Cold War mentality" of the immediate post-war period, "expelled" Mine Mill from its ranks, as well as the United Electrical Workers (UEW) and the International Leather and Fur Workers (ILFW), because of strong communist leadership and influence within their ranks.⁴²

Despite this, women's auxiliaries managed to provide important support to workers in the 1940s. Oshawa in particular, which despite the victory of the UAW in 1937 remained a paternal company town controlled by General Motors, "fostered working-class collective action and organized community service" via Ladies' Auxiliary 27 (LA27) as well as "the larger local, provincial, and national community."⁴³ In fact, much of the support work done by LA27

⁴⁰ Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 74. I have changed some wording here for the purpose of readability.

⁴¹ Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 77.

⁴² Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 80.

⁴³ Christine McLaughlin, "The McLaughlin Legacy and the Struggle for Labour Organization: Community, Class, and Oshawa's UAW Local 222, 1944-49," MA Thesis, Trent University, 2007, 2-4.

mirrored the kind of work that would be taken up by the WSS in Sudbury during the 1970s. LA27 established a wartime board that “assisted and entertained returning veterans,” worked with the Red Cross, established an elderly care home, provided a sense of community and conviviality for members of the Ontario Mental Health Hospital, and raised funds for Local 222 (while simultaneously acquiring “an independent source of income”) by hosting “annual bazaars and rummage sales.”⁴⁴ LA27 was therefore well-positioned to not only assist Local 222 in times of strike, but also mobilize around a number of class and feminist issues when not involved in strike support. For instance, “a swift protest” was “launched” in Ajax when war-time work contracts expired, requiring workers who received housing as part of their wartime contracts to vacate.⁴⁵ This mobilization was caught up with LA27’s broader programme of basic housing for Oshawa’s low-income population.⁴⁶ Similarly, LA27 worked to make local schools’ playgrounds accessible to children after hours, donated to “the Sick Children’s Hospital, Cancer Fund, and Appeal for Children,” and “protested” the cost of student textbooks.⁴⁷ As a result of this extra-union activity, LA27 positioned itself and Local 222 as key providers in the Oshawa community, ensuring that it became a bastion of moral, tactical, and financial support during strikes. The UAW’s women’s auxiliary in the United States provided similar forms of strike support during the period, notably in the 1937 General Motors strike in Flint Michigan. Genora Johnson Dollinger recalled that “a child-care center at the union headquarters,” as well as “public speaking classes” for wives of striking workers led by female members of the Socialist Party and the formation of the Women’s Emergency Brigade (detailed in *With Babies and Banners*) were among the key activities and mobilizations led by the UAW’s women’s auxiliary in the 1937

⁴⁴ McLaughlin, “The McLaughlin Legacy,” 123-126.

⁴⁵ McLaughlin, “The McLaughlin Legacy,” 131.

⁴⁶ As described in McLaughlin, “The McLaughlin Legacy,” 129-132.

⁴⁷ McLaughlin, “The McLaughlin Legacy,” 132.

strike.⁴⁸ Though the WSS in Sudbury thirty years later represented an even more autonomous relationship from the union compared to LA27 and the UAW women's auxiliary, the issues and agenda of the WSS was similar, and their work played a similarly important role in the Inco strike of 1978-79.

As for left-wing nationalist allies in Quebec such as Madeleine Parent, her radical and militant work with the textile unions in the 1950s saw her and her husband Kent Rowley expelled from the CLC, only to form their own union, the Canadian Textile Council (CTC.) The CTC then combined with others to form a new Canadian congress, the Canadian Congress of Unions (CCU), which was more welcoming towards socialism, communism, and left-wing nationalism than the CLC. Parent and Rowley also experienced (both personally and through attacks on unions) state repression by the Quebec government of Premier Maurice Duplessis, who, like his fellow premiers in Alberta and Newfoundland, worked tirelessly to contain working-class militancy and stomp out communism.⁴⁹ Duplessis' 1937 Padlock Law was particularly notorious as a form of anti-union and anti-communist repression, as it allowed meeting places of suspected communists to be shut down with little evidence, and guaranteed heavy punishment for those merely suspected of being communists.

Histories like Heron's provide invaluable insight into the struggles that *political* labour allies such as socialists, communists, and left-wing nationalists faced during the post-war period while working to build solidarity and militancy within the working-class. Indeed, there is some analysis in such texts of the aforementioned "working-class neighbourhoods" and local

⁴⁸ Sol Dollinger and Genora Johnson Dollinger, *Not Automatic: Women and the Left in the Forging of the Auto Workers' Union*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 131-132. Genora Johnson Dollinger's oral history of the Women's Emergency Brigade from 133-138 is complementary to what is seen in *With Babies and Banners*.

⁴⁹ Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 83.

communities that provided strike support to striking workers, but these actors play a secondary – and at times cursory – role in the broader struggle between labour, capital, and the state.⁵⁰

Working-class women, labour feminists, and unionized working women claim a fair amount of attention in these texts, albeit amidst the context of their relation to working men and the state, and not on their own terms. Fortunately, labour histories and sociological analyses published within the last decade have shown a more promising and holistic interpretation of how labour allies, be they working women, feminists, community activists, concerned citizens, or socialists of varying degrees, fit within the broader historical narrative of Canadian labour history. As an example of one such work, Joan Sangster's 2010 book *Transforming Labour* serves as a culmination of the revisions to history that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s which sought to focus on the experiences of women as important historical actors. What *Transforming Labour* (and the feminist research that informs it) tells us about Canadian labour history is that the “feminized workforce” of the post-war period has been forgotten due to scholars “focusing too intently on the [Fordist] accord” and the gains it made for white male workers.⁵¹ Consequently, women worked the “double day” of shift work and mother/house-work, and beyond that, acted as “citizen-workers” who challenged the gendered nature of the Fordist accord through a variety of means such as the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), the various strikes of the 1960s (at that point a record-setting decade for the number of industrial disputes), “political activism,” and the “refusal or negotiation of prescribed gender, sexual, and familial roles.”⁵²

⁵⁰ In fairness, this criticism also applies to Desmond Morton's *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement*, another foundational survey text in Canadian labour history, though more recent editions (5th edition) have marginally improved upon this.

⁵¹ Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 6-7.

⁵² Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 7-9.

Sangster's project of casting working-class women and labour feminists as "historical subjects that probed [the] changing material condition" of work reveals that women have been key allies in organized labour's battle against capital at key moments in Canadian labour history, and other works published soon after – though not direct responses to Sangster – have revealed more historical allies that were crucial to organized labour's survival.⁵³ Historically loyal allies to the labour movement such as the working-class "parents, spouses, [and] fellow citizens," (who Don Swartz and Rosemary Warskett argue have been not only sidelined by labour history but by unions themselves) and the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF, and now the NDP) were joined in the 1960s by the youthful, robust, and ideologically-charged New Left.⁵⁴ The importance of the New Left's solidarity with the labour movement has never been dismissed outright in labour historiography, but its relationship with organized labour has only recently been broached with considerable detail. As Ian Milligan has demonstrated, the "students, rank-and-file militants, [and] activists from a plethora of political groups" that made up the New Left were eager "to put their rhetoric into action" and through their support of the labour movement quickly became invaluable allies in many "picket lines and organizing campaigns."⁵⁵ As such, the 'rebel youth' of the 1960s and 1970s need to be counted as a crucial ally in organized labour's arsenal.

⁵³ Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 14-15. Again, I have altered the phraseology slightly for the sake of clarity.

⁵⁴ Donald Swartz and Rosemary Warskett, "Canadian Labour and the Crisis of Solidarity," in Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage, eds., *Rethinking the Politics of Labour in Canada*, (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2012), 24-25. Though my focus here is on allies *outside* of the traditional boundaries of the union movement, it is worth noting that Swartz and Warskett's article does an effective job of outlining the problems of building solidarity *within* the labour movement. Historical attention is given here to the divide between white-collar and blue-collar work, the difficulty of accounting for gendered and racial expectations of union representation, as well as the seemingly insurmountable challenge of unionizing the service sector, a topic which is also expertly researched by Julia Smith in "An 'Entirely Different' Kind of Union."

⁵⁵ This is one of the major arguments of Milligan's 2010 monograph (see: Ian Milligan, *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers, and New Leftists in English Canada*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014.) but a detailed case study of the New Left's contribution to the 1973 Artistic Woodwork strike can also be found in "The Force of All Our Numbers."

In summation, the labour movement's allies are many. They include fellow worker's organizations that seek to build solidarity and raise class consciousness within the working-class, such as the Knights of Labor, and in a more modern context, the unions of today. Convivial working-class communities, neighbourhoods, and establishments that have provided solace and relief from the harsh realities of the working world, such as Joe Beef's tavern in Montreal, are other important though often overlooked allies.⁵⁶ Working-class women, union-women, and feminists, whose work in the home, union auxiliaries, and women's/wives' groups have prevented the attrition of striking men while gaining important recognition and rights for working women are also amongst the ranks of labour's allies. Left-wing nationalists, who were key in fostering radical leftist ideologies and militancy within Canada and often represented workplaces that the more conservative trade unions cast out for being communist provided invaluable strike support during the period. So too did independent leftists and left-wing political parties, beginning with the CCF and later the NDP. Additionally, champions of the Keynesian welfare state, who lived through the hardships of the Depression and lobbied for living wages and job security for workers proved to be crucial political allies, as they ensured that labour rights remained on the agenda of provincial and federal politicians. Lastly, the New Left provided crucial tactical support on many picket lines while maintaining Marxist perspectives on class and the workplace.

But why has this exhaustive list of supporters and allies been so difficult to compile, and likewise been so scattered throughout the literatures of class, labour, and women's history? I believe the answer to this lies in the fact that, until recently, there has been a historical

⁵⁶ Peter DeLottinville's seminal work on Joe Beef's tavern has effectively demonstrated the role of the tavern in working-class communities, particularly as a place of reprieve and hospitality. It is also the most-read work on 19th century working-class history in Canada. See Peter DeLottinville, "Joe Beef of Montreal: Working-Class Culture and the Tavern, 1869-1889," *Labour/Le Travail*, 8, (1981): 9-40.

underrepresentation of the role of community in working-class life, both inside *and outside* the workplace. A recent publication by sociologist Alan Sears has rectified this gap somewhat by drawing attention to the “informal neighbourhood and workplace networks, shared cultural and leisure activities, [and] alternative media” of working-class communities which he argues had the “capacity” to build counter-power (or at least the beginnings of it) against employer and state austerity.⁵⁷ These “informal networks,” which Sears dubbed “infrastructures of dissent,” were common in working-class towns where single-employer enterprises were the life-blood of local politics and city life.⁵⁸ Sudbury as a mining town and Windsor as an auto town are good examples of places where an infrastructure of dissent would be strong and recognizable. In fact, Windsor largely informed Sears’ conceptualization of how the working-class builds counterpower through infrastructures of dissent. Sears argued that a neighbourhood in Windsor known as Drouillard Road, where “the large taverns served as gathering places for workers after work and on breaks,” and “politicized ethnic halls... provided cultural and educational events as well as meeting spaces,” and “a pedestrian shopping street for informal contact,” allowed the working-class to foster “radical countercurrents” and plan for strikes and mobilizations.⁵⁹ In effect, Sears identified the structures and institutions that informed how working people challenged their employers and made change in the workplace. This thesis does not explore bars, ethnic temples, or shopping malls, but it is inspired by Sears’ methodology of looking *outside* of the struggle between unions and employers and looking for other structures, organizations, and actors that profoundly shaped the battle between labour and capital in the 1970s. In doing so, I

⁵⁷ Alan Sears, *The Next New Left: A History of the Future*, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2014), 5-6.

⁵⁸ Sears, *The Next New Left*, 5. I use the past-tense here because as Sears’ book argues, the means by which infrastructures of dissent manifest themselves are largely contingent upon how the global economic environment shapes modern New Left activism. Sears does not speculate on what the infrastructures of dissent would look like by today’s standards (2014), as his work is largely historical.

⁵⁹ Sears, *The Next New Left*, 5-6.

aim to contribute to a broader understanding of the relationship between organized labour and its many allies, including the feminist movement and the left.

The Importance of Historical Context: Temporal and Geographical

Strike support materializes out of different temporal and geographic contexts. In areas where unions are complemented by strong feminist or left-wing ally organizations, strike support often extends *beyond* the scope of a singular strike, and comes to include local, provincial, or national issues as part of their agendas. In contrast, areas that are unionized but face the uphill battle of overcoming a paternal employer that actively suppresses working-class organization and alliances with feminism and the left are compelled to build such infrastructure from the bottom-up. Likewise, fraternal organizations, poor relief efforts, and women's auxiliaries are limited in what they can provide either due to differing agendas (such as the "carceral" focus of the Toronto House of Labour) or the restrictions placed on their work (such as the gendered lines within women's auxiliaries were forced to operate.) Temporality is important too. Periods of economic boom and decline have greatly determined the kinds of strike support available to the labour movement. The Depression, for example, saw left-wing organizations take center stage in support efforts, whereas community groups and independent leftists were usually hesitant to join the fray on account of the precarity of their livelihood. The 1960s, however, saw the beginning of a unification (though at times impermanent and always shaky) between feminists, leftists, community organizations – and even social-democratic political parties – which became even stronger in the 1970s.

The 1970s is a difficult period in which to contextualize strike support. Until the global economic downturn of 1974, Canadian workers (like their American counterparts) enjoyed a period of relative prosperity and union strength. From 1974 until well into the 1980s, however,

economic and political austerity threatened to undermine the Fordist accord that made such strength possible. A global recession resulted in stagflation, wherein the prices of goods and the cost of living rose, while wages fell, and jobs were lost. In Canada, the federal government implemented wage freezes and price controls to curb the financial crisis, and the post-war prosperity and union strength witnessed prior to the recession came to an end. Old forms of strike support and solidarity therefore had to be transformed into more creative forms of support, some of which drew on the kinds of alliances that were built in the past, while others were newly formed out of the unique economic circumstance of the period. Historical context, both temporal and geographic, is critical to accurately understanding the past. No decade or region can be oversimplified. Time and space matter. Accordingly, I do not claim to provide a holistic or expansive study of Canadian strike support in the 1970s, but I will suggest that the three strikes that I address are indicators of larger patterns that emerged within the Canadian labour movement's relationship with its allies in the period. As will be seen in Chapter 2, the strike at Dare Foods in Kitchener, Ontario stands out as a significant reminder that the relationship between feminism, labour, and the left has always been complicated, and that strike mobilizations are a difficult arena in which to couch women's issues

CHAPTER TWO: The Dare Foods Strike, 1972-73.

Introduction

Gender relations were certainly important to the story of [this] strike, but they were less central to the commentary of the time, and, ironically, in the pro-labour press, the strike went from being a just struggle of women against their employer to a heroic war of men sent to jail for their principles. The difficulties in organizing women's workplaces and the story of the debilitating injunction were certainly related, though this connection was not stressed at the time. Indeed, [this] struggle stands at the brink of new left, feminist, and student organizing that offered an analytic accent on working women's struggles as well as practical support on the picket line...¹

This was how Joan Sangster summarized the 1966 Tilco Plastics strike in Peterborough.

Though her article detailed a number of important nuances that characterized the strike – the most notable being management's use of an *ex parte* injunction limiting the number of pickets – Sangster chose to highlight how the strike was perceived by those involved at the time, as well as how it has been remembered. The popular image of the Tilco strike is the 26 male strikers who were sent to jail for their violation of the injunction, but, as Sangster suggests, there was far more at issue in the strike than just the injunction. 35 of the 60 total workers in the plant were women, and they were paid only 60% of what their male counterparts made; the employer, Harold “Dutch” Pammett, “punished dissenters” with hasty layoffs; and during collective agreement negotiations with the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA,) Tilco management fought hard against the union checkoff promised by the post-war accord.² These issues did not dominate contemporary coverage of the strike, however, particularly when the men's trial began. “The shift [in narrative] from striking women to heroic men seemed complete” by the time the

¹ Joan Sangster, “‘We No Longer Respect the Law’: The Tilco Strike, Labour Injunctions, and the State,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 53, (2004): 48.

² Sangster, “‘We No Longer Respect the Law,’” 53. “Escape clauses,” as they are named here by Sangster, were common proposals by management in collective bargaining cases in the 1960s and 1970s.

convicted strikers were jailed, and “press coverage [became] more interested in equating the word “woman” with “wife” rather than “striker.””³

History repeated itself only seven years later in Kitchener, Ontario at the Dare Foods Ltd. plant, a Canadian company established in the late 19th century and owned by the wealthy Dare family that made cookies and other snack foods. By the 1970s, Dare had production facilities in Canada and the United States and operated successfully in both countries, with its headquarters in Kitchener. The Dare plant in Kitchener had 350 employees in 1972, “90% of whom were women” that were underpaid and mistreated.⁴ The 350 employees went on strike when the company’s anti-union politics led to the breakdown of collective bargaining negotiations in May of 1972. Though the strike began over the proposal of a wage increase that gave more money to the male workers than the female workers, the strike quickly became about a number of issues that eventually overshadowed the concerns of the Dare women. These issues were many: the violence that abounded on the picket line; the Ontario Supreme Court’s injunction that led to the company’s use of strikebreaking labour (‘scabs’); the labour movement, feminist movement, and student activists of the New Left rallied around a particular issue of the strike and mobilized in solidarity with the strikers; and, a boycott of Dare products became a highly effective flashpoint through which the public made a stand against the company’s mistreatment of its workers.

But like the Tilco strike, the Dare strike drew national attention to itself when a handful of male strikers openly violated the rules of the injunction and received jail sentences. Despite their punishment, the violent acts these strikers committed on the picket line would go largely understated by both the court and the popular press due to the heroism they displayed against

³ Sangster, “We No Longer Respect the Law,” 67.

⁴ “New trouble on picket line at Dare plant,” *Globe & Mail*, 11 July 1972, 8.

Dare. Indeed, the strike and boycott amassed an impressive level of commitment from all kinds of allies, and the violence on the picket line captured the attention of the media – but at the strike’s core were women’s issues, issues that feminist organizations highlighted. The abundance of issues surrounding the Dare strike, and the public focus on such specific developments, should not obscure the experiences of the working-class women who fought for change in their workplace. Neither the Dare men, nor the United Brewery Workers (UBW) with which they were affiliated, intentionally or maliciously tried to undermine the female and feminist voices within the Dare strike; in fact, the support, encouragement, and solidarity that the Dare women received from their brothers in the UBW was evident from the very beginning of the strike. Instead, the multiplicity of issues has not yet been efficiently addressed by historians and subsequent commentators. This chapter is thus an attempt to centralize the issues of women’s inequality in the Dare strike amongst the many issues that were addressed by strike allies.

Historical Uses of Injunctions and Scab Labour

The use of injunctions by management was not limited to the strikes at Tilco or Dare. As with strikebreaking, injunctions were a common tactic used by employers facing a strike to combat industrial disputes with state-backed legal manoeuvres. As Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker have argued, injunctions were one of the core means by which industrial disputes and labour unrest could be effectively quelled by the state.⁵ Although Sangster has noted that Canadian labour law was more or less ambivalent in its allowance of injunctions (and instead relied on case law via the Judicature Act,) the A.W.R. Carrothers study on injunctions that was prompted

⁵ Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, “Forging Responsible Unions: Metal Workers and the Rise of the Labour Injunction in Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 37, (1996): 87.

by the Tilco strike reported that injunctions were becoming the preferred method of dealing with strikes in the 1960s.⁶

After the Second World War, the Fordist accord strengthened the power of injunctions by giving management special privileges in their relationship with labour. Indeed, injunctions had been used with increasing frequency since the 1960s (as noted by Carrothers, but also Stuart Jamieson) and organized labour's response to them remained vitriolic.⁷ When an injunction was passed during a strike, unions had to walk a fine line between fostering militancy and keeping their membership safe from prosecution under the law.⁸ Violations of court injunctions often carried harsh penalties, jailtime being the most common punishment. It was therefore advantageous for unions to discourage their membership from taking militant action, "wildcatting," or violating the terms of a court's injunction. The post-war accord effectively "tamed" the capacity for "direct action" by unions.⁹ That said, the settlement was stacked against organized labour even beyond the context of strikes and injunctions. "Face-to-face connections"

⁶ For Carrothers' analysis of injunctions, see volume 2 of his study entitled *Report of a Study on the Labour Injunction in Ontario*, (Toronto, 1966.) For Sangster's discussion of injunctions and Canadian labour law/common law, see: Sangster, "We No Longer Respect the Law," 55.

⁷ Carrothers' study is cited above, but to see Jamieson's analysis of labour injunctions in the post-war period see Stuart Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada*, 2nd Edition, (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1974), 97-98.

⁸ See Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History*, 2nd Edition, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1996). For similar arguments, see Donald M. Wells, "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model of Industrial Relations: The United Auto Workers in Canada and the Suppression of "Rank and File" Unionism, 1936-1953," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 20, 2, (1995): 193-225. Here, Wells provides an in-depth case study of the UAW during the early post-war period and argues that "the main price of employer and state acceptance of [post-WWII welfare state] security was the union leaders' agreement to suppress worker "direct action,'" and that the post-war accord "helped to shape the current limits of trade union mobilization in Canada." Additionally, it is argued in Neil Tudiver, "Forestalling the Welfare State: The Establishment of Programmes of Corporate Welfare," in Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert, eds., *The Benevolent State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987), 186-202, that "capitalists have used occupational welfare programmes to tighten their control over the labour process" by "[placating] angry employee groups, [forestalling] attempts at unionization, [softening] the harsh effects of poor working conditions, and [directing] workers' interests to their employers' interests." Lastly and perhaps most famously, the early post-war period is described by Panitch and Swartz in *From Consent to Coercion: The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms* as being one "in which the state and capital relied, more than before World War II, on obtaining the consent of workers generally, and unions in particular, to participating as subordinate actors in Canada's capitalist democracy."

⁹ Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 82.

between union leaders and the rank-and-file were lost since the Rand Formula ensured that stewards no longer had to solicit membership fees due to the union check-off.¹⁰ Unions also became heavily bureaucratized “and less openly democratic” institutions because “so much attention had [to now be] paid to the legalisms of class relations [and] the expanding contractual arrangements of the workplace [within] the state-orchestrated technologies of governance.”¹¹ Moreover, unions and labour organizations also became common targets of the “virulent post-war labour anti-communism” typical of the Cold War, thus making radical politics and militant agendas dangerous things to have on the job.¹² All of these characteristics of the post-war Fordist accord sustained management’s historical use of and reliance on injunctions, as well as a far more sinister strikebreaking tactic: the use of strikebreaking labour firms.

The use of scab labour as a strike-breaking technique has a long tradition in Canada. In their comprehensive study of a series of metalworking strikes in early 20th-century Ontario, Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker demonstrated that the Canadian legal system often sided with employers when strikes occurred, and thus “placed significant limitations” on “trade union activity” in order to help management continue business as usual.¹³ Until significant restrictions were put on the use of injunctions and strikebreaking in the late 1970s, laws outlining the extent to which employers could use strikebreakers remained vague.¹⁴ In fact, earlier cases in the metalworking industry of pre-war period strikebreaking often went unchallenged by workers.¹⁵ By the 1960s

¹⁰ Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 214.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See Fudge and Tucker, “Forging Responsible Unions.”

¹⁴ Fudge and Tucker, “Forging Responsible Unions,” 88.

¹⁵ Ibid.

and 1970s, however, striking workers who contended with scab labour became more openly critical of its usage.

Indeed, it had been pointedly criticized during the Dare strike by Marc Zwelling, a former *Toronto Telegram* reporter who had been commissioned by the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) to make a report on the use of strikebreaking in the province. Targeting the activities of the Canadian Driver Pool (CDP), a strikebreaking firm that will be given more attention below, Zwelling's report concluded that although strikebreaking violated the compromise of collective bargaining, it was ultimately a tactic endorsed by the state through police and "civic officials."¹⁶ Zwelling also charged that the use of strikebreaking techniques was a key determinant in violent labour conflicts, suggesting that the "coercive measures" it entailed incited strikers to resort to violence.¹⁷ Organized labour across Ontario thus feared that a company's ability to rely on strikebreaking firms such as CDP would seriously undermine a union's capacity to bargain for job security.¹⁸ Zwelling's report would eventually be published by the OFL, and serve as not only a detailed index of strikebreaking usage in Ontario, but a poignant criticism of the state's complicity in both strikebreaking and the use of force to end labour disputes.¹⁹

¹⁶ "Strikebreaking: a legally supported menace," *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Bargaining in bad faith," *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, 4, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.)

¹⁹ Marc Zwelling, *The Strikebreakers: The Report of the Strikebreaking Committee of the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto*, (Toronto: Ontario Federation of Labour, 1972), 12. I am referring here to the passage where Zwelling writes, "when up to 400 Ontario Provincial Police marched into Kirkland Lake during a 1942 miner's strike, when 100 Quebec Provincial Police invaded the town of Asbestos to protect hundreds of strikebreakers in the 1949 asbestos-workers strike, and when 300 OPP constables arrived in Sudbury during the 1966 strike at Inco, Canadian authorities were repeating a history of official sanction of the use of force in labour disputes in North America."

The Dare Women Speak Up

The collective agreement between Dare and Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers (UBW) expired on 30 April 1972.²⁰ It was the first collective agreement that the Dare workers had bargained, since a union in the Kitchener plant had only been certified in 1968.²¹ The company's wage increase offer entailed a 45-cent increase for the female workers in the plant and a 55-cent increase for the male workers.²² Both men and women would therefore receive a wage increase, but the women would still be paid less overall than male employees because- despite whatever additional tasks they took on in the plant- women were ultimately categorized as packers, "the lowest paid job in the plant."²³ The strike officially began at midnight on 28 May 1972, after nearly a month of negotiations.²⁴ Though unequal pay and job classification between male and female workers was the key demand of the union, a number of other issues informed the decision to strike. For example, the Dare plant was one of the few remaining workplaces after the 1950s that exceeded an eight-hour workday.²⁵ The use of work speed-ups in the plant by "insensitive supervisors" abounded,²⁶ and women workers in particular had some of the more difficult and dangerous working conditions. Their positions required them to stand for the entirety of their shift, work in hot kitchens that reached an excess of 130 degrees with no fans or adequate ventilation, and receive lunch and bathroom breaks only if they had reached

²⁰ "1972 Strike," David Lippert's notes, 1992, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 42, 1967 Surrey, BC Strike.

²¹ "The original issues," *Pro Tem*, 18 October 1972, 4.

²² "1972 Strike," David Lippert's notes, 1992, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 42, 1967 Surrey, BC Strike.

²³ "Women's group backing encourages Dare strikers," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 21 September 1972.

²⁴ "Dare strike: a brief history," *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

production quota.²⁷ In an informational pamphlet distributed by Madeleine Parent and the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women (OCSW), it was also revealed that women were required to “wear [uncomfortable] dress type uniforms” that were not at all conducive to working in the hot kitchens.²⁸

Later during the strike, the Dare women would level more criticisms and share more of their personal grievances against the company, making the strike encompass a broader spectrum of women’s issues that extended beyond pay equity.²⁹ Picket captain Andrew Diamond and his wife, alongside packers Pauline Breen and Beverley Norris, met privately with one another to “give their view of working conditions” and the many problems that women employees faced on the shop floor.³⁰ One of the issues that they later voiced to *The Globe & Mail* was that women were frequently passed over for promotions. Breen voiced annoyance at the fact that company supervisors often approached those in line for promotions privately, offering them the promotion secretly without giving others the ability to apply.³¹ Breen and Norris noted that they felt discouraged from applying for any promotions that would pay better, such as the coveted position of oven captain, since the company “make up their minds ahead of time who is going to get the job before the job is even posted.”³²

The women also told *The Globe & Mail* that they were often shouted at and verbally abused by their supervisors while on the job, and at times would not be relieved for bathroom

²⁷ “Bargaining in bad faith,” *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 4.

²⁸ “Women’s group backing encourages Dare strikers,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 21 September 1972.

²⁹ “Female employees well treated, company man says: Dare strike started over pay raises, now involved in wider rage of women’s rights,” *The Globe & Mail*, 1 February 1973, W6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

breaks until up to an hour after requesting one.³³ Dare representatives were “exasperated” by both claims, and defended the company by explaining that women “don’t want the responsibility” of the oven captain jobs, and that “there would be chaos” in the plants if women “just walked off” to the bathroom leaving cookies to “pile up.”³⁴ The company’s refusal to acknowledge any of the union’s demands beyond the equal raise dispute, combined with the female strikers’ increasingly public criticisms of the company’s practices, led Diamond to declare that the Dare strike was “a strike about women’s rights.”³⁵ Earlier in November of 1972, Madeleine Parent threatened to involve the Women’s Bureau if the Dare women’s conditions had not improved.³⁶ Parent also criticized mainstream labour unions for not accommodating women’s issues, and noted that the Dare women were indicative of the workers in Canada who were paid less for equal work with men.³⁷ Attracting the attention of Parent, the OCSW, and the Women’s Bureau to the Dare women’s working conditions allowed the strike to occupy the attention of both the women’s movement and the labour movement. The OCSW was initially apprehensive about throwing all of its support behind the striking women, since some of the strikebreakers bought in by CDP were also women, who would have no doubt gained employment because of the strike. Madeleine Parent simplified the situation for the OCSW by arguing that “the women on strike were fighting for justice, and that many more women, and all society, would benefit if they won.”³⁸ As the issues that the strike covered multiplied, however, even more allies would be drawn to the Dare women’s cause.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Status group may complain for women,” *The Globe & Mail*, 9 November 1972, W6.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lynn McDonald, “The Challenge Accepted: The Founding of the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women,” in Beth Atcheson and Lorna Marsden, *White Gloves Off: The Work of the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women*, (Toronto: Second Story Press, 2018), 50.

The Dare Strike Becomes a Battle on Several Fronts

When the strike began, Local 173 reported “well-organized and extremely orderly” picket lines.³⁹ On 6 June 1972, however, “violence broke out” at the Dare plant “after pickets tried to halt truckloads of goods being removed from the plant” by scabs employed by CDP.⁴⁰ The number of strikers present at the picket totalled 200.⁴¹ The strikers threw stones at the scabs’ vans as they left the plant, slashed the tires of any vehicles in range, and allegedly threw Molotov cocktails through the plant windows as well as rocks,⁴² resulting in plant damages of \$40,000.⁴³ Dare estimated that \$15,000 worth of the damages came from product that was “ruined” by glass and debris.⁴⁴ The Ontario Supreme Court then passed the injunction that limited picketing on 12 June 1972 as a direct response to the violence and damage.⁴⁵ After the injunction was ordered, the union promised to uphold it, and Dare promised not to use scab labour to transport the 30,000 “cases of cookies and candies” that still needed transporting.⁴⁶ An amenable, though momentary truce on the Dare picket line resulted, though Dare did rescind its proposed collective agreement offer due to its disdain for the violence and damage.⁴⁷

Violence on the picket line escalated anew when Local 173 realized that the injunction allowed Dare to use CDP as scab labour with relative ease, regardless of whatever promises they

³⁹ “Dare strike: a brief history,” *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 1.

⁴⁰ “New trouble on picket line at Dare plant,” *The Globe & Mail*, 11 July 1972, 8.

⁴¹ “Dare strike: Pickets in Kitchener obey ruling of court,” *The Globe & Mail*, 14 June 1972, 9.

⁴² One unmarked document in the University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives Dare Foods collection appears to be authored by a company representative and describes the use of Molotov cocktails by the strikers. As a later footnote acknowledges, tire slashing instruments were provided to the Dare strikers beforehand.

⁴³ “New trouble on picket line at Dare plant,” *The Globe & Mail*, 11 July 1972, 8.

⁴⁴ “Dare strike: Pickets in Kitchener obey ruling of court,” *The Globe & Mail*, 14 June 1972, 9.

⁴⁵ “Dare workers vote to dislodge brewery union,” *The Globe & Mail*, 1 February 1974, 2.

⁴⁶ “Dare strike: Pickets in Kitchener obey ruling of court,” *The Globe & Mail*, 14 June 1972, 9.

⁴⁷ “To all union members within Dare Foods group of employees,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 14 June 1972.

had made.⁴⁸ Later in July 1972, a number of Dare employees “who had tired of the [then]-seven-week strike” and were persuaded back to work by phone calls and letters sent by Dare⁴⁹ were barred from entry by a human chain made by the strikers.⁵⁰ “A scuffle” of “shoving and shouting” resulted, and Kitchener police were called to quell the disturbance.⁵¹ The 6 officers that were initially on the scene soon numbered 25.⁵² The police had to use force in order to break apart the chain and ultimately arrested three young picketers, David Rushton, Gilbert Bailey, and Paul Pugh.⁵³ Though he was not arrested, video footage taken by a Dare representative from inside the plant caught Louis Dautner, the international representative for the UBW, trying to break the police corridor, violating the injunction.⁵⁴ Nine more strikers including Dautner and Pugh were issued summons to appear in court for their part in the altercation.⁵⁵ Reports of drunkenness and tire-slashing abounded.⁵⁶ The injunction forbid any such activity, particularly “interference” or “coercion” that would prevent returning Dare employees from entering the plant.⁵⁷ Rushton, who had a concealed weapon on the picket line, was an indirect casualty of the strike’s violence. He died by suicide, which his friends attributed to “depression” caused by his inability to participate in union activity.⁵⁸ After being arrested, Rushton had to report twice a week to Kitchener police, was ordered to stay 1000 feet away from the plant at all times, and was

⁴⁸ “Dare strike: a brief history,” *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ “New trouble on picket line at Dare plant,” *The Globe & Mail*, 11 July 1972, 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² “Andrew Diamond et al. and Dare Foods – Reasons for Judgement,” LAC, Diamond v. Dare Foods, RG125, R927, Vol. 1941, File 13288, 6.

⁵³ “New trouble on the picket line at Dare plant,” *The Globe & Mail*, 11 July 1972, 8.

⁵⁴ “Andrew Diamond et al. and Dare Foods – Reasons for Judgement,” LAC, Diamond v. Dare Foods, RG125, R927, Vol. 1941, File 13288, 7.

⁵⁵ “New trouble on the picket line at Dare plant,” *The Globe & Mail*, 11 July 1972, 8.

⁵⁶ Undated and unlabeled headlines in the Waterloo Special Collections & Archives Dare Foods fonds read “Three Dare pickets, drunk are convicted,” and “Tire-slasher supplier at strike fined.”

⁵⁷ “New trouble on the picket line at Dare plant,” *The Globe & Mail*, 11 July 1972, 8.

⁵⁸ “Dare pickets mourn asphyxiated striker,” *The Globe & Mail*, 9 August 1972, 4.

barred from contacting fellow union members.⁵⁹ He was also unemployed because of the strike, and his behaviour and punishment received negative attention in the local press.⁶⁰

An unidentified group of strikers also followed CDP delivery trucks carrying Dare products to Toronto and attempted to force the trucks off the road.⁶¹ Due to the continued violence, Dare executives pushed hard against a clause in the proposed collective agreement that would require all workers to be unionized by the UBW via union checkoff.⁶² Dare's executive VP defended the company's attack on the clause by tying the UBW to violence not just during the current strike, but in past disputes as well.⁶³ At an Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) hearing in August of 1972, the UBW sought to prosecute Dare for violating the Labour Relations Act due to its unwillingness "to bargain in good faith."⁶⁴ Reports of the hearing emerged one day after pickets formed outside a Toronto Dare warehouse where it was alleged that Dare was importing product from a B.C. production facility.⁶⁵ Delivery trucks refused to cross the picket line and enter the warehouse.⁶⁶

Additionally, Dare sought damages in early October from the Supreme Court of Ontario in excess of \$1.6 million, \$100,000 of which was proposed to be punitive damages against each defendant found guilty of breaching the injunction.⁶⁷ Dare also proposed that the Supreme Court

⁵⁹ "Man asphyxiated: Picket line mourns striker found dead," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992.

⁶⁰ "Severity of the law," *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 1.

⁶¹ "Man asphyxiated: Picket line mourns striker found dead," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992.

⁶² "OLRB hearing for strike at Dare plant," *The Globe & Mail*, 25 August 1972, 5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ "Struck firm seeking \$1.6 million damages," *The Globe & Mail*, 7 October 1972, 2.

grant a separate injunction against the growing boycott of Dare products in order “to protect the company’s name.”⁶⁸ Dare’s claim that the boycott was illegal was not a novel tactic used by management to break strikes. As explained by Charles Smith, industrial legality clearly outlined that primary picketing (the picketing of the business where strikers were employed) could be regulated by injunctions, yet the regulation of secondary pickets (demonstrations and boycotts against businesses and companies affiliated with the striking business) “was not always clear.”⁶⁹ Because of the legal procedures dictated by Canadian common law, the decision to side with management or deny their case against a boycott was left to individual judges.⁷⁰ Still, the industrial legality of the 20th century (even in the early years) had noticeable anti-labour prejudices. As Minister of Labour in the early 1900s, for example, William Lyon Mackenzie King called for the outlawing of boycotts (among many other picketing tactics) after a heated attempt at conciliation with striking Rossland, B.C. miners in 1903.⁷¹ Even the 1960s and 1970s, two decades that witnessed a series of successful boycotts such as Cesar Chavez’s grape boycott in the United States in 1965, and the Kraft foods boycott in 1971, simultaneously saw companies use injunctions against them, as was the case in *Hersees v. Goldstein* in 1963, where a judge sided with the Hersees Company and granted an injunction on the use of boycotts and secondary picketing.⁷²

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Charles W. Smith, “We didn’t want to totally break the law:” Industrial Legality, the Pepsi Strike, and Workers’ Collective Rights in Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 74, (2014): 94.

⁷⁰ Smith, “We didn’t want to totally break the law,” 94.

⁷¹ Gregory S. Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 431.

⁷² Chavez’s personal recollections on the U.S. grape boycott are recounted in *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* by Jacques E. Levy (particularly chapter 3, “National Spotlight.”) Marc Zwelling covered the Kraft boycott in the 1970s in *Canadian Dimension* (see: “The Kraft Boycott,” *Canadian Dimension* 8, no. 4-5, 1972, pages 8, 10, and 64; also “Watch For These Labels,” in the same issue, page 65), as does Sean Antaya in his article “The Poverty of Bureaucracy: New Left Theory and Practice in the Canadian Labour Movement During the 1960s and 1970s,” *The Great Lakes Journal of Undergraduate History*, 4, 1, 53-68. For information on the *Hersees v. Goldstein* injunction, see: Smith, “We didn’t want to totally break the law,” 94.

Boycotts were thus a common tactic for striking workers, and they were often fought by management, though with varying degrees of success. During the Dare strike, the bumper stickers that read “Don’t buy Dare products,” and other clever pieces of merchandise that were distributed to raise awareness of the boycott, were considered illegal by the company, but the courts did not agree.⁷³ The boycott had begun as early as the strike’s third week, and expanded beyond Dare products, reaching “businesses which did any service” for Dare.⁷⁴ Though a few rental companies ended their business with Dare as a result of the boycott (like Day and Ross, a freight company, and Riordan Rentals, a car leasing business) pickets formed outside of the companies that did not, such as “Newtex Cleaners, Hertz Rent-a-Car, Sanderson’s Tire Service,” and a taxi company that scabs used to get themselves to and from the plant.⁷⁵ One of the pickets that formed at Hertz in February 1973 was almost exclusively composed of and led by women.⁷⁶

Indeed, the boycott proved to be the means by which many allies rallied in solidarity with the Dare strikers. Local and provincial women’s groups such as the Guelph Women’s Center and the OCSW aided Local 173 in distributing pamphlets to local grocery stores to inform consumers about the boycott.⁷⁷ In fact, the OCSW had proved itself an important ally well before the boycott gained traction. It joined the Dare women in forming pickets outside of the plant, and one of the members of the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), the body within the OCSW that was most involved in the Dare strike, arranged a meeting with Dare management, an

⁷³ “Struck firm seeking \$1.6 million damages,” *The Globe & Mail*, 7 October 1972, 2.

⁷⁴ “Boycott Dare products,” *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ “Dare strikers picket Hertz truck office,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 23 February 1973.

⁷⁷ “Boycott Dare products,” *Perspective on Dare*, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 1.

act that Marjorie Cohen has described as “virtually unthinkable today.”⁷⁸ FEPC also lobbied for the Ontario Labour Minister to “personally intervene” and force Dare to settle.⁷⁹ Additionally, another FEPC member wrote to the press and ensured that “the need for an end to [gendered] job discrimination” was present in media coverage of the strike.⁸⁰ When the boycott became the primary means of mobilizing against Dare, the OCSW helped organize striking Dare women into pickets outside of stores that sold Dare products, such as “Loblaws, A&P, Miracle Mart, and Dominion.”⁸¹ One OCSW-led boycott picket took place outside of the St. James Town Dominion store and Towne Mall in Toronto, where they distributed pamphlets and information to consumers about Dare’s exploitative practices.⁸² These pickets were highly effective, since union representatives in contact with the local grocery stores reported to the UBW that there were “very few Dare cookies on the shelves,” and that those that were carried did not sell.⁸³ Additionally, Cohen claimed that the boycott was so influential that “even after the strike ended... many women still refused to buy Dare cookies.”⁸⁴

Another important ally in the strike, the Kitchener NDP committee made and sold popular “Don’t Dare” lapel buttons.⁸⁵ Additionally, the Dare Strike Support Committee, made up of striking Dare women, printed and distributed the Dare cookies’ recipes, encouraging the

⁷⁸ Marjorie Cohen, “Employment and Economy Issues: The Fair Employment Practices Committee,” in Beth Atcheson and Lorna Marsden, *White Gloves Off: The Work of the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women*, (Toronto: Second Story Press, 2018), 62-63.

⁷⁹ Cohen, “Employment and Economy Issues,” 63.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ “Women’s group backing encourages Dare strikers,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 21 September 1972.

⁸⁴ Cohen, “Employment and Economy Issues,” 63.

⁸⁵ “Boycott Dare products,” Perspective on Dare, sponsored by Local 173 of the United Brewery Workers, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.), 1.

public to bake their own rather than buy them.⁸⁶ A provincial ally, the Ontario Anti-Poverty League, also pledged its support to the boycott.⁸⁷ In September of 1972, the OCSW helped the Dare strikers prepare a briefing to the Metro Toronto labour council, where “all 50 Ontario labour councils and their 1,800 affiliated locals” were asked for “financial help” as well as support in the boycott.⁸⁸ The archival record of the boycott also indicates a number of individuals and families who wrote letters voicing their support of the boycott to Dare directly, and encouraged their neighbors to do so as well.⁸⁹ Stores in the Kitchener area that decided to support the boycott were “A&P, Steinberg’s, Dominion, Loblaw’s and IGA,” though one student newspaper noted that some Dominion stores in the Toronto area continued to carry Dare products.⁹⁰

As the strike wore on into February of 1973, ads were printed in *The Globe & Mail* by the company warning sympathizers of the strike to avoid joining the picket lines.⁹¹ These ads attempted to make clear to the public that anyone found in violation of the court’s injunction would be punished on the same terms as the strikers.⁹² Since the injunction did not apply to store premises or the boycott, however, NDP MPP’s (encouraged by provincial leader Stephen Lewis) joined the strikers and the OCSW on the picket lines outside of stores selling Dare products to strengthen the boycott.⁹³ The NDP’s place on the picket line followed a public meeting hosted by

⁸⁶ File 7 of the Dare Foods collection in the University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives contains a copy of this recipe sheet.

⁸⁷ “Women’s group backing encourages Dare strikers,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 21 September 1972.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ There are a number of personal letters, handwritten and typed, in the University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives Dare Foods collection. Some are signed, others are left anonymous. Many of the letters in the collection were addressed to CEO Clifford Dare.

⁹⁰ “Dare products boycott,” *Pro Tem*, 18 October 1972, 5.

⁹¹ “Public notice,” *The Globe & Mail*, 14 February 1973, 4.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ “Strikers at Dare back NDP aid offer,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 7 February 1973.

the Kitchener-Waterloo Human Rights Caucus in the UBW union hall where Lewis openly denounced the injunction and Dare's refusal to bargain fairly.⁹⁴

Support for the Dare strike and demonstrations against scab labour eventually expanded beyond Kitchener. In February of 1973, 75 demonstrators including "unionists, students, and 35 Dare strikers" (led in part by economist and then-Waffle leader Mel Watkins) "bogged down operations at the Canadian National Express terminal" in Toronto for 2.5 hours.⁹⁵ The *Toronto Star* reported that "demonstrators stood in front of CN trucks leaving and entering the express yard and in some cases were pulled from the path by CN [employees] and York Regional Police," and that many trucks refused to enter the yard out of fear of crossing the picket line.⁹⁶ Though representatives from CN insisted that no Dare products were handled at the Toronto terminal, Pugh, who was present with the demonstrators at the Toronto picket, explained that the goal of the demonstration was to "embarrass" CN for its complicity in shipping Dare food.⁹⁷

The Dare women also received the support of the IWDC in March 1973. Many Dare women, such as Louella Carnegie, a female member of Local 173's bargaining unit, were invited to participate in a number of demonstrations in Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square on International Women's Day. Organized by the Toronto's Women's Place, feminists and Dare strikers "shook hands with curious passers-by, chanted "heaven help the working girl in a world that's run by men"... and put on a brief skit showing women rebelling against their male bosses" by pouring piping hot coffee over their heads.⁹⁸ A women's group known as the Beautyshop

⁹⁴ Ibid. See also, "Public meeting in support of the Dare strikers," ad in *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*.

⁹⁵ "75 block CN express terminal to support Kitchener strike," *Toronto Star*, 9 February 1973, 55.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Dare strikers help mark Women's Day," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 9 March 1973.

Quartet also led the demonstrators in song and dance.⁹⁹ Parent and the Canadian Textile and Chemical Workers' Union (CTCU) rallied Local 560 at the Toronto Puretex Knitting Co. plant to join the Dare women in solidarity during the Women's Place demonstrations.¹⁰⁰ Ironically, the Puretex women, who make up the focus of Chapter 3, would find themselves in a strike not at all dissimilar from their sisters at Dare five years later, and it is likely that their involvement in the International Women's Day demonstrations in 1973 was a crucial stepping stone on their own path to militancy. The CTCU-organized Harding and Texpack plants later supported the Dare boycott by picketing outside of their local Dominion Store locations and sending letters to the Ontario labour minister asking him to intervene on Local 173's behalf.¹⁰¹ As Heather Jon Maroney argues in her study of the Fleck strike in 1978, rallying "women's committees and groups from the autonomous women's movement for picket line and financial support" was an effective means by which the women's movement could be "legitimated" within the labour movement.¹⁰² Maroney also notes that the feminist perspective added to the strike due to the involvement of women's organizations encouraged journalists to bring "a feminist concern to their investigation," thus popularizing women's issues and women's discourse in coverage of the strike.¹⁰³ This was true of the Dare strike as well, and like the Fleck strike, it "popularized a militant feminist ideology" that caught the attention of mainstream media.¹⁰⁴ Though a number of other issues that surrounded the strike would soon muffle the feminist agenda of the Dare

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ "C.T.C.U. supports Dare strikers," *CTC Bulletin*, March 1973, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 Positive p-413 c-2.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Heather Jon Maroney, "Feminism at Work," *New Left Review*, 141, (1983): 61.

¹⁰³ Maroney, "Feminsm at Work," 61.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

strike, the early days of the strike drew media attention due to the feminist discourse of women's issues at work surrounding it.

On 21 March 1973, 50 "placard-carrying demonstrators" marched and sang outside of Queen's Park, where Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) President David Archer called for other unions (as well as all of Ontario's labour councils)¹⁰⁵ to stand in solidarity with the Dare strikers.¹⁰⁶ The aim of this demonstration was also to encourage the provincial government to impose stricter labour laws surrounding injunctions and strikebreaking.¹⁰⁷ Liberal leader Robert Nixon was also "booed and heckled throughout his brief speech" by the demonstrators, despite his emphatic anti-scab and anti-injunction stance.¹⁰⁸ Though many of the unions present at the rally considered it a success, Albert Gill, president of Local 173, was disappointed that a mere 400 supporters showed up despite the projected "thousands."¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the Dare strikers continued their endeavour to rally as much support as possible, and 14 April 1973 marked another large mobilization in support of the strike. The Kitchener-Waterloo Labour Council organized a parade in partnership with the union and the various strike support committees in Kitchener's Victoria Park, which later marched to city hall.¹¹⁰ This event was preceded by a free concert organized by the UBW headlined by Canadian satirist Dave Broadfoot.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ "Dare union organizing mass protest," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 14 February 1973, 3.

¹⁰⁶ "Plea for general union support made at Dare demonstration," *The Globe & Mail*, 22 March 1973, 57.

¹⁰⁷ "Dare union organizing mass protest," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 14 February 1973, 3.

¹⁰⁸ "Plea for general union support made at Dare demonstration," *The Globe & Mail*, 22 March 1973, 57.

¹⁰⁹ "Only 400 protest labour laws," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.)

¹¹⁰ "Don't Dare miss this parade," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.)

¹¹¹ "Dare: A day of concern," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.) It may also be important to note that in 1978, when the aforementioned Puretex women would go on strike over similar issues, the OFL was absent and did not provide such support.

Over 1,100 people turned out to the parade, and the success of the event prompted the strikers and their supporters to plan a third mobilization for May of 1973.¹¹² By the end of May, however, 110 of the original 375 strikers had returned to work at Dare or sought employment elsewhere.¹¹³ Prior to this, Dare had called for 50 workers to return to work but the UBW decided amongst themselves via secret ballot that no one would answer the call.¹¹⁴ The UBW also faced decertification by the OLRB due to the “year of continued operations” at Dare, despite the strike effort.¹¹⁵ The UBW had spent \$250,000 in nearly one-year’s time “to finance” the strike, and had begun preparations to fund a potential second year of strike action, which seemed likely to follow.¹¹⁶ Although Dare had been fined for four violations of labour law for its use of coercive back-to-work ads, the strike appeared to be losing its momentum.¹¹⁷ In order to “boost the morale” of the strikers, the UBW hosted the third rally as planned in order to once again rouse their supporters across Ontario.¹¹⁸ There was concern in the weeks leading up to the rally that it would be sparsely attended, as a previous event hosted by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in support of the Dare strikers attracted only 150 attendees.¹¹⁹ Mel Watkins, who not only co-led the Waffle with James Laxer, but was also a distinguished Canadian political economist at the University of Toronto and Canadian nationalist critical of American control over the economy, spoke at the event and warned that Dare’s union-smashing attempts were not isolated to Kitchener, and that many workplaces across the country were prone

¹¹² “Dare union plans march, talks go on,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 30 April 1973.

¹¹³ “3,500 support Dare strike in Kitchener,” *Toronto Star*, 28 May 1973, 34.

¹¹⁴ “Dare union rejects offer to recall 50,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 7 May 1973.

¹¹⁵ “3,500 support Dare strike in Kitchener,” *Toronto Star*, 28 May 1973, 34.

¹¹⁶ “No sign of a settlement at Dare: A strike that’s a year and \$250,000 old,” *The Globe & Mail*, 26 May 1973, 1.

¹¹⁷ For coverage of Dare being fined for breaching labour laws, see: “Dare Foods, executive fined under labour act” *The Globe & Mail*, 15 May 1973, B3; for claims of lost momentum, see: “Dare workers vote to dislodge brewery union,” *The Globe & Mail*, 1 February 1974, 2.

¹¹⁸ “3,500 support Dare strike in Kitchener,” *Toronto Star*, 28 May 1973, 34.

¹¹⁹ “Unionist says Dare strikers ‘left in cold,’” *The Globe & Mail*, 9 April 1979, 2.

to such activities by management.¹²⁰ Similarly, Bill Morrison, SEIU's "Kitchener-based organizer" echoed these concerns, and charged the labour movement with leaving Dare "out in the cold" due to the fact that many workers who made above the then-coveted five-dollar wage failed to turn up at the event.¹²¹

Fortunately, the turnout at the third and final rally was exemplary, with Kitchener police estimates of nearly 3,500 demonstrators, (although another *Globe & Mail* article claimed 5,000),¹²² all of whom "moved peacefully through downtown Kitchener to a parking lot next to a police station," while chanting "Don't buy Dare."¹²³ The demonstrators then congregated in Mackenzie King Square to sing and hear "speeches from representatives of major unions" such as the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the OFL.¹²⁴ Contrary to Morrison's forecast, the Dare strikers were not left in the cold, and organized labour was far from the major constituency in attendance: NDP MPPs, students, youth, and leftist members of the Kitchener community were all in attendance to support the Dare strikers.¹²⁵ A representative from the Spanish Workers' Association spoke to the crowd via interpreter, and a local Marxist group's banners could be seen alongside the banners of the Teamsters and Steelworkers.¹²⁶ Even the Kitchener chapter of the United Church of Canada, "concerned over the animosity dividing workers and the community," lent its support to the strike by sending a telegram to Ontario's

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "5,000 union men march in support of Dare strikers," *The Globe & Mail*, 28 May 1973, 4.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ "3,500 support Dare strike in Kitchener," *Toronto Star*, 28 May 1973, 34; coverage of the rally was also in *The Globe*, namely, "5,000 union men march in support of Dare strikers," *The Globe & Mail*, 28 May 1973, 4.

¹²⁵ "3,500 support Dare strike in Kitchener," *Toronto Star*, 28 May 1973, 34.

¹²⁶ "5,000 union men march in support of Dare strikers," *The Globe & Mail*, 28 May 1973, 4.

labour minister “urging him to review the situation with the aim of a reconciliation in the dispute.”¹²⁷

Due to the diversity of supporters the rally attracted, opinions varied regarding the strikers’ next steps. OFL President David Archer and the UBW insisted that maintaining the boycott against Dare products should be the strikers’ main priority, with one Dare striker suggesting that the boycott was the “only weapon” against the company.¹²⁸ One NDP MPP from Windsor denounced labour relations laws in Ontario for being the main enemy of the strikers, and publicly declared that the use of injunction and scab labour should be made illegal.¹²⁹ More militant voices from CUPE encouraged the strikers to bolster the picket lines and urged utility companies and workplaces in Kitchener to cut off power, postal service, and transportation to the plant.¹³⁰ Reporters at the rally observed, however, that the rally’s vigor was not matched by the leaders of Local 173. Dautner, who “looked tired” throughout the rally’s proceedings, knew of the UBW’s impending decertification by the OLRB, and heard only “rhetoric and roars” in the rally’s crowd.¹³¹ Indeed, Dare’s sales in Canada had dropped nearly \$2 million since 1972, but despite being a Canadian company, the American market ensured that no serious financial loss was incurred by the company, since the boycott had no measured effect in the United States market.¹³² The boycott thus remained strong, but the union faced decertification.

The Dare Men Go to Court

¹²⁷ “No sign of a settlement at Dare: A strike that’s a year and \$250,000 old,” *The Globe & Mail*, 26 May 1973, 1.

¹²⁸ “3,500 support Dare strike in Kitchener,” *Toronto Star*, 28 May 1973, 34.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* As a note of comparison, similar suggestions and calls for militancy were made to the TWUA during the Tilco strike.

¹³¹ “3,000 at Dare rally: Union near end, fight isn’t,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 28 May 1973.

¹³² “Why some strikes drag on,” *Financial Times*, 28 May 1973, 6.

On 1 March 1973, the judge presiding over the Dare strikers' violation of the injunction, Justice Donnelly, ruled that Dautner, Diamond, Pugh, Wayne Zettler, Reid Scott, and Jack Horne were all in contempt of court for their actions on the picket line.¹³³ Breen, who had been charged with contempt along with the others, was the only one "dismissed."¹³⁴ Jail time was given to all of the men found in contempt of the court injunction, with the exception of Horne, who was exempted because his wife and daughter were both ill.¹³⁵ Dautner and Diamond received 60-day jail sentences, while Zettler and Pugh received 30-day sentences, and Scott received 10.¹³⁶ Dautner, Diamond, and Zettler attempted to appeal their sentences, as they believed their punishments to be indicative of the very problem within industrial legality that they were trying to fix, namely that labour laws penalized the workers and exempted the company from any wrongdoing in labour disputes.¹³⁷ Their appeal was dismissed, and Donnelly gave no reason for the dismissal.¹³⁸ Pugh and Scott, who did not appeal their sentences, were "escorted by 15 sign-carrying friends" who "peacefully" followed the men as they turned themselves in to face their sentences, hailed as heroes by their contemporaries in the labour movement for openly defying the court's injunction.¹³⁹

Like the Tilco strike in Peterborough less than a decade prior, a strike that emerged out of women's calls for better pay and respect on the job quickly transformed into a narrative of male heroism, and open defiance of the oppressors of their 'sisters.' The support the convicted men

¹³³ "6 strikers convicted of contempt of court," *Toronto Star*, 2 March 1973, 2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ "5 jailed for Dare picket line violence," *Toronto Star*, 8 March 1973, 67.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ "3 of 6 strikers to appeal jail terms," unlabelled newspaper clipping found in University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992, (n.d.)

¹³⁸ "Andrew Diamond et al. and Dare Foods – Affidavit," LAC, *Diamond v. Dare Foods*, RG125, R927, Vol. 1941, File 13288, 2-3.

¹³⁹ "Friends escort strikers to jail," *The Globe & Mail*, 23 March 1973, 9.

received as they marched to jail tells one story, but their behaviour on the picket line tells another. It was revealed during the court case that Dautner had made an anonymous phone call to a striker who intended to return to work, threatening to trash his home and car if he did so.¹⁴⁰ Zettler made what Justice Donnelly described as “a cowardly attack” against Dare employee Garry Moore in a hotel bar parking-lot, strangling him and holding him to the ground after shouting obscenities to him in the restaurant,¹⁴¹ threatening to kill him if his wife returned to work; Pugh shouted profanity, insults, and threats at female workers as they exited the plant one night; and Scott and Horne both “bumped” and “shoved” employees on the picket line while Dautner and Diamond – the men in charge of keeping order on the picket line – did little to contain the violence.¹⁴² Though Justice Donnelly sentenced the men and denounced their actions publicly in court, there appeared to be a reluctance to do so, a kind of sympathy with the men he was punishing. Donnelly explained to the men that “it was never an agreeable task to send a man to jail, but the courts have held that imprisonment is the proper remedy for criminal contempt.”¹⁴³ He then went on to call the strikers “good citizens in a prosperous community” who “[did not] need reformatory sentences.”¹⁴⁴

Effectively, the violence towards women and their husbands on the picket line was only ‘punished’ because of Donnelly’s obligation to ensure that “court processes be respected, and court orders obeyed.”¹⁴⁵ The issue, however, was complicated, since the assaulted women were strikebreakers employed by CDP. Some women in the OCSW questioned why the striking Dare

¹⁴⁰ “Andrew Diamond et al. and Dare Foods – Reasons for Judgement,” LAC Diamond v. Dare Foods, RG125, R927, Vol. 1941, File 13288, 8.

¹⁴¹ “Flouted injunction in strike at Dare, six men sentenced,” *The Globe & Mail*, 8 March 1973, 5.

¹⁴² “Disobeyed order, injunction, 6 are guilty in Dare incidents,” *The Globe & Mail*, 2 March 1973, 35.

¹⁴³ “Flouted injunction in strike at Dare, six men sentenced,” *The Globe & Mail*, 8 March 1973, 5.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

women were supported while the strikebreaking women were condemned.¹⁴⁶ Ironically, it was Madeleine Parent who assuaged those in the OCSW who sympathized with the strikebreaking women by arguing that “the women on strike were fighting for justice, and that many more women, and all society, would benefit if [the strikers] won,” and that “if they lost, not only would women workers lose, but others would be discouraged from demanding equal pay.”¹⁴⁷ Though well-intentioned, Justice Donnelly and Parent both contributed to the contempt of the strikebreaking women in a battle that began, above all, over issues of women’s inequality.

Though Dautner would share his regret over the violence in the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* 20 years after the strike, hostilities remained embedded in the community well after strike.¹⁴⁸ Many of the former strikers maintained their views that Dare was an anti-union environment and could not forgive their use of scab labour. The company, as always, maintained that it never had anti-union sentiments. Zettler’s reputation became divided, with some media outlets emphasizing his contrition and the fact that his jail sentence would temporarily separate him from his family, and later coverage of the strike viewing him as a “radical” for his violent actions on the picket line.¹⁴⁹ The strike was also a divisive one: though Local 173 drew many supporters from across Ontario (both within and outside of the organized labour movement), Dare had its own supporters who viewed the union’s actions with disdain.¹⁵⁰ The archival record

¹⁴⁶ McDonald, “The Challenge Accepted,” 50.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “The bitterness lingers over 1972 Dare strike,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 25 July 1992, B7, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992.

¹⁴⁹ For coverage of Zettler being considered a ‘radical’ in reflections on the strike 20 years later, see “The bitterness lingers over 1972 Dare strike,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 25 July 1992, B7, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992. For a more sympathetic take on his actions that was published at the time of his sentence, see “Jail is all that’s left for 3 union men,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 23 February 1974, 3.

¹⁵⁰ A quick note on sources: these particular letters were donated to the University of Waterloo Archives & Special Collections by the company, so there is very likely a biased reflection of support within these documents. Many of them were local businesses who sympathized with Clifford Dare’s attempts to reign in the union, as well as more conservative anti-union workers in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. It’s therefore unclear exactly how many supporters

of the strike is just as full of letters of support to Dare management as it is with letters of support to the union.¹⁵¹ The community was thus divided into those that saw the union's cause as just, and those who viewed its violent mobilization as deplorable. The Dare strike therefore became remembered as "a black mark" on Kitchener's labour history.¹⁵²

New Left and Student Involvement in the Dare Strike

In June of 1973, the Liberal MP for London West, Judd Buchanan, forwarded a message to Dare's CEO, Clifford Dare. The message was from the student union at the University of Western Ontario, and it stated their intent to participate in the boycott of Dare products.¹⁵³ It also outlined its criticism of the Canadian and Ontario governments' inaction regarding the unfair bargaining procedures used by Dare against Local 173.¹⁵⁴ Buchanan's preamble to Clifford Dare urged him to return to the bargaining table with the UBW.¹⁵⁵

Western was not the only Ontario university to join the Dare strikers in solidarity. Coverage of the Dare strike, as well as student involvement in it, were well publicized in a number of campus newspapers such as *Pro Tem* (York University's Glendon campus), *The Varsity* (University of Toronto), and *The Chevron* (now-defunct, University of Waterloo.) Student newspapers had long been one of the primary means by which student activists raised consciousness around social justice issues, and student solidarity with the labour movement was

the company had, but it is clear that there was a faction within the Kitchener-Waterloo community (however big or small) that took the company's side during the strike.

¹⁵¹ Many local businesses wrote to Clifford Dare to offer support, moral or otherwise, during the strike. These letters often shared personal experiences of strikes or labour disputes, and openly condemned the UBW's actions. An assortment of these kinds of letters can be found in the University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, Dare Foods collection.

¹⁵² "The bitterness lingers over 1972 Dare strike," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 25 July 1992, B7. University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 4, Clippings: Dare strike – 1972-1992.

¹⁵³ Letter from the University Student Council of the University of Ontario to London West MP Judd Buchanan, May 1973., University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 42, 1967 Surrey, BC Strike.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

no exception to this pattern.¹⁵⁶ *The Chevron* in particular was a well-known leftist student paper in the 1960s and 1970s, and was thus a popular and reliable source of left activist knowledge in Kitchener. *Pro Tem* contained biting, sarcastic, and sharp commentary on both CDP and Clifford Dare, calling the former “goons,” and the latter a “self-made man,” “motivated” by the fact that “he made it on his own, so the bastards in the union can bloody-well do the same without his help.”¹⁵⁷ It also encouraged York students to support the boycott by purchasing the pins, buttons, and bumper stickers printed by the NDP.¹⁵⁸ In fact, the author of the article in question - a fourth-year political science student named Bob Edwards - received a letter from Dare’s legal counsel warning him that his editorial violated the injunction by meddling with Dare’s operations.¹⁵⁹ The ‘grounds’ upon which Dare believed it could prosecute Edwards was circumstantial evidence linking his editorial to the cancellation of many grocery stores’ contracts with Dare in support of the boycott.¹⁶⁰ It was quickly discovered, however, that the stores’ contracts with Dare were cancelled well before Edwards’ editorial was published, but Dare’s eagerness to prosecute students was a clear indication of how far the company would go to end the boycott.¹⁶¹

The Varsity supported the Dare boycott by printing images of popular Dare cookies on store shelves, with the caption “this beautiful variety of baked goods should not be on your grocers’ shelf.”¹⁶² Another image showed Dare’s ‘pantry packs’ (a bulk package of cookies) with

¹⁵⁶ One example of the relationship between New Left student newspapers and social justice issues is explored in Benjamin Isitt’s *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972*, where Isitt demonstrates that UBC student papers such as *The Ubysey* and the Montreal paper *Our Generation Against Nuclear War* were publications where nuclear arms and colonialism were commonly challenged. As his discussion alludes to, student newspapers were not only *sites* of student and leftist activism, they were also founded in order to *create* a platform for student activists to condemn, mobilize, and raise consciousness around social justice issues.

¹⁵⁷ “The real issue,” *Pro Tem*, 18 October 1972, 4.

¹⁵⁸ “Dare products boycott,” *Pro Tem*, 18 October 1972, 5.

¹⁵⁹ “Glendon student defies Dare,” *The Chevron*, 17 November 1972, 1, https://issuu.com/uw_imprint/docs/1972-73_v13-n24_chevron.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² “Dare to struggle,” *The Varsity*, (n.d.)

the phrase “Don’t Dare” superimposed over top of them.¹⁶³ One issue even published the words to an anonymous “striker’s poem”: “Oh Dare was a place, That kept women in place, By raising the pace, On the belts. The women complained, They were hot and they pained, They called Dare insane, Because they felt angry.”¹⁶⁴ In February of 1973, the University of Toronto’s and York’s support for the strike expanded beyond the boycott and became more practical. One article in *The Varsity* called for students to join the Dare strikers at the temporary shutdown of CN on 8 February 1973, noting where and when to meet in order to begin the demonstration.¹⁶⁵ As mentioned previously, police intervention on behalf of CN successfully negated the efforts of the demonstrators - though the strikers, Dare women, University of Toronto, and York students were joined on the picket line by the Waffle, “independent leftists,” and the Teamsters union, all of whom helped distribute leaflets and literature about strikebreaking and fair wages to slowed down traffic and passersby.¹⁶⁶ *The Varsity* estimated that 150 demonstrators were in attendance.¹⁶⁷

By September of that year, however, *The Varsity*’s coverage of the strike was much less optimistic, and University of Toronto students’ support returned solely to the boycott, which even then, was considered a “declining” endeavour by one student columnist.¹⁶⁸ Coverage by the University of Waterloo’s *The Chevron*, however, combined *Pro Tem*’s fierce penchant for criticism of the Dare company with *The Varsity*’s theoretical and practical interest in the strike. *The Chevron*’s coverage of the strike began in the first week of June in 1972, shortly after picketing and demonstrations against scab labour began. Its inaugural issue on the strike on 9

¹⁶³ “Strikers want equal pay for women: Major food chains back Dare boycott,” *The Varsity*, 11 October 1972, 6.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ “Help wanted in winning Dare strike,” *The Varsity*, 7 February 1973, 3.

¹⁶⁶ “Dare workers picket scab CN transport,” *The Varsity*, 9 February 1973, 1.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ “Strike against Dare continues, but quietly,” *The Varsity*, 17 September 1973, 11.

June 1972 claimed that “coverage in the local media of the two-week strike at Dare... has been extensive, yet incomplete,” and that due to the “broad implications” of the strike for all union’s in Canada, it had the obligation to “provide a more cogent representation” of the strike.¹⁶⁹ *The Chevron*’s first few issues echoed well-trod criticisms of Richard Grange (the young twenty-something director of CDP), Clifford Dare, and the use of injunctions,¹⁷⁰ words which would see engagement with Waterloo students by the Dare strikers themselves. Breen wrote to *The Chevron* a few weeks after the 9 June 1972 issue, thanking the editorial board for writing about “the truth,” while another striker praised the paper for its research on the strike, which in her mind surpassed that done by local newspapers.¹⁷¹ Later issues also encouraged Waterloo students to participate in the boycott, and buy the NDP buttons that were sent to *The Chevron*’s campus office.¹⁷² When Dare sued Local 173 and the OFL for the damage done to the plant, *The Chevron* was quick to defend the strikers, reminding their readers that “physically violent acts can erupt when workers must confront low wages, an unjust legal system, an arrogant management, an unthinking city government and a gang of strike-breakers.”¹⁷³

Students at Waterloo also provided critical moral support to the Dare strikers during the holiday season of 1972. As the strike wore on into December, the picketers had to confront not only the colder weather, but the expectation that families should be together during the holidays. As such, the Waterloo Federation of Students donated \$200 to Local 173 to set up a Christmas

¹⁶⁹ “The Dare strike: the issues,” *The Chevron*, 9 June 1972, 1, https://issuu.com/uw_imprint/docs/1972-73_v13-n05_chevron.

¹⁷⁰ “Scabbing: a modern industry,” *The Chevron*, 9 June 1972, 2, https://issuu.com/uw_imprint/docs/1972-73_v13-n05_chevron.

¹⁷¹ “Response to Dare coverage,” *The Chevron*, 7 July 1972, 7, https://issuu.com/uw_imprint/docs/1972-73_v13-n08_chevron.

¹⁷² “Dare boycott bolstered by OFL,” *The Chevron*, 15 September 1972, 3, https://issuu.com/imprintuw/docs/1972-73_v13-n12_chevron_20100813_201611.

¹⁷³ “Dare sues OFL,” *The Chevron*, 13 October 1972, 3, https://issuu.com/imprintuw/docs/1972-73_v13-n19_chevron1.

party fund for the strikers' children.¹⁷⁴ The Federation's donation allowed the UBW to organize a children's magic act, and provide food, drink, and small presents for nearly 70 Dare children, a form of support that would also be used by the WSS in Sudbury five years later.¹⁷⁵ Unlike *The Varsity*, coverage of the strike by *The Chevron* in the early months of 1973 remained optimistic. *Chevron* reporters observed that "weekly [union] meetings [were] packed," morale was high, and that despite the court cases concerning the violations of the injunction, the boycott remained strong.¹⁷⁶

One important advantage that the Dare strikers gained that *The Varsity* failed to take into account in its appraisal of the strike in September of 1973 was the positive coverage the strikers received in the media. One *Chevron* article detailed the help given to the Dare strikers by Wired World, a citizen's group that educated "minority interest groups" in how to use the media to its advantage.¹⁷⁷ With Wired World's help, Dautner, Diamond, Gill, and others were able to share their plight with radio audiences on programs such as CBC's *This Country in the Morning*, effectively expanding their message beyond the printed realm of boycott literature and local newspapers.¹⁷⁸ When Stephen Lewis spoke to the Dare strikers at the Kitchener-Waterloo Human Rights Caucus meeting in February of 1973, *The Chevron* observed the lukewarm response Lewis' address received, mainly due to the fact that it promised harsh penalties for scab labour and bad-faith bargaining only if the NDP attained provincial power.¹⁷⁹ Instead, *The*

¹⁷⁴ "Dare kids party," *The Chevron*, 8 December 1972, 3, https://issuu.com/uw_imprint/docs/1972-73_v13-n27_chevron.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ "Dare meets the media," *The Chevron*, 19 January 1973, 2-3, https://issuu.com/uw_imprint/docs/1972-73_v13-n29_chevron.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ "Lewis meets Dare strikers: Promises left behind," *The Chevron*, 9 February 1973, 1, https://issuu.com/uw_imprint/docs/1972-73_v13-n32_chevron.

Chevron reiterated that the boycott was the primary means by which “the general public” could support the Dare strike.¹⁸⁰ “Go into stores which carry Dare products and complain,” it urged its readers after briefly covering Lewis’ talk; “find the manager and spray his legs or something, but express your disgust at a company that supports the exploitation of workers.”¹⁸¹ Though given second-page status over Lewis’ first-page placement that week, *The Chevron* allotted much more space in its 9 February 1973 edition to striker Louella Carnegie, whose address to the public earlier that week asked for public support in a more earnest tone.¹⁸²

Finally, when Dautner, Diamond, Zettler, Pugh, Horne, and Scott were all found in violation of the injunction, *The Chevron* defended the men’s actions as the natural outcome of Dare’s anti-union and strikebreaking measures:

Tie a person’s hands behind his back. Cut down his income to the barest of minimums so that he can just pay the rent. Then if this person doesn’t like being hog-tied and kicks back, tell him he is violent and have him arrested. This is the situation that members of Local 173 of the UBW find themselves in. Only in a democracy can we appreciate such freedom under justice.¹⁸³

“Unable to get fair treatment from the courts,” the convicted men were thus seen as victims of an industrial legality regime that favoured management and its right to continue operations at the expense of fair treatment for workers.¹⁸⁴ The most significant bit of commentary to come from *The Chevron*’s defense of the Dare men, however, was the comparison it made to the conviction of the Dare men and the 26 jailed Tilco strikers. Indeed, *The Chevron* was the only public news outlet to make this comparison, and the similarities were

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² “Strikers ask for support,” *The Chevron*, 9 February 1973, 2, https://issuu.com/uw_imprint/docs/1972-73_v13-n32_chevron.

¹⁸³ “Courts vs. Dare strikers: In contempt of what?” *The Chevron*, 9 March 1973, 1, https://issuu.com/imprintuw/docs/1972-73_v13-n36_chevron.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

uncanny.¹⁸⁵ It was reported in *The Chevron* that Justice Donnelly found the Tilco strikers' punishments "not severe enough," due to the ineffective deterrence it provided to the Dare strikers.¹⁸⁶ As was made very clear to *Chevron* readers, the legacy of the Tilco ruling on industrial legality reared its head less than a decade later to inflict more punishment on workers attempting to strike amidst an injunction.

Local 173 Gets Decertified

On 1 February 1974, a union representation vote resulted in the UBW being decertified as the Dare workers' union.¹⁸⁷ The results were resounding: of the 232 members who voted, only 16 voted against decertification.¹⁸⁸ Six workers spoiled their ballots.¹⁸⁹ Two short months passed before the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers' International Union (BC&T) took over from Local 173 as BC&T Local 264.¹⁹⁰ The collective agreement between the BC&T and Dare in 1976 contained a clause that unionized all workers in the plant via mandatory checkoff, a clause that Dare management had fought against when dealing with the UBW.¹⁹¹ It also mandated that the company adjust oven temperatures so that workers who needed to be temporarily relieved could do so without the sizeable delays noted by Ms. Diamond, Breen, and

¹⁸⁵ Though *The Chevron* was the only public news outlet to draw comparisons between the Dare strikers and the Tilco 25, Justice Donnelly did reference the case extensively in his ruling. In fact, it is clear from his sentencing rationale that the Tilco case highly influenced his decision in the matter of the Dare men. Justice Donnelly's reason for sentencing can be found in "Andrew Diamond et al. and Dare Foods – Reasons for Judgement," LAC, Diamond v. Dare Foods, RG125, R927, Vol. 1941, File 13288, 8.

¹⁸⁶ "Courts vs. Dare strikers: In contempt of what?" *The Chevron*, 9 March 1973, 1.

https://issuu.com/imprintuw/docs/1972-73_v13-n36_chevron.

¹⁸⁷ "Dare employees vote against having union," *Toronto Star*, 2 February 1974, D16.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ "1972 Strike," David Lippert's notes, 1992, University of Waterloo Special Collections & Archives, GA 282 Dare Foods Limited, File 42, 1967 Surrey, BC Strike.

¹⁹¹ Collective agreement (duplicate), Article 3, Dare Foods and Local 264 of the BC&T, 1976, Ontario Archives RG 7-33- Company-union agreements: Dare Foods (Biscuit Division) Limited, 2. Under the final contract between Dare and the UBW in 1974, workers were given the option of joining the union and – as mentioned previously – a clause that required all workers to join the union was fought against by the company during the strike. (The 1974 UBW agreement can be found in the same collection as the BC&T agreement in the Ontario archives.)

others during the strike.¹⁹² Overtime coverage of the ovens was limited to 15 minutes, and those who were called for overtime were to be paid fair overtime rates.¹⁹³ A second 15 minute break was added to each worker's schedule, and in the event of overtime, they were to be given another 30 minute break for supper.¹⁹⁴ The work week was finally reduced to 40 hours.¹⁹⁵ The company could no longer approach its preferred job candidates for a vacant position, as the BC&T's collective agreement outlined that all vacancies were to be brought to the attention of all employees.¹⁹⁶ Life insurance of \$2,000 was placed on each worker, regardless of position or seniority, with the option of \$1,000 of extra coverage available to workers who opted to pay higher union dues, and health insurance was paid in full, something that previous agreements under the UBW could not win.¹⁹⁷

Although the packers received a pay raise amounting to \$5 per hour, a sizeably better wage than what they made with the UBW, they were still the lowest paid position in the plant.¹⁹⁸ The BC&T's collective agreement with the company also outlined the formation of a Labour Relations and Safety Committee, made up of union reps and management, that was to meet

¹⁹² Collective agreement (duplicate), Article 3, Dare Foods and Local 264 of the BC&T, 1976, Ontario Archives RG 7-33- Company-union agreements, Dare Foods (Biscuit Division) Limited, 6. Though this complaint was addressed in the new union's collective agreement, the resolution over the issue of the women's uniform is unclear. Pages 18 and 19 outline that the company was to provide 2 uniforms to all workers, but there is no detail as to what the women's uniforms looked like.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Collective agreement (duplicate), Article 3, Dare Foods and Local 264 of the BC&T, 1976, Ontario Archives RG 7-33- Company-union agreements, Dare Foods (Biscuit Division) Limited, 12.

¹⁹⁵ Collective agreement (duplicate), Article 3, Dare Foods and Local 264 of the BC&T, 1976, Ontario Archives RG 7-33- Company-union agreements, Dare Foods (Biscuit Division) Limited, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Collective agreement (duplicate), Article 3, Dare Foods and Local 264 of the BC&T, 1976, Ontario Archives RG 7-33- Company-union agreements, Dare Foods (Biscuit Division) Limited, 17.

¹⁹⁷ Collective agreement (duplicate), Article 3, Dare Foods and Local 264 of the BC&T, 1976, Ontario Archives RG 7-33- Company-union agreements, Dare Foods (Biscuit Division) Limited, 19-20.

¹⁹⁸ Collective agreement (duplicate), Article 3, Dare Foods and Local 264 of the BC&T, 1976, Schedule A, Ontario Archives RG 7-33- Company-union agreements, Dare Foods (Biscuit Division) Limited, Schedule A. The final collective agreement under the UBW in 1974 paid the packers \$3.76 per hour (the 1974 UBW agreement can be found in the same collection as the BC&T agreement in the Ontario archives.)

monthly and discuss “matters of mutual interest.”¹⁹⁹ Given the fact that this clause allowed both management and the union to bring in “outside representation,” it is likely that this committee was a preventative measure to ensure that no violent labour conflicts occurred at the Kitchener plant ever again.²⁰⁰

Conclusion

In *Rebel Youth*, Ian Milligan rightfully identifies women’s issues as a key factor in the Dare strike.²⁰¹ Unfortunately, Milligan’s analysis - alongside the few memoirs, testimonials, and reflections found in both Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz’s *Union Sisters* and Beth Atcheson and Lorna Marsden’s *White Gloves Off*, the newspapers and editorials written at the time, and coverage in feminist strike support papers – is one of the few cases where the Dare strike’s feminist agenda is given its due. Two oral accounts of striking Dare women’s experiences can be found in *Union Sisters*. One striker, Grace Litwiller, comments that “the strike has done something for some women... It’s made them realize that they have rights. Now they speak up without being bossy. This is something wonderful to see and it’s not just happening to young women, women are now just coming out of themselves.”²⁰² Similarly, fellow striker Diane Proderer is quoted as follows: “[Before the strike] I was a union member because I had to be a union member... I’ve wakened up a lot since then.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Milligan, *Rebel Youth*, 131-136. Even so, Milligan’s *primary* focus is on the contribution of youth and the New Left. He addresses (though briefly) the feminist support given to Local 173 by the feminist organizations I have noted here, as well as feminist student groups at the University of Waterloo, but centralizes the experiences of students and youth.

²⁰² Judy Darcy and Catherine Lauzon, “The Right to Strike,” in Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz, eds., *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement*, (The Women’s Press, 1983), 179.

²⁰³ Ibid.

For the most part, however, the Dare strike became remembered as a violent though righteous uprising by men against their employers' mistreatment of their sisters. The explanation for this historical misremembering is that historical accounts of the strike have not successfully achieved an analytical balance of the many issues that the strike covered. The company's use of the injunction and scab labour rallied the political left, the New Left, and other unions to the UBW's cause, the boycott relied heavily on public participation, and the mistreatment and exploitation of women workers attracted feminist groups to the cause. By no means did the Dare men intentionally obscure or silence the voices of their sisters, but the plethora of issues simultaneously obscured the key cause of the strike: unequal pay and unfair treatment towards women. This was not a novel occurrence, however, since nearly the same instance of feminist understatement occurred during the Tilco strike in 1966.

This points to a pattern in women's labour history, one that complicates the role of men and non-feminist allies in labour mobilizations. The support provided to striking women by groups such as the NDP, New Left, and autonomist left groups are invaluable, and without them, it is likely that many strikes would not succeed. Yet there is always the potential for key issues in the strike to become obscured in historical accounts. What results is a historical memory that obscures – and at worst, *forgets* – the feminist agenda in strikes. Though the labour-feminist allies of the strikers struggled with this in the Dare strike, a later mobilization at the Puretex Knitting Co. plant in Toronto in 1978 succeeded in centralizing women's voices in their campaigns for equity, rights, recognition, and freedom.

CHAPTER THREE: The Puretex Knitting Company Strike, 1978-79.

Introduction

Six years after the victory at Dare Foods, the Puretex Knitting Company strike of 1978-79 became one of the most well-publicized labour disputes in Canada. The exploitation, shop-floor control, and difficult working conditions that vexed the Dare women were also present at Puretex, a garment factory that made men's clothing. Electronic surveillance became the key issue of the strike when eight closed-circuit television cameras, with one trained on the exterior of the premises, were installed within the plant. One of the interior cameras was fixed, unmoving, on the entrance to the women's washroom. 190 of the approximately 220 employees at Puretex were women, and this invasion of privacy instigated an immediate uproar from the women in the plant. Puretex President Gary Satok, when pressed months later by the media, insisted that the installation of the cameras was meant to deter theft, accusations of which were frequent at Puretex, despite only one proven incident. Local 560 of the Canadian Textile and Chemicals Union (CTCU) saw things differently, however. Led by militant labour leader and working-class feminist activist Madeleine Parent, the CTCU declared the installation of the cameras a violation of human rights, not to mention an oppressive exercise infringing on privacy of workers. Many of the Puretex women were immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, and Parent believed that the surveillance of these women was not meant to deter theft, but instead to exercise control over a disadvantaged ethnic group within the working-class, one that had longstanding fears of intrusions into their private lives.

Documentation of the strike left an indelible archival footprint. The CBC Digital Archives show media coverage of the picket line; the *Toronto Star* and *Globe & Mail* contain dozens of articles covering nearly everything about the arbitration; sociological and legal texts

reference (though sparingly) the peculiarity of the strike;¹ the CBC TV drama *Maria*, which aired in 1977, used the female textile workers of the plant and many others in similar situations as the inspiration for a popular interpretation of textile strikes; and nearly any tribute, presentation, or obituary of Parent or the CTCU mentions the strike's outcome as one of the greatest victories of her career. And yet, despite all the interest that the strike garnered from contemporaries, there has been little said about its significance to Canadian labour history. This may be, in part, because the CTCU did not have strong support from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) or its affiliates. However, this is not to say that *no* support was provided to Local 560 when it eventually struck. Many CTCU and Local 560 leaders actively participated in the strike, and labour lawyers and feminist organizations provided strike support of their own variety.

Thus, it is not entirely accurate to say that the CTCU was on its own when it came to the Puretex strike. On the one hand, the feminist group OWW stood in solidarity with the Puretex workers. The strike also gained invaluable legal support from Toronto lawyer Frank Park, who represented the union since its collective bargaining struggle for a first contract with the company in 1972. As a communist, Park's left-leaning politics also aligned with the aims of the labour movement.² His involvement with the union was not an odd phenomenon; "progressive lawyers... caught up in the ferment of the New Deal" in the United States and similar post-war

¹ See for example David Lyon, *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); and Michel G Picher, "Truth, Lies, and Videotape: Employee Surveillance at Arbitration." *Canadian Labour and Employment Law Journal*, 6, (1998): 345-367. Both texts mention the Puretex strike, and note its peculiarities, yet add little to an overall understanding of the relationship between surveillance and the working-class.

² The Frank and Libbie Park fonds at Library & Archives Canada contain a variety of "textual documents relating to labour movements, the Labour Progressive Party, Communist Party of Canada," and "drafts and publications" sympathetic to Canadian unions. See Frank and Libbie Park fonds, 1882-1997, LAC, MG31-K (and other fonds under the Parks' names.)

industrial laws in Canada encouraged lawyers to work closely with their union.³ But like J.L. Cohen (though perhaps less prolific,) Park “was a genuine radical who believed in industrial democracy,” and fought for it with a level of commitment worth noting.⁴ On the other hand, the CTCU was unique because of the support it could garner for its workers. Created and led by left-wing nationalists, the CTCU was mobilized by some of the fiercest, most experienced labour leaders of the period, who came of age in a time where breaking away from American union domination in Canada was a tall order.⁵ Thus, even though the CTCU lacked support from CLC-affiliated unions and the Toronto labour community, Local 560 won the Puretex strike due to the aid given to the workers by both the left-wing nationalist community fostered by the CTCU, the legal help provided by Frank Park, and the support of OWW. Left-wing nationalists and lawyers, alongside the broader left-wing milieu of the 1970s and the women’s and socialist feminist movements, were key allies during the period, and Puretex represents no exception to this pattern. As CTCU organizer Laurell Ritchie has put it, “pockets of supporters” within the officialdom of the labour movement were supplemented by “a jigsaw puzzle” that was “beginning to be put together on many fronts” by feminist and left-wing allies.⁶

³ Laurel Sefton MacDowell, *Renegade Lawyer: The Life of J.L. Cohen*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 4.

⁴ MacDowell, *Renegade Lawyer*, 5.

⁵ There is a rich literature that details the difficulty in not only forming Canadian unions, but in breaking away from Canada’s economic dependence on the United States. For essays in both labour and economic nationalism, see Gary Teeple, *Capitalism and the National Question in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972). R.T. Naylor’s article “The Rise and Fall of the Third Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence” is well known for its demonstration of Canada’s economic dependence on the United States, while Roger Howard and Jack Scott both have chapters in the book devoted specifically to the labour movement. For comprehensive histories of American unions organizing Canadian workers, see both Robert H. Babcock, *Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism before the First World War*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); and Jack Scott, *Canadian Workers, American Unions*, (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1978). As is suggested by the title, Babcock’s history of American trade union activity in Canada extends only as far as the early 20th century, whereas Scott includes the post-war until the late 1960s in his analysis. Scott’s critique of American unions is noticeably more pronounced, with his conclusion describing American “internationals” as a “dead weight of bureaucracy.”

⁶ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019.

Key to my analysis of this strike is American political scientist Michael McCann's "legal mobilization theory," which posits that "litigation and other legal tactics [provide] movement activists an important resource for advancing their cause" within the boundaries of post-war industrial law.⁷ This is not to say that unions gave undivided trust to the legal system in this period. Left-nationalist unions were critical of not only the bureaucracy of organized labour, but the bureaucracy of industrial legality. As such, Local 560 placed its trust in noted allies such as Parent and Park to navigate the legal bureaucracy while pursuing alternative avenues to the CLC for strike support.

Madeleine Parent and Left-Wing Nationalism in the Canadian Labour Movement

Perhaps most indicative of the complex relationship between feminist currents and the labour movement is the activist career of Madeleine Parent (1918-2012.) Because her career began in the 1930s, Parent was somewhat of an outlier within the feminist movement of the 1970s. She came of age in a time when the standard domestic division of labour, as well as the limits of women's work outside the home, went unchallenged, yet she embraced the emancipatory capacity of feminism, and accepted (rather than worked against) emerging feminist currents in the 1970s. She had already built an impressive career at the age of 24 by leading the textile workers of Valleyfield and Montreal in strikes and pickets.⁸ The result of her early organizing work in the 1950s was a concentrated attack against her by the Quebec government, led by then-Premier Maurice Duplessis, who accused Parent of being a communist conspirator and had her jailed.⁹ Though she was acquitted, the criminal discourse attached to her name

⁷ Michael McCann, *Rights at Work: Pay Equity Reform and the Politics of Legal Mobilization*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 2-4.

⁸ Laurell Ritchie, "Passing the Torch: Remembering Madeleine Parent (1918-2012)," *Our Times*, (2012): 17-18.

⁹ Ritchie, "Passing the Torch," 18.

remained throughout Duplessis' tenure as Premier, and the "convergence" of McCarthyism, the anti-union English Canadian "elite," and American union domination led to Parent and her partner Kent Rowley being expelled from the textile union.¹⁰ Losing their labour 'stronghold' in Quebec, Parent and Rowley regrouped in Ontario to co-found the CTC and the CTCU – Canadian unions in response to the American domination of working-class representation in international unions. Briefly considering working for the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers' Union or the United Electrical Workers, Madeleine and Kent opted to stay "the Canadian course," and commit to organizing Canadian textile workers.¹¹

Parent, therefore, came to represent a multitude of working-class women during her time as Secretary Treasurer of the CTCU and founding member of the CLC. Fellow union activist and feminist collaborator Laurell Ritchie described her work as "the weaving of solidarities," a testament to the many Canadian women she represented during her career.¹² As another fellow unionist John Lang argues, Parent's outreach to "the fledgling women's movement" during the Texpack strike of 1971 in Brantford, Ontario allowed "many young women to see "the reality of working women's struggles."¹³ Sangster has emphasized the importance that Parent placed on the partnership between class and gender, noting that "Parent urged the feminist movement to take account of working class women's issues, and the labour movement to take account of women's issues," thus "pushing both towards a more socialist-feminist analysis," which Parent hoped would elevate the material conditions of women's lives.¹⁴ Indeed, Parent expertly wove

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Rick Salutin, *Kent Rowley: The Organizer – A Canadian Union Life*, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1980,) 85.

¹² Ritchie, "Passing the Torch," 19.

¹³ John Lang, "Carrying on the Struggle in Ontario," in Andrée Lévesque, ed., *Madeleine Parent: Activist*, (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2005), 82.

¹⁴ Joan Sangster, "Presentation – Madeleine Parent (1918-2012): Historical Legacies," *Labour/Le Travail*, 70, (2012): 197.

together the complex social and political issues confronting “organized labour, peace movements, civil liberties, and the rights of immigrants, women,” and French Canadians, creating a unified and strong working-class feminist base within whatever locale wherein she fought. As such, historian Bryan Palmer has written that “none, it may be argued, have left legacies that link together as many causes.”¹⁵ Due to her earlier organizing experience with textile plants in Quebec, Parent was aware that the paternalistic and exploitative nature of the industry that was particularly hard on women lingered into the 1970s, which made her an ideal leader for the strike at Puretex where exploitation was alive and well.¹⁶

Beginning in the 1960s, the Canadian labour movement became more critical of the domination of American unions representing its workers. The general criticism of American internationals in the 1970s was effectively displayed in *Maria*, when textile workers met with an American union representative for the UCWA (either a fictitious version of the United Garment Workers of America, or an early incarnation of the United Construction Workers’ Association – the film does not specify) and are dissatisfied with his complacent and hands-off attitude towards their situation. In an attempt to persuade them to form a local, the UCWA representative states that “[we have] 200,000 members throughout the United States and Canada, but – and I tell you this honestly – that doesn’t mean we don’t care about you. We know you’re there, and we’re with you all the way.”¹⁷ The UCWA’s complacency is exposed in the film at the end of the representative’s pitch, however, when he reiterates the phrase, “work hard, and stay in touch.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Bryan D. Palmer, “Presentation - Madeleine Parent (1918-2012): Introduction,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 70, (2012): 187.

¹⁶ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019.

¹⁷ *Maria*, Directed by Allan King, (Ottawa: CBC Television, 1977).

¹⁸ *Maria*, 1977.

Immediately, the textile workers leave the meeting, believing that the UCWA has no interest in having any sort of meaningful presence in the plant.

Though the events of *Maria* were fictitious, the anti-American sentiment towards international unions was indeed a historical reality. By the 1960s, this dissatisfaction led to the emergence of left-wing nationalism, a political ideology that encouraged a move away from the American labour bureaucracy and the formation of Canadian unions. Not only did left-wing nationalism oppose the “conservatism and ‘business unionism’ that predominated in American unions,” it sought to gain autonomy from the American imperialism within the Canadian trade union movement.¹⁹ Central questions to left-wing nationalism were “who controlled the [union] finances, who got to determine whether a strike was called or if a strike was to be ended, did the Canadian ‘officers’ have any real decision-making [powers], or were they simply token positions,” and if “Canadian positions” in American unions could “be put under trusteeship if... the American headquarters did not like the direction they were going in?”²⁰ Norman Penner’s observation of the debate in 1977 was that it was “the most urgent ideological and organizational problem before the trade union movement.”²¹ Though Penner was skeptical of the emerging Canadian trade unions,²² the “denunciation” of American monopolies in Canada was observable

¹⁹ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Norman Penner, “International Unions and the Canadian Left,” in *Imperialism, Nationalism, and Canada: Essays from the Marxist Institute of Toronto*, (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1977), 203.

²² Penner, “International Unions and the Canadian Left,” 203. Penner writes that “all unions under capitalism, whether they are Canadian or American-controlled, are by definition reformist in character, and therefore... [their] ideological tasks are the same.” Penner argued that the notion of Canadian unions being “purer” than American internationals “[could not] be sustained theoretically or empirically,” and that the nationalist current in the labour movement would “lead to isolation of socialists from the great majority of the organized working class.”

outside of the labour movement: “symbolic manifestations” of left-wing nationalism could be seen, for example, in the bicentennial celebrations of Confederation, particularly Expo ’67.²³

In the labour movement, “a series of breakaways and successions by Canadian union locals” occurred in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁴ Palmer has argued that though the Canadian nationalist movement was small, the movement was “a voice of discontent” indicative of the younger generation of workers entering the workforce who “threatened the post-war settlement.”²⁵ The “newly unruly line” that labour “walked” in the 1960s and 1970s “chastised and jeered” the bureaucracy of “established unions and... collective bargaining.”²⁶ As Dimitry Anastakis argues with specific regard to the Canadian auto industry, the debate over whether or not to globalize the Canadian auto industry was also demonstrative of the economic nationalism of the 1960s. The auto pact, for many, represented the Americanization of Canadian labour, work, and capital.²⁷ Effectively, the Canadian auto industry was “cast into the maw of the great American commercial enterprise” by the auto pact, a move which Anastakis argues saw the Canadian labour movement become “less militant,” and more self-policing and bureaucratic.²⁸

The most explicit manifestation of left-wing nationalism in the labour movement was the formation of the Canadian Congress of Unions (CCU), the national ‘headquarters’ of Canadian unions such as the CTCU, and the Canadian Association of Industrial Mechanical and Allied

²³ Andrée Lévesque, “Introduction: Setting the Stage,” in Andrée Lévesque, ed., *Madeleine Parent: Activist*, (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2005), 34.

²⁴ Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 239.

²⁵ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 240-241.

²⁶ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 240.

²⁷ Dimitry Anastakis, “Between Nationalism and Continentalism: State Auto Industry Policy and the Canadian UAW, 1960-1970,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 53, (2004): 90.

²⁸ Dimitry Anastakis, *Autonomous State: The Struggle for a Canadian Car Industry from OPEC to Free Trade*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 18, 21.

Workers (CAIMAW.)²⁹ Lang makes an important distinction between the left-wing nationalism that the CCU represented and the broader notion of nationalism that it came to be confused with. Despite critics of the union who charged it with “wrapping itself in the Canadian flag,” the CCU’s nationalism “was rooted in the... recognition that Canada was the only country in the industrialized world whose labour movement was controlled from outside its borders,” and that as a result, “it was time that Canadian workers put an end to having to pay tribute to their unions’ American head offices.”³⁰ The CCU and the emergence of Canadian left-wing nationalism was thus a culmination of the labour mobilizations that came before it, and was integral to all organizing that took place after its inception.³¹ Parent and Rowley’s “vision of labour organizing” came to exemplify the left-wing nationalism of the Canadian labour movement as they proposed “democratic unions, freed from the bureaucracy of U.S. headquarters and based on participation by the rank-and-file that were first and foremost Canadian.”³² Furthermore, Anastakis reminds us that nationalism was also a “vehicle” that allowed Canadian workers some “self-interest” and autonomy in an economy that was largely controlled by the United States.³³

Legal Mobilization Theory

In 1994, Michael McCann, a political scientist at Washington University, studied the relationship between the increasing number of American women entering the workforce and their turn to litigation to attain pay equity reform in the 1970s and 1980s. McCann argued that

²⁹ Levesque, “Introduction: Setting the Stage,” 31-36. These pages do an exemplary job of highlighting the origin of the CCU and some of its most noteworthy affiliates.

³⁰ Lang, “Carrying on the Struggle in Ontario,” 78.

³¹ Lang, “Carrying on the Struggle in Ontario.” Lang argues along these lines in pages 76-78.

³² Levesque, “Introduction: Setting the Stage,” 34. As Levesque notes in a separate paper, Parent’s commitment to Canadian nationalism emerged out of her and Rowley’s expulsion from the United Textile Workers Union of America in 1952 for inciting a strike in Valleyfield, Quebec which the UTWA did not endorse. Not long after their expulsion, Parent and Rowley formed the CTCU. See Andrée Lévesque, “Presentation – Madeleine Parent (1918-2012): A Life of Struggles,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 70, (2012): 189-192.

³³ Anastakis, *Autonomous State*, 210-211. In this section, Anastakis is specifically referring to Bob White’s formation of the Canadian Auto Workers outside of the American-based UAW.

“litigation and other legal tactics [provided] movement activists an important resource for advancing their cause,” and made the important observation that “nearly all of [the gains made by pay equity cases] were authorized by unit-specific collective bargaining or local legislation rather than directly by the courts.”³⁴ In his notes on McCann’s monograph, Princeton scholar Tommaso Pavone argues further that despite early American court rulings against such reform, “the beneficial legacy of legal mobilization was captured by its ability to provide politicizing experiences for women workers, to legitimize their claims via a familiar rights discourse, to forge political opportunities for collective action by raising expectations, and to cultivate an enduring legal consciousness.”³⁵ Quoting Harvard legal scholar Martha Minow, McCann suggested that legal mobilization theory, as practiced by working-class women and feminists in 1970s and 1980s America, “[gave] rise to a rights consciousness so that individuals and groups may imagine an act in light of rights that have not been formally recognized or enforced.”³⁶ In essence, McCann hypothesized that while the American court system ruled unfavorably against pay equity reform cases, the smaller hearings, collective bargains, and arbitrations between lawyers, unions, feminists, and workers usually resulted in victories for women (and other underpaid) workers.³⁷

Legal mobilization was not a new method for labour or feminist mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s, however. Dennis Deslippe’s study of the American feminist and labour

³⁴ McCann, *Rights at Work*, 2-4.

³⁵ Tommaso Pavone, “Michael McCann: *Rights at Work: Pay Equity Reform and the Politics of Legal Mobilization*,” (unpublished notes), 2015, 1, https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/tpavone/files/mccann_rights_at_work.pdf

³⁶ McCann, *Rights at Work*, 7.

³⁷ McCann, *Rights at Work*, 4. See also Pavone’s notes. Both McCann and Pavone note that wage and labour laws changed over time, and that as a result, the courts were not an entirely reliable means in which to secure pay equity reform. Both scholars draw attention to the conservative and “privileged” powers that resided in court, suggesting that arbitrations, mediations, and bargains were more beholden to the rigour of collective agreements and labour laws.

movements demonstrated that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned employment discrimination based on sex, served as a “catalyst” for feminist mobilizing around labour rights.³⁸ Deslippe argued that “the drive for legislation” that occurred in the immediate post-war period and led to the enactment of Title VII “opened up a new dialogue on women’s roles in the labour movement and society at large that would gather force in the 1960s.”³⁹

Similarly, Dorothy Sue Cobble has argued that “the 1960s legislative initiatives to ... end unfair sex discrimination in employment were the culmination of a twenty-five-year reform effort.”⁴⁰

Although the 1960s and 1970s saw many labour feminists “turn to the courts” in order to “test the limits and language of the new antidiscrimination laws,” the passing of such laws were the results of decades of women’s activism, within and outside of the courts.⁴¹ Legal mobilization has thus been a part of the activist and reform tradition in the post-war period, though its use in the United States increased in the 1960s and 1970s.

McCann’s legal mobilization theory is generalizable to Canadian industrial legality in the 1970s, and as such, is a helpful way of understanding why the Puretex strike of 1978-79 was successful despite the lack of support it received from the CLC. The human rights discourse that surrounded the strike immediately changed the context, providing a rationale for sympathetic mobilization from OWW and the IWDC. To be sure, OWW and the IWDC provided important strike support of their own, but it was Parent and Park’s legal case that won the strike. As such, figures like Madeleine Parent, Laurell Ritchie, and Frank Park – actors with a myriad of experience in legal mobilization – became the most valuable assets to the Puretex women in their

³⁸ Dennis Deslippe, *“Rights Not Roses”: Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-1980*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 2.

³⁹ Deslippe, *“Rights Not Roses,”* 6.

⁴⁰ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 9.

⁴¹ Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 206.

time of need. Alongside leftist activists and lawyers, feminist organizing proved another means of mobilizing during the strike, whether it came from OWW, the IWDC, or leaders within the CTCU, and was an invaluable resource to the strikers. As will become evident, the kinds of allies that Local 560 procured in the Puretex strike were exemplary of the kinds of broad strike support available to workers in the 1970s when the CLC's anti-nationalist politics channeled labour solidarity in increasingly restricted ways.

The Puretex Workers and their Fight for a First Contract

Before they were represented by the CTCU, Puretex employees worked for 48 hours per week, were paid “the legal minimum wage of \$1.65 an hour,” and enjoyed little-to-no benefits.⁴² By contrast, unskilled labourers in the Toronto area employed by other industries such as auto and plastic worked only 40 hours per week, and were paid roughly \$2.68 per hour.⁴³ Compared to the average worker, Puretex workers made much less but worked far longer than their unskilled counterparts, who even then were bringing in meagre wages that hardly covered the cost of living. This was typical of textile and garment workers in Toronto. As shown in *Maria*, some of the working immigrants employed by textile factories were unable to support entire families, and sometimes came to Canada without them, living instead with fellow workers to offset the cost of living.⁴⁴ Immigrant women, who were expected to marry young and have children, were hesitant to do so due to the uncertainty and precarity that characterized textile work. The title character in *Maria* experiences this reluctance throughout the film. She is often teased by her family and coworkers about the not-so-subtle affection given to her by Gino, a

⁴² “Small metro factories keep wages low: Unions,” *Toronto Star*, 25 July 1972, 8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Maria*, 1977. Though this is not the case for the title character Maria, who lives with her large family, the beginning of the film alludes to the fact that some of her fellow workers are in Canada alone, saving money to bring their spouses and children overseas.

fellow Italian immigrant, and while she reciprocates the affection, she doubts whether or not she wants to marry and have children.⁴⁵ Many times throughout the film, Maria reflects on whether or not she would be truly happy working in the textile plant and struggling to care for children while supporting Gino.

Despite being a smaller operation than the Dare plant, the Puretex workers also laboured under oppressive working conditions, and management's anti-union politics were equally pronounced. In *Maria*, the working conditions of the average textile plant are shown to be dismal. Shop floor supervisors used verbal harassment to enforce work speedups, the workers often complained about the cleanliness and state of disrepair of their washrooms, and workers who found themselves unable to meet quota were forced into piecework, which paid less and was a more precarious position.⁴⁶ Piecework positions in textile plants, as well as the threat of being reduced to piecework pay for not meeting quota, was a condition of the industry "leftover from the 30s and 40s," and compelled textile workers into "being at the beck and call" of management.⁴⁷ At Puretex, when management caught wind of the CTCU's attempts to organize the plant in October of 1971, "the Company fired three workers and searched the lockers and private effects of its employees for any trace of union membership."⁴⁸ When the CTCU accused management of this at an OLRB hearing, the company was not penalized, and the OLRB "accepted" management's word that it would not happen again.⁴⁹ By March of 1972, the CTCU had successfully helped the Puretex workers in filing an application for representation to the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019.

⁴⁸ "Puretex workers fight continues," *CTC Bulletin*, Summer Edition 1972, LAC Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

OLRB, but the application sat in limbo for many months.⁵⁰ By the time the certification hearing was held on 10 April 1972, “the CTCU demonstrated that it had signed up 74 percent of the Puretex employees and it appeared that automatic certification was warranted.”⁵¹ In a noticeable display of anti-left nationalism, however, management was allowed to submit a written complaint to the OLRB on behalf of a Puretex worker who alleged that “the method of payment” for his “initiation fee” into the union was obtained via coercion and intimidation.⁵² The hearing was thus rescheduled, despite the evidence submission date being long passed, and a separate hearing was opened to determine the validity of management’s evidence.⁵³ “Under persistent cross examination,” it was discovered in this separate hearing that the employee did in fact voluntarily sign on to the union and pay the fee; despite this, the Puretex workers’ certification hearing was postponed to 12 June 1972, the result of more stalling and bureaucratic scheming by management and its counsel.⁵⁴

Delaying and stalling were important tactics by management when dealing with lower-paid, more transient workers whose employment was often precarious. The anti-unionism of textile plants and the management bias of the OLRB is depicted in *Maria*, though under different circumstances. The plant that Maria and her fellow workers are employed by is more paternal, relying on the coercive notion of business as a ‘family’ to dissuade workers from joining a union.⁵⁵ At the OLRB hearing in the film, management does not get the privilege to submit

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Maria*, 1977. Though the company uses a kind of “corporate familialism” to discourage unionization in the beginning of the film, their attempts become more sinister and violent towards the end of the film. The assistant manager threatens to fire one worker who is on the fence about signing on with the union, and a plant supervisor threatens another worker with a knife when it is discovered that the worker will vote in favour of union certification. Though the latter did not occur at Puretex, the vitriol with which anti-unionism is portrayed effectively speaks to the general feeling towards unions in textile industry during the 1970s. My use of “corporate familialism” is along the

evidence late, but worker frustration with the bureaucracy is made apparent. When deliberations carry on too long, the OLRB adjourns and decides to reconvene in two months. Maria, who is present at the hearing and hopeful that her recently laid-off co-worker Gloria will be reinstated by the board, shouts in protest, “two months!? What’s Gloria supposed to do for two months?”⁵⁶

Frustrated with the ineffectiveness of the certification process, the CTCU used its monthly publication, *The CTC Bulletin*, to criticize the OLRB’s “long history of... discrimination against Canadian unions,” an action which prompted outcry from the OLRB.⁵⁷ It demanded the statements be redacted since the board members saw themselves as ‘neutral,’ linked neither to management nor labour.⁵⁸ Ignoring these outcries due to the OLRB’s inability to legally censor the union, the CTCU demanded that the certification process for Puretex continue unencumbered, while simultaneously reaching out to Stephen Lewis, who by now was the NDP’s provincial labour critic, and a handful of Liberal MPP’s to pressure the OLRB into meeting with them.⁵⁹ The CTCU also asked parliamentarians to launch an investigation into the OLRB’s conduct, and even recommended placing two representatives from Canadian unions on the board to ensure that the bias against left-nationalism could be stopped.⁶⁰ The certification hearing was then set for 26 June 1972.⁶¹ By 30 June 1972, the CTCU was certified to represent the Puretex workers.⁶²

same lines as Bryan Palmer uses it in *Capitalism Comes to the Backcountry: The Goodyear Invasion of Napanee*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1994).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Puretex workers fight continues,” *CTC Bulletin*, Summer Edition 1972, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “Puretex workers fight continues,” *CTC Bulletin*, Summer Edition 1972, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 2.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “Union walks out at knitting mill returns in hour,” *Toronto Star*, 2 Nov 1972, 53.

Immediately after the hard-won battle for certification, negotiations with management began for the workers' first contract, and proved to be just as tiresome and arduous. Negotiations between the CTCU and Puretex management had been "stalemated" for several months, prompting a provincial mediator from the labour department to intervene in order to mediate the dispute.⁶³ The CTCU was ready to organize a strike for the workers at Puretex if management failed to bargain in good faith, a pattern established in the five previous conciliation meetings that went nowhere.⁶⁴ Puretex management hired Edwin L. Stringer as their counsel, an employment lawyer "notorious" for stalling contract negotiations and installing strong management rights clauses into workers' contracts.⁶⁵ One 1979 *Maclean's* editorial described Stringer as the "unofficial leader of a new strain of Canadian labour lawyers whose prime intention is to see that unions don't come in to play at all."⁶⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Stringer was the same lawyer who fought against the CTCU's certification for Puretex representation in the OLRB hearings. One issue of *The CTC Bulletin* describes Stringer's stalling attempts in detail: refusing to negotiate with the CTCU on any matter other than wages before settling vacation, benefits, and seniority, Stringer arrived at one conciliation meeting with the "monetary" section of the draft contract completely blank; when asked to return with a wage proposal and a set of job classifications, he and management "never did;" and when Stringer finally *did* come prepared to a meeting, he proposed a management rights clause that triggered a "lengthy wrangle" between management and the CTCU.⁶⁷

⁶³ "Puretex: Conciliation date set," *CTC Bulletin*, October 1972, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ "The man who loves labour pains," *Maclean's*, 2 April 1979, LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds, MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, "Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance – Notes on hearing 1 of 5, 1979."

⁶⁷ "Puretex: Conciliation date set," *CTC Bulletin*, October 1972, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 1.

The management rights clause proposed by Stringer was “no exception” to the discriminatory nature of other clauses Stringer had won for management cases in contract disputes. In the Puretex negotiations, his proposal suggested giving “management the right to decide the hours of work, whether an employee will be on time-work or piece-work, and whether any employee is demoted, reclassified, laid-off, or fired.” Stringer’s proposed management clause, in contrast to those in most contracts, had seniority dictated by a worker’s “reliability, physical fitness, experience, efficiency, and qualifications.”⁶⁸ The CTCU maintained that the union’s definition of seniority (which did not match Stringer’s) should be the determining factor in a layoff, and that “employees with many years standing” should receive job training to advance, rather than having the company resort to outside hires.⁶⁹

A conciliation date was set for 6 October, 1972, and many of the Puretex workers on the bargaining committee urged Satok to respond reasonably.⁷⁰ The October negotiation date, however, resulted in more stalling from Puretex management when a wage offer was once again withheld.⁷¹ In November of 1972, the workers at Puretex finalized another contract proposal with the CTCU, and were within their legal right to strike by 2 November 1972. All of the workers on the bargaining team were women,⁷² which was no doubt intentional, as Parent was ardent in her belief that only women workers could account for female-related demands.⁷³ An all-female bargaining team therefore gave the Puretex workers, 80% of whom were women, the assurance

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Puretex: Conciliation date set,” *CTC Bulletin*, October 1972, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2. 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ “Puretex: Strike deadline,” *CTC Bulletin*, November 1972, LAC Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 1.

⁷² Leone Kirkwood. “Organizer uses direct approach to get women involved in unions,” *Globe & Mail*, 7 December 1972, W11.

⁷³ Ibid.

that their problems would be taken seriously.⁷⁴ Despite the calls for immediate strike action, the CTCU overruled the 64 members in favour of strike, instead opting to wait for a response from management once the contract was finalized.⁷⁵ When negotiations between the CTCU and Puretex management carried on until 4 am on 2 November, however, many feared that these negotiations – like the many others that preceded it – would end in stalemate. As such, a picket of striking women began to form outside the company’s gates, huddled under umbrellas shielding them from the rain, carrying banners reading “Puretex on Strike.”⁷⁶ Not long after the picket formed, management conceded and agreed to the first contract.⁷⁷

By conceding, Puretex management agreed to the following demands: “a minimum increase of at least 40 cents an hour in two stages [a maximum of 80 cents an hour],” overtime pay after 45 hours of work, an important concession due to the fact that many of the Puretex workers banked 48 hours per week, “eight paid statutory holidays, improved vacation pay, bereavement pay and company payment of health insurance premiums.”⁷⁸ CTCU representative Laurell Ritchie described this agreement as one of the best agreements currently in place in the Canadian textile industry.⁷⁹ *The CTC Bulletin* made little mention of the egregious management rights proposals made by Stringer, though based on the glowing editorial they *did* write,

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “Nine to get civic award of merit,” *The Globe & Mail*, 2 November 1972, 5; and “Strike is suspended until vote on offer,” *The Globe & Mail*, 3 November 1972, 4.

⁷⁶ “Union walks out at knitting mill returns in hour,” *Toronto Star*, 2 Nov 1972, 53.

⁷⁷ Puretex Settlement,” *CTC Bulletin*, December 1972, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 1. Accounts of why the November picket line dissipated are in dispute. One *Toronto Star* article reported that the CTCU informed the picketers of their decision to postpone strike action, suggesting a miscommunication between the union and the workers. *The CTC Bulletin* suggests that the picket line forming in the early hours of 3 November 1972 hastened management’s decision to review the union’s terms and prepare a response of their own.

⁷⁸ “Puretex, union reach accord on first pact,” *The Globe & Mail*, 6 November 1972, 2.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

highlighting the “important” clauses for grievance procedures and seniority rights, it is clear that the management rights clause contained little to no demands originally proposed by Stringer.⁸⁰

In 1974, Puretex workers began bargaining for their second agreement with the CTCU. This time around, a new agreement had to remedy the raised costs of living, which “had eroded the general increase” that Puretex workers won during their fight for a first contract.⁸¹ The *CTC Bulletin* noted that “even wage increases that looked very good a year ago look small today,” and that “prices have jumped upward in all directions – food, clothing, transportations, rents, etc...”⁸² When canvassed by the CTCU, nearly all of the Puretex workers signed a document agreeing to open a discussion with management about renewing the contract to adjust to the new costs of living.⁸³ When ratified, the renewed and updated agreement ensured “a general increase of 40 cents an hour immediately, an additional 35 cents an hour on 10 November 1975, plus 5 cents on 1 August 1976.”⁸⁴ This agreement would raise the Puretex worker’s wages to \$3.00 per hour in a province where the minimum wage was then \$2.25 an hour.⁸⁵ This agreement also ensured that the work week for Puretex workers would be reduced to 42 hours by 1976 – a noticeable decrease from the 48 hours they banked prior to 1972 – and guaranteed “nine paid statutory holidays, three weeks vacation after eight years... a minimum of 12 weeks maternity leave and a maximum of nine months.”⁸⁶

Local 560 on Strike

⁸⁰ “Puretex Settlement,” *CTC Bulletin*, December 1972, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 2.

⁸¹ “Union Asks Puretex Increase Due C.O.L.,” *CTC Bulletin*, March 1974, LAC, Microfilm holdings, C 427 positive, p-413, c.2, 1.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ “Union ratifies 2-year contract at Puretex mill,” *The Globe & Mail*, 12 November 1974, B2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

In November of 1976, Satok installed nine closed-circuit security cameras in the Puretex plant, four of which were stationed in the company's storage areas, one of which was stationed outside of the plant to monitor the exterior of the property, three of which were installed on the shop-floor, and the final and most problematic of which was trained on the door to the women's washroom. Immediately, CTCU lawyers reached out to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) for help in their case against the cameras, describing them as "a violation of worker's dignity," and "a gross invasion of their privacy."⁸⁷ The CTCU's request to the OHRC sat in limbo for nearly two years before being denied without explanation.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Satok was incensed by the CTCU's decision to go to the OHRC, telling *The Globe* that he was "being robbed blind," and thus needed the cameras to deter theft.⁸⁹ He also insisted that the cameras had nothing to do with the women being immigrants, and assured *The Globe*, "if I discriminated against black women, against Italian women, I'd be working with just me. I need my workers, but they need the company as well."⁹⁰ Satok also remained adamant that "the workers [did not] even think about" the cameras while on the job and continued their work as usual.⁹¹ Parent, who up to this point had been dissatisfied with the outcome of the OLRB hearing and the OHRC's silence, remained confident that the strike vote taking place would result in strike action, noting that the cameras were only one of a number of other concerns for the workers, who were not only under surveillance, but also "much too far apart on wages and on certain fringe benefits..."⁹² Despite the pronounced disapproval of the cameras, strike action would not take place for another two

⁸⁷ Margaret Mironowicz, "Union's fight over TV monitors going to civil rights board," *The Globe & Mail*, 9 November 1976, 12.

⁸⁸ The arbitrator of the camera grievance, Justice S.R. Ellis, explains this in the arbitration award.

⁸⁹ Mironowicz, "Union's fight over TV monitors going to civil rights board," *The Globe & Mail*, 9 November 1976, 12.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Margaret Mironowicz, "Strike likely against knit firm by immigrant workers," *The Globe & Mail*, 5 November 1976, 5.

years. This is because the camera dispute coincided with collective agreement negotiations. The third agreement between the CTCU and the workers at Puretex since 1972, the new agreement passed with 66% in favour, and included a 9 percent increase in year one (a \$0.30 minimum increase in wage), a 7 percent increase in year two, a (\$0.25 minimum increase in wage), and a 5-cent increase across the board to their \$3.00-\$3.25 per hour.⁹³

Speaking to the CBC on 5 May 1978, Parent noted that the cameras were “noticeable from the plant gates” since one of the nine cameras covers the exterior, and that the camera trained on the women’s washroom supposedly being installed to prevent theft was “just an excuse” due to the fact that some of the cameras are turned off during the night shifts – which were composed primarily of men – who were therefore subject to less surveillance and supervision than the women.⁹⁴ The area most overtly scrutinized in the plant was the assembly line, where “the finished product” was finalized by women workers.⁹⁵ “If [Satok] is concerned about theft, why do the camera’s not monitor people on the evening shift?... He’s never explained [this] and surely, I’m not going to ask him,” Parent told the CBC, while also informing them that “tension” best characterized the relationship between the Puretex workers and Satok, and that many women workers in the plant felt “nervous” and “degraded” by the presence of the cameras.⁹⁶ “These are honest workers who earn a living the hard way. They’re not thieves, but [Satok] is so intent upon keeping them insecure and making them feel like he watches them all the time, *not* for purposes of theft, but for the purpose of keeping their nose to the ground all the

⁹³ Mironowicz, “Union’s fight over TV monitors going to civil rights board,” *The Globe & Mail*, 9 November 1976, 12.

⁹⁴ “Madeleine Parent discusses Puretex strike,” CBC Digital Archives, CBC News, *As It Happens*, 1978 radio broadcast, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/madeleine-parent-discusses-puretex-strike>

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

time,” she explained.⁹⁷ As is clear, Parent made sure to emphasize the concentrated surveillance of *women* workers in the plant, suggesting they were cast as criminals and thieves while their male counterparts worked without the burden of being under surveillance or increased supervision.

Despite the oppressive and demeaning work environment they faced, the Puretex women turned into powerful feminist actors once the strike began and they took part in the picket line. The longer they struck, the louder they sang, and the further they marched, the more confident they became. They did not shy away from sharing their experiences with those who asked why they were striking – even those who came with cameras! One particularly revealing piece of coverage from the Puretex picket line came from Helen Bullock and Christie Blatchford for *The Bullock Blatchford Report*, which described the striker’s picket in detail: the portable toilet installed near the picket line was dubbed “Judy-on-the-spot”; many of the striking women joked with Bullock that they could finally “go in peace”; “resentment” brewed towards their male co-workers who entered the plant for the night shift with the cameras turned off and left their shift without being searched by management; and songs of liberty and solidarity were no longer shared with the Puretex women, they were *written* by them:

We’re Italian, we’re immigrants, we came to a new country to work. We strike because you don’t give a raise. We make a lot for you. We want to work, so you better let us work but give us good money. We want to make progress, we’re not scared, we’re not worried.⁹⁸

When asked by Bullock for comment, Satok’s deputy manager read a prepared statement that read, “Madeleine Parent... and the media are trying to make this little strike news. We are not

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Helen Bullock, “Workers on candid cameras don’t want screen careers,” *Toronto Star*, 16 November 1978, A2.

news and we have no comment.”⁹⁹ When pressed further by Bullock, the deputy simply reiterated, “we are not news.”¹⁰⁰

The camera issue in particular attracted the attention of OWW. Established only three years prior to the strike, OWW women joined Local 560 on the picket line and helped the CTCU organize the Puretex strikers, while simultaneously supporting strikes at Fleck, Inco, “York University, RadioShack, Blue Cross... Bell, Irwin Toys, and Mini-Skools.”¹⁰¹ This support culminated in a fundraising concert with popular performers like Canadian folk singer Marie-Lynn Hammond headlining the event.¹⁰² Laurell Ritchie has also recalled that the Puretex women received picket line support from The Red Berets, a self-described “group of “socialist feminist women who [liked] to sing”” and provide moral support to striking women.¹⁰³ According to Ritchie, The Red Berets “didn’t just visit picket lines” and donate, “they’d practice classic labour songs,” albeit with a socialist feminist twist in the lyrics, and “entertain” picketers “to try and lift [their] morale and spirit by playing songs.”¹⁰⁴ CBC news coverage of the strike in December of 1978 showed Parent leading the striking workers in song and demonstration, even amidst Toronto’s cold winter.¹⁰⁵ One particular broadcast aired two contrasting interviews of the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Organized Working Women,” *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, organized by Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, Meg Luxton, et al. <http://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/organized-working-women/>. In addition to their work with Puretex and the strikes noted above, OWW also supported CUPW, OPSEU, and CALEA in the 1970s.

¹⁰² Maria Iori, Interview with Laurell Ritchie and Joan Sangster, (n.d.) Maria was a member of Local 560’s leadership and a Puretex striker.

¹⁰³ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019. The description of The Red Berets was found at “The Red Berets,” *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, organized by Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, Meg Luxton, et al. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/culture/music/red-berets/>

¹⁰⁴ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019.

¹⁰⁵ “Workers walk out over Orwellian TV monitors,” CBC Digital Archives, CBC News, *The National*, 1978 television broadcast. <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/workers-walk-out-over-orwellian-tv-monitors>. Not all media representations of Parent were positive, however. One *Globe & Mail* post denounced her left-leaning nationalism and her desire to organize outside of American internationals as “[inhibiting] the growth of [the CTCU] by cutting it off from the mainstream labour movement.” Her view described as “myopic,” Parent was disparaged for “only” championing “five agreements [and] 1,500 members,” which was apparently “little to show for so many years of

surveillance debate, one from a male picket captain who maintained that people are “used to” surveillance in public buildings; the other from the female picketers who were outspoken in their anxieties and shame in being watched.¹⁰⁶ This broadcast made clear that, besides the clear divide between management and workers on labour surveillance, there was a divide between men and women on how being under surveillance effected them. Mirella Depiro, the male picket captain interviewed in the broadcast, spoke as a consumer, noting that many who enter a public building have already surrendered themselves without knowing it to a camera, and that little fuss is made about it.¹⁰⁷ Speaking as *workers*, however, the Puretex women were emphatic in their stance that they were “in prison” when on the job.¹⁰⁸

Speaking at a labour rally at the Bathurst Street United Church, Madeleine Parent criticized the OHRC for refusing to take Puretex’s case in the camera dispute.¹⁰⁹ In her speech, Parent characterized the cameras at Puretex as a human rights violation, echoing her earlier statements that the surveillance was “degrading” and “offensive.”¹¹⁰ On 22 January 1979, Parent distributed an appeal to the CTCU’s allies outlining the goals of the strike and calling for aid in a variety of forms. Parent outlined the strike’s goals as being the removal of all nine cameras, a \$0.40 raise to improve the \$3.60-\$3.75 hourly rate, improved welfare benefits since the company only paid OHIP premiums in part, better seniority rights to “protect against layoffs” and to train “seniority workers into other skills,” and “a better grievance procedure.”¹¹¹ In her appeal, Parent

effort.” Ironically, however, the same journalist went on to write a glowing account of her years of service to the Canadian labour movement shortly after Parent announced her retirement in 1983. See Wilfred List, “A zealous champion of working women,” *Globe & Mail*, 24 January 1979, 7; and Wilfred List, “Union organizer retires: No rocking chair for Madeleine Parent,” *Globe & Mail*, 11 June 1983, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ “Delay by rights group led to strike, union says,” *Toronto Star*, 5 December 1978, A7.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Madeleine Parent, “Appeal from the Strikers at Puretex Knitting Co., Toronto,” *Canadian Textile and Chemical Union*, 22 January 1979.

also stressed that many of the workers employed at Puretex were immigrants “of foreign origin,” and exploited because of this.¹¹² Parent’s appeal asked for financial donations to the CTCU, a letter writing campaign to R.E. Elgie, the Ontario labour minister, asking him to “personally intervene and support” mediators in the strike settlement, and for consumers to educate their local department stores that sell Puretex clothing on how Puretex workers are treated.¹¹³

The strike drew to a close as the CTCU and management convened at the bargaining table in early February of 1979. After a 52-hour-long round of negotiations with Puretex management and the CTCU, 90 percent of the Puretex workers voted on a contract that would remove the camera from the women’s washroom door.¹¹⁴ Additionally, the agreement promised a \$0.35 increase in the first year of the agreement and \$0.30 in the second year, “15 to 17 cents more an hour than the company’s final prestrike offer on 12 November 1978.”¹¹⁵ Parent made sure that the female cutters had “special adjustments in the settlement,” as they were previously the lowest paid workers at Puretex, and subject to the most scrutiny and surveillance by the company.¹¹⁶ This agreement brought an end to the strike, but did not remove the eight other cameras still in operation, three of which surveyed workers on the shop-floor. In order to remove the remaining cameras, the CTCU needed to look outside of its ranks and enlist the help of a labour lawyer who knew his way around the bureaucratic web of industrial law.

Frank Park and the Camera Arbitration

Toronto lawyer Francis “Frank” Park was involved with the CTCU’s efforts to organize the Puretex workers from the very beginning. Since acting as the CTCU’s legal counsel during

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “Union contract kills washroom ‘spy’ TV,” *Toronto Star*, 7 February 1979, A4.

¹¹⁵ “Arbitrator to decide on 8 other cameras: TV on workers to go as strike ends at Puretex,” *Globe & Mail*, 7 Feb 1979, 11.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

the first contract negotiations in 1972, his commitment to the legal protection of the Puretex workers was fierce and focused.¹¹⁷ When the union failed to increase the wages of *all* employees prior to the CTCU's second collective agreement for the Puretex workers, Park was the one trusted by Parent and the CTCU to hold management to task.¹¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, it was Park who was entrusted with challenging Stringer, who remained management's legal counsel, on the issue of the cameras. The camera arbitration was spread across four hearings, roughly one week apart beginning on 20 April 1979, and ending on 18 May 1979. Park's strategy was to demonstrate that the presence of the cameras created stress, anxiety, and tension in the workplace. As arbitrator Justice S.R. Ellis explained in the eventual arbitration award, this strategy was not sufficient enough to warrant the removal of the cameras.¹¹⁹ Though the final ruling called for the removal of all cameras trained on workers, a favorable ruling for the CTCU, the reasoning for the ruling did not come from the testimony of the women who were watched by the cameras, but from the legal precedent set by rulings in other workplace surveillance cases that spoke to a more generalized pattern of management abuse of electronic spying technology. Though Park's

¹¹⁷ The Frank and Libbie Park fonds in Library and Archives Canada contain correspondence letters between Park and the various arbitrators between Puretex management and the CTCU. Though many of these letters are short and to-the-point, Park's ability to speak confidently and firmly for the union – particularly when faced with unfavorable rulings in arbitration – is evident. See for example his opening statement to his dissent from the arbitration for Puretex workers' second contract with management in 1975: "In the matter of an arbitration between Puretex Knitting Company Limited and the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union: Dissent of Union Nominee F.W. Park," LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds MG31 K 9 29, Box 29, "Canadian Textile and Chemical Union: Puretex Arbitration, 1975."

¹¹⁸ "In the matter of an arbitration between Puretex Knitting Company Limited and the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union, and its Local 560: Respecting a grievance of claim for retroactive pay," LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds MG31 K 9 29, Box 29, "Canadian Textile and Chemical Union: Puretex Arbitration, 1975."

¹¹⁹ As Ellis writes in the arbitration award, "much of the hearing was devoted to evidence about the actual or potential psychological impact of the cameras on the employees. The Union made some attempt to show that the cameras were the cause of the actual symptoms of psychological stress but I am satisfied the attempt was unsuccessful." See: "In the matter of an arbitration... between Puretex Knitting Company Limited, and Canadian Textile and Chemical Union – Concerning: Dispute Between Company and Union Re Electronic Surveillance of Employees," June 1979, 12. (Hereafter referred to as "Ellis arbitration.")

strategy was to give voice to the women who were under surveillance, this was not what the final ruling reflected.

Park brought in a handful of witnesses to testify that the cameras were causing them stress, all of whom were female workers at Puretex. Vendelin Renford, a sewing operator and also the CTCU local VP at Puretex, testified that she was experiencing “a lot of strain,” and “constant headaches while working.”¹²⁰ “The supervisors are more pushy since the cameras [were installed] since they know they are being watched by the cameras,” she remarked; “they tell you to speed up, do more work, they go around and they time you.”¹²¹ Renford’s testimony was also meant to dissuade Ellis from siding with Stringer and management on the grounds that the cameras were installed to keep track of theft, since Renford testified that there had been no increase in plant supervisors since accusations of theft.¹²² Park had therefore logically assumed that if Satok was seriously concerned in loss of product, more supervisors on the floor would be hired to cover what the camera’s movements could not catch.¹²³ Salome Tsakonas, a cutter who had been working at Puretex for nine-and-a-half years, testified that when she returned from a brief work hiatus, her coworkers appeared “more nervous,” noting that “they didn’t even talk to each other” after she returned.¹²⁴ Tsakonas admitted that the cameras made her nervous as well,

¹²⁰ “In the matter of an arbitration between the Puretex Knitting Company Limited and the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union: Points intended to be argued on behalf of the Union,” LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds, MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, “Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance – Arbitration Hearing, 1979,” 3.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ In Park’s case notes, his doubt in Satok’s claims of loss prevention measures is clear. In his notes, he writes that “if the Company had been so concerned about employee theft it could have instituted a form of inventory control, particularly after the Meli incident,” where one female employee was caught stealing product. Furthermore, Park draws attention to the fact that “on the night shift... there is a great opportunity for employees to actually take company property,” since “the cameras are turned off” during the night shift, when mostly male employees are working. See: “Seriousness of Company’s concern Re: theft,” LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds, MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, “Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance Correspondence 1 of 2 1979.”

¹²⁴ “In the matter of an arbitration between the Puretex Knitting Company Limited and the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union: Points intended to be argued on behalf of the Union.” LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds, MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, “Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance – Arbitration Hearing, 1979,” 5.

and that she felt as though she was not considered “responsible enough and that someone always has to watch [her],” prohibiting her from “using [her] judgement” on the job.¹²⁵ During her testimony, Tsakonas was asked if she would “feel better” if management explained what the cameras were for: Tsakonas reaffirmed under persistent questioning that she would not.¹²⁶ Linda Caulfield, an administrator in the plant who did not even work on the production floor, was another witness called by Park who cited unease with the cameras, testifying that whenever she passed the production floor, she felt it “an invasion of privacy.”¹²⁷

After Renford, Tsakonas, and Caulfield’s testimony, Park brought in Dr. Gordon Atherley, an expert in occupational health (though by his own admission, not a psychologist) to provide expert testimony on the cameras. Atherley conceded that the cameras themselves were not a stress-inducing factor, but emphasized that the worker’s perceptions of the cameras were what could lead to stress, anxiety, and tension.¹²⁸ Stringer asked Atherley if telling the workers what the cameras were for would solve their perceptions, and Atherley said no, that “if there was an obvious incompatibility between the explanation and what the worker can see the camera doing, then... the problem [cannot] be resolved.”¹²⁹ Further examination of Atherley’s evidence available in Park’s case notes reveals that “what people believe about the environment or equipment is a very important component in many cases of industrial stress,” and that “an object or a circumstance may be quite neutral to the casual observer, but so charged with meaning to

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “In the matter of an arbitration between the Puretex Knitting Company Limited and the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union: Points intended to be argued on behalf of the Union,” LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, “Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance – Arbitration Hearing, 1979,” 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ “In the matter of an arbitration between the Puretex Knitting Company Limited and the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union: Points intended to be argued on behalf of the Union,” LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, “Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance – Arbitration Hearing, 1979,” 7.

someone else [can acquire] the force of a stressor.”¹³⁰ Here, Atherley’s testimony aptly describes the relationship between Puretex workers and management, that this was no simple issue of theft prevention, but rather a mistrust of the female employees on the grounds that they were immigrants, and therefore thieves.

What won the day for Park and the CTCU was the legal precedent surrounding the use of electronic surveillance. In the arbitration award, Ellis cited six cases where unions disputed their employer’s use of spy cameras, or other “mechanical spy” devices: the American cases of *Electronic Instrument Company, Inc (EICO) v. IUE (1965)*; *FMC Corporation v. UAW (1966)*; and the Canadian cases of *Milk and Bread Drivers v. Dominion Dairies, Ltd (1969)*; *Caproco Inc v. Upholsterer’s International Union of North America*; *Liberty Smelting Works v. UAW (1972)*; and a case referred to only as “Colonial Bakery” in the award.¹³¹ Regarding the significance of these disputes to the Puretex case, Ellis wrote that

it is clearly a matter of balancing competing considerations after recognizing that any use of cameras that observe employees at work is intrinsically seriously objectionable in human terms, with the degree of objection depending on the way the cameras are deployed and the purpose for which they are used and ranging from unacceptable in the case of constant surveillance of conduct and work performance to probably non-objectionable in the case of short-term individual application for training purposes. Applying these principles to the present case, I find that the use of the production areas of the plant cannot be justified. It is true that they are rotating cameras which do not keep employees under constant surveillance and that they are not used to check on production performance or conduct. But they are objectionable for all that – the employees, for example, experience a constant surveillance since they cannot keep track of the camera’s movements and cannot know from minute to minute whether or not they are in the camera’s eye – and I find that there is no sufficient countervailing justification.¹³²

¹³⁰ “Notes Re: Puretex Arbitration Evidence of Dr. Gordon Atherley – 4:15p.m. April 24, 1979,” LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, “Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance – Arbitration Hearing, 1979.”

¹³¹ In the case of the *Milk and Bread Drivers v. Dominion Dairies*, tachographs were installed on delivery trucks to measure “the time and rate of engine speeds as well as idle times,” thus differentiating it from the other cases, which were more explicitly about cameras, but was still found to be a form of surveillance. See Ellis arbitration, June 1979, 21.

¹³² Ellis arbitration, June 1979, 28-29.

Ellis ordered the removal of all cameras from the production floor on the grounds that they violated basic human dignities and an individual's right to privacy, while allowing Puretex to keep only the cameras trained on the exterior of the plant and in storage areas. There is some evidence to suggest that Park was working towards a second strategy for the arbitration, one that fell in line with Ellis' eventual ruling surrounding the legal precedent of electronic surveillance. In his case notes, it appears that Park was looking into the Liberty Smelting Works ruling and acknowledged the same similarities in circumstance between the workers there and the ones at Puretex.¹³³ Similarly, Park acknowledges in his case notes that the CTCU sent him information on the EICO arbitration to be used in his case.¹³⁴ Though both of these cases were referenced by Ellis as precedents informing his final ruling, it is unclear how (if at all) Park used them in his case, nor what effect – if any – Park's introduction of them into his case had on Ellis' decision.¹³⁵ Effectively, women's voices in Park's case were silenced, and the decision – though favorable – came from legal case precedents. Parent herself acknowledged that “the union might have lost the case against the cameras if it had gone to arbitration on the grievance, instead of to “interest arbitration,” where the tribunal has greater powers.”¹³⁶

The Case Closes?

As the Puretex arbitration came to its close, signs of unrest could be seen brewing in the garment industry. In April of 1979, the distribution of pamphlets entitled *Our Health, Our Safety, Our Right: Voice of Garment and Textile Workers* was cause for polarizing discussion in the

¹³³ Found in Frank and Libbie Park fonds, LAC, MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, “Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance – Notes on Hearing 2 of 5, 1979.”

¹³⁴ “Puretex Knitting Mills – Camera Grievance – Notes on Hearing 2 of 5, 1979,” LAC, Frank and Libbie Park fonds MG31 K 9 33, Box 33, 7.

¹³⁵ Park's notes on case law and similar surveillance disputes are detailed, but there is little information on where and how he used this research in his case for the CTCU. Any such conclusion on the connection between Liberty Smelting Works and EICO in both Park's research and Ellis' ruling would be speculative at best.

¹³⁶ “Spy Cameras Out at Puretex,” *Canadian Union News*, Vol. 8, No. 1, July 1979.

labour community. Published by “an ad hoc safety task force that grew out of a December conference on women’s occupational health and safety,” and sponsored in part by OWW, the pamphlets were printed in “English, Chinese, Italian, and Portuguese... for the mostly immigrant readers,” and criticized the hazards of working in garment factories, management’s apathy and resistance to worker’s compensation for injury, and the lack of rights afforded to the immigrant women who dominated the industry.¹³⁷ “In a mini bill of rights,” the *Toronto Star* reported, “the pamphlet calls for “the right to work in complete safety, the right to refuse a job that is unsafe, full compensation for job-related injuries or sickness and the right to set up worker-controlled safety committees in every factory.””¹³⁸ One could easily surmise how the management teams of various textile plants in Toronto responded to the accusations in the pamphlets, but in an interesting turn of events, the pamphlet was criticized by textile and garment unions for the criticisms levelled against the lack of health and safety clauses in collective agreements.¹³⁹ The International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU), an American-based international union, was the most outspoken critic in the labour movement of the pamphlet, as its accusations “implied [the unions] haven’t done their jobs.”¹⁴⁰ Parent and the CTCU, however – never one to shy away from criticisms of the labour bureaucracy or American internationals – gave verbal support for the pamphlets on the heels of the Puretex arbitration, though she was careful to pin the difficulty in gaining health and safety clauses on management, not the unions.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Louise Brown. “Pamphlet on workers’ safety causes furor,” *Toronto Star*, 6 April 1979, C2.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

On 31 May 1979, the cameras in the production areas of Puretex plant were ordered to be removed. Satok and the company had the option to appeal this decision, but they chose not to.¹⁴² Parent described Ellis' ruling as "important for all workers in Canada," as "it upholds the right of people to privacy and to human dignity at the workplace."¹⁴³ Likewise, the CBC reported the decision as a victory not just for the workers at Puretex, but as a victory for all unions in Canada.¹⁴⁴ Despite the \$0.60 increase that the Puretex workers eventually gained after the arbitration (an impressive increase from the \$0.40 that was originally asked for), Parent maintained that more was still to be done: "with so many uses of electronic devices, our civil liberties are constantly in jeopardy," she warned the CBC.¹⁴⁵ "A law should be passed to protect our rights," she exclaimed, calling for the involvement of lawmakers in the emerging discussion of how electronic surveillance in the workplace was to be handled moving forward.¹⁴⁶

Such laws had been called for fervently during the Puretex strike, and after Ellis' award in the CTCU's favour, progress was being made in the provincial legislature towards a bill that would make employers more accountable for their use of surveillance. It is important to stress here, however, that though progress was being made, it did not necessarily move quickly, nor did it move in the entirely right direction. Liberal Opposition Leader Stuart Smith tried to contact Puretex management during the strike in order to see the setup of their surveillance cameras. This was after Smith had pressed Labour Minister Elgie to start on a workplace surveillance ban

¹⁴² "Puretex surveillance cameras ordered removed," CBC Digital Archives, CBC News, *The National*, 1979 television broadcast, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/puretex-surveillance-cameras-ordered-removed>

¹⁴³ Ellis arbitration (Parent preface), ii. Parent distributed copies of Ellis' arbitration with her preface to locals in the CTCU and its allies.

¹⁴⁴ "Puretex surveillance cameras ordered removed," CBC Digital Archives, CBC News, *The National*, 1979 television broadcast, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/puretex-surveillance-cameras-ordered-removed>

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. Parent echoes these sentiments in her preface to Justice Ellis' arbitration, noting that two bills proposed by the Liberals and the NDP respectively proposing a ban on "spy cameras" were shot down by provincial parliament.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

in the provincial legislature. When Smith was denied access to the Puretex plant, he and “some thirty picketers” gathered outside the factory gates, two of whom were women who made \$130.00 per week or less, and one of which was a single mother who was on the picket line with her child due to her inability to pay for a sitter.¹⁴⁷

When no progress was made, Elgie was asked again in early December 1978 to legislate against the use of surveillance cameras in the workplace. Smith challenged Elgie to “come forward with a simple amendment making it illegal to have that type of surveillance, or... [demand] that a permit be obtained proving that it is needed for security [or] safety.”¹⁴⁸ Smith and NDP MPP Antonio Lupusella even called for Elgie’s direct involvement in the strike at Puretex. Lupusella in particular was an important political ally for the CTCU. An immigrant himself, Lupusella was sympathetic to the exploitation of the immigrant workers at Puretex and listened earnestly to the CTCU’s call for aid.¹⁴⁹ Despite being assured by Smith that Elgie would have “the support of both the other parties,” the response was less than promising: “one doesn’t delve into it overnight and say, “Ah ha, I’ve got the answer,” Elgie responded, assuring the members of the house that he was “looking into it.”¹⁵⁰

Soon after the Puretex arbitration, however, “a provincial government study” suggested that banning electronic surveillance would curb labour unrest.¹⁵¹ This study was the government’s response to MPP Lupusella’s introduction of a private members bill in the Ontario Legislature aimed at “restricting” the electronic surveillance of workers.¹⁵² Labour Minister

¹⁴⁷ Marina Strauss, “Doors closed to Smith for opposing ‘spying,’” *The Globe & Mail*, 30 November 1978, 4.

¹⁴⁸ “House documents from the 31st Parliament, 2nd Session,” *Legislative Assembly of Ontario*, 7 December 1978. <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/house-documents/parliament-31/session-2/1978-12-07/hansard-1>

¹⁴⁹ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019.

¹⁵⁰ “House documents from the 31st Parliament, 2nd Session,” *Legislative Assembly of Ontario*, 7 December 1978. <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/house-documents/parliament-31/session-2/1978-12-07/hansard-1>

¹⁵¹ Joe, O’Donnell. “Shop-floor spying ban could ease unrest – study,” *Toronto Star*, 10 October 1979, A2.

¹⁵² Joe, O’Donnell. “Ban spying at work: NDP,” *Toronto Star*, 19 May 1979, A6.

Elgie circulated the study to unions and managers “across the province,” hoping to prompt input on how to implement the ban.¹⁵³ Elgie’s own suggestions included amending the Criminal Code, the Employment Standards Act, the Labour Relations Act, and/or the Human Rights Code, to account for abuses of electronic surveillance, and implementing privacy committees “to investigate and provide remedies” to surveillance disputes, made up of a combination of management and union representatives.¹⁵⁴ Once again, however, the legislature was criticized for moving too slowly. One outspoken critic in this vein was Clifford Pilkey, president of the OFL, who charged Elgie with “procrastinating” too long on the ban and insisted that “the privacy of the individual in the workplace” was “paramount,” with too many abuses of surveillance technology taking place already to move any slower.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

In many ways, Puretex was part of a larger pattern of labour mobilization in the 1970s. Like the Texpack strike in 1971, the CTCU’s presence encouraged many CLC allies to “turn their backs” on the Puretex workers, forcing the CTCU to form alliances with feminist groups such as OWW.¹⁵⁶ The Puretex strike was also “a microcosm of broader political struggles of the period,” namely left-wing nationalism, “the changing gender and ethnic profile of unionized workers,” the increasing contestation of the “shaky” Fordist accord, and the growing “rank-and-file rebellions within the labour movement.”¹⁵⁷ Like the Texpack strike, the CTCU’s representation of the Puretex workers influenced their “strategies, politics, and organizing in important ways,” namely by transforming the unorganized and exploited female workers into

¹⁵³ Joe O’Donnell, “Shop-floor spying ban could ease unrest – study,” *Toronto Star*, 10 October 1979, A2

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Joan Sangster, “Remembering Texpack: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Militancy in Canadian Unions in the 1970s,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 78, (2006): 41.

¹⁵⁷ Sangster, *Remembering Texpack*, 41.

confident and capable feminist organizers.¹⁵⁸ Unlike the Artistic Woodwork Strike of 1973, however, Puretex did not receive the same resounding numbers of youth or New Left support on the picket line. While Artistic benefitted from the support of the New Left, the CTCU and feminist allies such as OWW provided the bulk of the picket line support in the Puretex strike.¹⁵⁹ Nor did the Puretex strike generate a significant amount of violence from strikers or the police.¹⁶⁰ Instead, video documentation of the Puretex strike was couched in as much human rights language and discourse as the many pamphlets, speeches, and addresses distributed by the CTCU were.

In terms of allies involved in the Puretex strike, Madeleine Parent, the CTCU, and Frank Park stand out because of the invaluable leadership and strike support they provided. Parent's various legal troubles as an accused communist, her experience in establishing the CCU, and the many certification battles she won for Canadian unions ensured that she – and later her colleagues within the CTCU – was well-versed in the law and able to confidently navigate the various complexities within Canadian industrial legality. Also, Parent and the CTCU not only organized the Puretex strikers but they were present on the picket line, an important means of minimizing the distance between leaders and members. The human rights discourse surrounding the Puretex strike made it possible for popular support to be mobilized, most notably by feminist groups such as OWW. Parent and the CTCU also used this rhetoric to their advantage and won Local 560 a victory due to their experience with such cases. There is therefore a case to be made

¹⁵⁸ Sangster, "Remembering Texpack", 60.

¹⁵⁹ Ian Milligan, "'The Force of All Our Numbers': New Leftists, Labour, and the 1973 Artistic Woodwork Strike," *Labour/Le Travail*, 66, (2010): 38. Milligan argues that the New Left organizers in the Artistic strike were invaluable allies.

¹⁶⁰ Milligan, "'The Force of All Our Numbers'," 62-66. These pages in particular outline the violence captured by video documentation of the strike, noting that it was a "daily" occurrence.

that left-wing nationalists are particularly capable of weathering strikes that cover a plethora of issues, as well as standing strong amidst the bureaucracy of industrial legality.

Likewise, individual actors such as Frank Park, whose politics made him sympathetic to the CTCU's situation, need to be recognized as important labour allies. Park remained with Parent and the CTCU through all legal negotiations with Puretex, and when the camera grievance came to arbitration, constructed his case in a way that gave center stage to the experiences of the Puretex women under surveillance. The case was noble, and Park knew it would likely not pass, but he fought the battle nonetheless. The legal realm is often seen as a barrier, indeed an adversary to the plight of the working-class. However, when we consider Parent and Park as activist allies who were mobilizing in line with McCann's legal mobilization theory, we can see that engaging with the legal bureaucracy does not have to be a futile endeavour. Legal mobilization alone did not win the strike at Puretex. Activism also counted. The CTCU's organizing and Park's legal case gave voice to the immigrant women amidst a legal system that has largely forgotten or ignored them, but without the strike support provided by feminist groups such as OWW and IWDC, it's unlikely the strikers would have held out as long as they did.

Puretex stands out as a mobilization that could not count on the support of a powerful international union, or an organized labour body like the CLC. The issues that the CTCU faced in mobilizing its allies were therefore only indicative of the challenges facing small, left-wing nationalist, Canadian unions. International unions also faced internal and external challenges to mobilizing its membership and its allies. As Chapter 4 will demonstrate, women and feminists within international unions had different yet equally troublesome obstacles to overcome when attempting to mobilize strike support and allies.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Inco Strike, 1978-79

Introduction

1978 proved to be a difficult year for employers, and an important year for workers. While the CTCU rallied supporters to the aid of the Puretex women in Toronto, negotiations over a new collective agreement broke down between Local 6500 of the USWA (United Steelworkers of America) and the International Nickel Company (Inco) nickel mine in Sudbury. On 15 September 1978, the 11,700 Inco workers of Local 6500 struck, and demanded fairer wages, improved safety measures, stronger collective bargaining procedures, vacation, pensions, and increased cost of living allowances. But while the Steelworkers of Sudbury soon became caught up in negotiations and bargaining rounds with Inco in Toronto, a women's committee made up of striking miners' wives took it upon themselves to step into a supportive role in the Sudbury community and mobilize support for the strikers and their families during the 8-month long strike.¹ The Wives Supporting the Strike Committee (WSS) effectively contested the common conception that trade unions are the only hub of labor organizing and became demonstrative of the important role feminist and community solidarity played in labor organizing and strike support. The Inco strike of 1978-79 was successful in no small part due to the strike support provided by the WSS (in partnership with other feminist and community groups) to the striking Steelworkers.

¹ While the campaigns led by Local 6500 and the various women's groups diverged at times, their relationship was always supportive. One letter from Patterson to Diedre Gallagher of the Organized Working Women (OWW), discussing the support that Local 6500 would give to the OWW and WSS' December strike fund benefit, demonstrates a friendly and cooperative attitude between the two organizations. See "Re: Benefit Concert – Women Fighting Inco," City of Toronto Archives, Organized Working Women fonds, Box 3, File 238790-18, "Series 663, File 5, Strikes Support – 1978-1985."

Though the WSS' efforts were successful, and the union ultimately held out for a new contract, this victory had to overcome a number of obstacles. Canada was one of the largest producers of nickel in the world, and the international demand for nickel was high, making the nickel mining industry a top employer for Canadians living near the Sudbury Basin. Inco was thus a larger industry than the food production and textile industries represented by Dare and Puretex. Mobilizing against even one branch of Inco therefore involved far more people than in the Dare and Puretex strikes and would thus be doubly as difficult due to the historically gendered lines upon which mining towns were constructed. The most important of these obstacles, however, was the complicated relationship between the WSS and USWA Local 6500. Meg Luxton effectively articulated this issue when she wrote that a husband's union creates "an opportunity for [their] wives to organize their concerns and activities in a collective way, alongside the union and in support of the union," but that union structure can only provide for its members – in this case, the male workers.² Effectively, this relationship distanced wives' committees from the union, though their goals were often similar during the strike.³ To be sure, the WSS was not a women's auxiliary. It was "autonomous" from the USWA, "[controlling] its own funds and [making] its own political decisions."⁴ But its weak *formal* affiliation with Local 6500, and its overall objective of providing for families and the community (not just the paid membership) guaranteed that its mobilizations, activism, and forms of support for the strikers would be inherently different from the efforts of the USWA and the broader trade union movement.⁵ Luxton specifically wrote that the WSS had "a two-pronged strategy for winning the

² Meg Luxton, "From Ladies' Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees: Housewives and the Union," in Meg Luxton, Harriet Rosenberg, and Sedef Arat-Koc, eds., *Through the Kitchen Window: The Politics of Home and Family*, 2nd Edition, (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990), 107.

³ Luxton, "From Ladies' Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees," 107.

⁴ Luxton, "From Ladies' Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees," 109.

⁵ Ibid.

strike,” one focused on “helping workers and their families survive during the hardship of the strike period,” and one dedicated to “educating other wives and members of the community who may be unfamiliar with the issues and hence reluctant to support the strike.”⁶ Luxton has therefore suggested that involving the *Sudbury* community was the main strategy of the WSS, whereas the USWA concentrated on winning support from the *labour* community, broadly speaking.

The autonomy of the WSS and its distance from the USWA was not achieved easily. A great deal of Martin Duckworth, Sophie Bissonnette, and Joyce Rock’s 1980 National Film Board (NFB) documentary *A Wives’ Tale* deals with the contentious, though often supportive, relationship with the union. As was expected of ladies’ auxiliaries in decades past, the WSS was initially told to have every mobilization, demonstration, press release, expenditure, and action approved by the union. As the primary fundraisers during the strike, the WSS took particular issue with the union’s desire to dictate what the money they raised would be used for. One scene in the documentary shows a heated argument between the WSS and Local 6500 President Dave Patterson after he insisted that expenditures by the WSS be approved by a union deputy.⁷ In this instance, older wives and former members of the women’s auxiliary were also insistent that the union sign-off on WSS expenditures, as that was how their expenditures were dealt with in prior strikes.⁸ As will be explained later, the women’s auxiliary was used to a certain degree of supervision from the union, and they were also trying to remain on good terms with the Steelworkers after a previous strike in 1958 resulted in skepticism towards women’s involvement

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *A Wives’ Tale*, directed by Martin Duckworth, Sophie Bissonnette, and Joyce Rock (National Film Board, 1980).

⁸ *A Wives’ Tale*, 1980.

in strikes. In another instance, *A Wives' Tale* shows the WSS fighting back against Local 6500 Vice President Ronald McDonald when he insisted that press releases by the WSS were also to be cleared by the union.⁹ In both scenarios, the Steelworkers backed off and allowed the WSS to operate (mostly) on its own accord, and in fact built a strong relationship with the wives as the strike proceeded. The issue was that such autonomy had to be granted in the first place, for the WSS was *not* a women's auxiliary, nor was it a Steelworkers fundraising drive: from the very beginning, the WSS was to be a separate, autonomous organization from the USWA that worked *outside* of organized labour to bring in support from a diverse variety of labour allies. The WSS' continuous battles for such independence throughout 1978-1979 thus demonstrated how difficult it was for such mobilizations to take place within the labour movement, especially when led by women who previously occupied the traditional roles of mother, housekeeper, and homemaker.

Gender and Mining Communities

The Inco strike of 1978 cannot be properly understood without first understanding the complex relationship between women and their expected gender roles in mining communities. As Nancy Forestell has argued, mining towns were inherently masculine, and not unlike the “paper mills, bush camps, railways, grain elevators, [and] construction projects” that served as “ideal work places for many working-class men in northwestern Ontario” described by sociologist Thomas Dunk.¹⁰ Only men could work in the mines until the 1960s, and though women often carved out their own feminine identities in mining towns, they could not change the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Nancy M. Forestell, “The Miner’s Wife: Working-Class Femininity in a Masculine Context, 1920-1950,” in Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell, eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999), 139; Thomas W. Dunk, *It’s A Working Man’s Town: Male Working-Class Culture*, 2nd Edition, (McGill-Queen’s University Press: 2003), 97. The list of “ideal” male workplaces in Dunk’s book also includes mines.

largely masculine culture that surrounded them.¹¹ “Daily interaction and negotiation,” as well as a long history of male dominance in mining communities, ensured that “gender roles of female housewife and male breadwinner” were not only constructed, but rigidly adhered to.¹² Forestell, in her case study of Timmins, Ontario, noted that in the early twentieth century, mining communities were populated by “bachelor homes,” where men lived alone or with fellow miners. By the 1920s, miners became increasingly encouraged to move their families to mining towns, and as a result, “wives assumed the responsibilities of domestic labour, child care, and financial management while their husbands took on the role of primary wage-earner labouring at the mines to provide for their families.”¹³ Forestell suggested a few reasons as to why gender roles were so quickly replicated in mining towns, namely because a miner’s shift schedule often dictated what his wife was expected to be doing. If her husband worked in the morning, his wife was expected to have food ready for him, care for the children, and see him out the door; but, if he worked “graveyard shifts”, she was expected to keep the children quiet.¹⁴ The interviewees in Forestell’s study discussed how personal preferences and shift timing could quickly cause tension in a household if expectations of meals or quiet time were not met by the wife or children.¹⁵ Some women were able to “augment” their husbands wages by “pickling, berry picking, and gardening,” as well as taking in boarders, but aside from these activities, women did not often seek paid work outside of the home.¹⁶ Their primary role was to care for their children, cook for their husband, and maintain the domestic balance of the home.

¹¹ Forestell, “The Miner’s Wife,” 139.

¹² Forestell, “The Miner’s Wife,” 141-144.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Forestell, “The Miner’s Wife,” 151-152.

It was therefore common for women in mining towns, as it was for women all over Canada in the 1970s, to “bear the burden of the double day,” in other words working for pay during the day and managing the home in the evening.¹⁷ In terms of pay and employment outside of the home, Sudbury fell “10 percent” below the national average.¹⁸ Paid employment numbers increased for Sudbury women by 1976, but still fell 6% below the paid employment rate for women in the rest of Canada.¹⁹ Indeed, the male-dominant composition of mining communities was strong in Sudbury, but it was not immune to the broader social change taking place in Canada and globally. The renewed women’s movement brought an abortion referral service, a rape crisis center, and a women’s center to Sudbury, and also spurred the development of local feminist organizations such as Women in Action and Women Helping Women (WHW.)²⁰ The women’s movement therefore had a foothold in Sudbury, but it had to contend with a historically masculine culture that was often resistant to the expansion of women’s roles outside the home. Not only that, but Sudbury miner’s wives had a difficult local legacy to overcome leading up to the 1978 strike.

Build Up to the 1978 Strike

The 1978 strike was by no means the first (or last) industrial dispute between Inco and the USWA in Sudbury. In a previous strike in 1958, Local 6500’s former women’s auxiliary lost the confidence of the Sudbury community when it was deceived by Inco, civic officials, and “pro-Inco forces.”²¹ Sudbury’s mayor announced he would host a meeting in the community

¹⁷ Meg Luxton, “Two Hands for the Clock: Changing Patterns in the Gendered Division of Labour in the Home,” in Meg Luxton, Harriet Rosenberg, and Sedef Arat-Koc, *Through the Kitchen Window: The Politics of Home and Family*, 2nd Edition (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990).

¹⁸ Dieter K. Buse. “The 1970’s,” in C.M. Wallace and Ashley Thomson, eds., *Sudbury: Rail Town to Regional Capital*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 253.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Buse, “The 1970s,” 253-255. Buse also notes that Sudbury also experienced lively civil rights, anti-Vietnam, environmentalist, and student protests during the 1960s and 1970s.

²¹ Luxton, “From Ladies Auxiliaries to Wives’ Committees,” 112.

recreation center for “all interested women” to attend and voice their concerns about the strike.²² The women’s auxiliary refused to attend, and instead planned a separate mobilization elsewhere in the city. As Sudbury newspapers ran a plethora of ads for the mayor’s meeting, however, the women of Sudbury became confused over which meeting was hosted by who and for what purpose. Ultimately, “over two-thousand women” attended the mayor’s meeting, where speeches were given about “community unity” and the need to settle the strike quickly, despite inadequate contract proposals.²³ A haphazard ‘vote’ was hastily thrown together by the mayor, asking if the Sudbury women would agree to urge their husbands back to work. 150 women voted against such action,²⁴ but despite the sizeable opposition to the motion, the mayor quickly ended the meeting. The next day, Sudbury newspapers were dominated by articles stating that the Sudbury women wanted the striking Steelworkers to return to work and end their strike, the pressure of which ultimately led to the men’s return to work.²⁵ The blame for the strike’s failure fell squarely on the shoulders of the women’s auxiliary and created a mistrust of union women in the Sudbury community that remained alive and well by the time strike action took place in 1978.²⁶ In *A Wives’ Tale*, a number of interviewed WSS members stated that one of their biggest anxieties was ending up like “the women of ’58.”²⁷

Wallace Clement has argued that Inco’s strategy in the 1958 strike, though devious, was not unusual. Companies could easily meddle in union-community relations and turn people

²² Luxton, “From Ladies Auxiliaries to Wives’ Committees,” 111.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Luxton describes the mayor asking dissenters to stand on the arena’s ice, and the 150 dissenting women did so. See Luxton, “From Ladies Auxiliaries to Wives’ Committees,” 112.

²⁵ Wallace Clement, *Hard Rock Mining: Industrial Relations and Technological Changes at Inco*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1981), 307.

²⁶ This is a key point of focus in *A Wives’ Tale*.

²⁷ *A Wives’ Tale*, 1980.

against the union.²⁸ As Clement and many others have noted, the post-war accord effectively transformed some unions into “instruments of social control,” causing them to act as “buffers” that “reduce” union power and “limit the forms of action possible to workers.”²⁹ Donald Wells’ case study of the UAW earlier in the twentieth century claims that “by severing mass militancy and solidarity,” and moving to “contract bargaining and administration,” the post-war settlement “became... a breach of labour's defenses.”³⁰ With women’s auxiliaries’ campaigns tied so closely to the activities and politics of their union, it can be understood that a company’s attempts to turn the public against the union would inevitably harm the auxiliary’s efforts as well. As a result, it became necessary for a new kind of organizing, *separate* from the union, to ensure that women’s issues in strikes were not “co-opted” like they were in 1958.³¹ Luxton has suggested that the WSS (and wives’ committees more generally) represented this shift from ladies’ auxiliaries to a more autonomous form of women’s organizing in the 1970s.³² Similarly, Rosemary Warskett has argued that the “union feminism” represented by the WSS has “played a fundamental role in breaking down the ideological separation of paid and unpaid work, home and work, the economy and the community,” as well as “challenging the idea of work as a separate sphere.”³³ It is along these lines, of an autonomous transformative union feminism, that the WSS needs to be understood.

²⁸ Clement, *Hard Rock Mining*, 313.

²⁹ Clement, *Hard Rock Mining*, 313.

³⁰ Donald M. Wells, “Origins of Canada’s Wagner Model of Industrial Relations: The United Auto Workers in Canada and the Suppression of “Rank and File” Unionism, 1936-1953,” *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 20, 2, (1995): 195-196.

³¹ Luxton, “From Ladies Auxiliaries to Wives’ Committees,” 112.

³² Luxton, “From Ladies Auxiliaries to Wives’ Committees,” 120.

³³ Rosemary Warskett, “Feminism’s Challenge to Unions in the North: Possibilities and Contradictions,” *Socialist Register*, (2001): 334.

In addition to the negative legacy of working women's mobilizing in Sudbury, Inco's economic strength during the 1970s posed an additional challenge to the strikers. By the summer of 1978, Inco's Sudbury plant had a stockpile of over 300 million pounds of nickel and the company called for a temporary six-week shutdown. It was during this shutdown that negotiations for a new employment contract took place. The offer that was given to the Steelworkers by Inco in August of 1978 was interpreted by union leadership to be a blatant "attack on the union."³⁴ The Steelworkers were advised to vote against the offer, as it "infringed on several areas of the existing grievance procedures and workers' seniority rights."³⁵ Patterson felt "shame" that their proposal of a mere \$0.10 an hour increase was rejected, and that a cost of living allowance would not even be put into effect until November at the earliest, and even then would not be raised any higher than what was entitled to them in their previous contract.³⁶ Inco was prepared to extend the old contract should the Steelworkers vote against the August 1978 offer, but the Steelworkers' bargaining committee chairman Gilbert Gilchrist said the Steelworkers would strike.³⁷

On September 2, 1978, the Steelworkers voted 80 percent in favor of rejecting the August 1978 offer.³⁸ Though Gilchrist was adamant that a strike was a certainty upon rejection of the offer, workers were still encouraged to return to work until September 8, during which time the bargaining committee would "renew attempts to reach a settlement with the company."³⁹ The

³⁴ *Ottawa Citizen*, 29 August 1978, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979."

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ottawa Citizen*, 31 August 31, 1978. LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979"; *Montreal Gazette*, 1 September 197, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979."

³⁸ *Ottawa Journal*, 2 September 1978, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979."

³⁹ *Ibid.*

workers returned to Inco briefly before the strike, and the former agreement which had expired in July was extended until September.⁴⁰ The Steelworkers were to meet with Inco and a provincial mediator in Toronto in order to rectify the negotiations that had ended with the ‘no’ vote.⁴¹ Here, it became particularly clear that the once-confident declaration of strike was now being met with hesitation, as the union began to realize that the company could hold out for much longer than six weeks, well over a year, with its current stockpile.

The September negotiations proved just as ineffective as the August negotiations. After nearly a week of bargaining between Inco, the Steelworkers, and the provincial arbitrators, the offer to the Steelworkers did include the \$0.10 increase, but Inco did not agree to change the clause that would weaken collective bargaining rights.⁴² The union scheduled a series of meetings to present the negotiations to the membership, but “many miners... advocated beginning strike action immediately.”⁴³ Despite the four day-long negotiations, and Inco’s agreement to the \$0.10 wage increase, Local 6500 was advised by Patterson to vote no. As in the last round of failed negotiations, strike action was promised to occur “immediately.”⁴⁴

Even before the strike had officially begun, there were dissenting voices within the Sudbury community who knew the hardship and consequence that such a strike would bring on the community. One Steelworkers steward, Stewart Cooke, who represented USWA Local 6200 of the Port Colborne, Ontario Inco mine, spoke out against the union’s recommendation to reject

⁴⁰ *Globe & Mail*, 6 September 1978, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979.”

⁴¹ *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 September 1978, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September - 4 June, 1979.”

⁴² *Globe & Mail*, 12 September 1978, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979.”

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Inco's offer.⁴⁵ Cooke warned the membership of Local 6500 that "a reduction of Inco's inventories would not alleviate the problem of a world surplus of nickel."⁴⁶ He advised Local 6200 to accept the contract. Subsequently, Local 6500's relationship soured with Port Colborne.⁴⁷ Cooke became the subject of scorn and ridicule for his decision: "he had nothing to do with our negotiations," the Vice President of Local 6500 Ronald MacDonald said; "he would have done us a favor if he hadn't butted in."⁴⁸ That same day, September 15, 1978, the strike in Sudbury began. Inco's proposal was struck down in a vote of 6,319 to 4,141.⁴⁹ A *Globe & Mail* article from the same day described the atmosphere in Sudbury after the proposal was rejected: Steelworkers "cheered as the results of the vote were announced"; "cars honked their horns as they passed by"; "and pickets spread out from the [union] hall [to] the various Inco plants to begin the shutdown."⁵⁰ Despite the triumphant picture that this *Globe* article suggested, it concealed the fact that negotiations excluded dissenting voices in the Sudbury community, the miner's wives being noteworthy examples, and spoke largely for the male union leadership of the Steelworkers. Though the union may have reveled in its perceived victory over the company, the strike to come would be long and bitter, while Inco's immense stockpile promised business as usual.

The WSS Becomes Involved

⁴⁵ *Ottawa Journal*, 15 September 1978, LAC RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 September 1978, LAC RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Globe & Mail*, 16 September 1978, LAC RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

The WSS formed during a meeting of WHW, a Sudbury women's group that "had done some mildly militant community education work" since 1971.⁵¹ As described by Susan Vanstone in her MA thesis, the WHW was indicative of the broader women's movement in the 1970s, advocating for union and feminist solidarity, and abortion services locally and nationally.⁵² In her recollection of the WSS, spokesperson Arja Lane recalled the shared experiences between the Inco wives and the WHW, who understood the burden placed on "homemakers" during strikes.⁵³ Immediately, the WHW encouraged the wives to educate the Sudbury community about their struggles and to provide support for the picketers. WHW's chair was a woman named Joan Kuyek, a prominent youth and left activist in the 1960s, and "experienced community activist" who passed a motion to support the formation of a wives' group and helped them get in touch with Local 6500.⁵⁴ Only days later, Lane, Kuyek, and a small group of women were allowed inside the union hall to solicit membership.⁵⁵ Kuyek and WHW knew that the strike would work in the company's favour given the stockpile, and that the community had to be mobilized quickly in order to "beat the company" at its "own game."⁵⁶ Kuyek saw the potential for this in the WSS.⁵⁷ The domestic ideal of women in this period, however, made it difficult for the WSS to gain any immediate traction. Lane recalls that any pamphlets mailed to wives in the

⁵¹ Arja Lane, "Wives Supporting the Strike," in Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz, eds., *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement*, (The Women's Press, 1983), 322.

⁵² Susan Vanstone, "Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender: Wives Supporting the Strike, Sudbury, Ontario, 1978-79," M.A. Thesis, OISE, 2002, 98-99. Vanstone's thesis contains many oral history interviews with former members of the WSS and is thus an invaluable source in the history of the 1978 strike. Many of these women have since become busy with feminist activism or union work and are thus difficult to locate and get in touch with. Vanstone's oral histories are thus used here to fill important gaps within the overall historical narrative of the WSS.

⁵³ Lane, "Wives Supporting the Strike," 322.

⁵⁴ Vanstone, "Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender," 99.

⁵⁵ Vanstone, "Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender," 101. As I stated previously, the relationship between the union and the WSS was complex; supportive, but separate. Here, Vanstone explains that the WSS needed the "legitimacy" provided by Local 6500 in order to gain membership but was in many ways its own project separate from the goals of the union.

⁵⁶ Vanstone, "Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender," 100.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

early days of the strike were thrown out by husbands, who would warn that “the union hall” (where a majority of the WSS materials were distributed) “was no place for a woman.”⁵⁸ When Lane and Kuyek put up a table in the union hall soon after the initial committee’s formation, they recall being spat at and having their flyers torn up in front of them.⁵⁹ Despite this initial resistance, however, Steelworker Bruce McKeigan recognized that “[the] kind of support” that the WSS came to receive “was new to Sudbury,” and that no such mobilization in the community’s history ever had so many allies effectively organized.⁶⁰

By October of 1978, the WSS was at 40 members strong, and hopes were high for an increase in membership as the strike carried on.⁶¹ Some of the members, however, were not strikers’ wives, but independent leftists, activists, and feminists from the Sudbury community, with different (albeit loosely aligned) politics and backgrounds.⁶² These members of the WSS were given limited roles in the committee, and did not have the ability to vote on the group’s motions, and were encouraged to channel most of their expertise into the Citizens’ Strike Support Committee, a group that welcomed activists from more diverse “social locations,” unlike the WSS whose politics was rooted in that of home and family.⁶³ Ultimately, these 40 members managed to draw out 100 demonstrators to a picket rally on 29 October 1978, and quickly got to work on setting up a clothing drive, receiving help from the local church and fire hall for depot space.⁶⁴ Other localities in the Sudbury area opened up their own clothing drives in solidarity

⁵⁸ Lane, “Wives Supporting the Strike,” 323.

⁵⁹ Vanstone, “Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender,” 102.

⁶⁰ Bruce McKeigan, “The Rise and Decline of Local 6500 of the United Steelworkers of America,” in David Leadbeater, ed., *Mining Town Crisis: Globalization, Labour, and Resistance in Sudbury*, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 247.

⁶¹ *Globe & Mail*, 10 October 1978, LAC RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979.”

⁶² Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender*, 104.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ “Items of Interest from the Wives Supporting the Strike Committee,” *The Striker*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 21 November 1978, City of Toronto Archives, Organized Working Women fonds, Box 3, File 238790-18, “Series 663, File 5,

with the WSS, and these depots quickly became “drop-in social centers” for many women, an unintended but positive and important form of strike support.⁶⁵ One of Vanstone’s interviewees recalled that one woman would bring her child to the clothing depot during the day while her husband worked with the union to negotiate a contract.⁶⁶ Increasing numbers of young mothers used the clothing depots as a kind of refuge during the strike, and the WSS called for more children’s clothes, toys, food, and cosmetics to be donated.⁶⁷ Eventually, the WSS was able to organize parenting courses, and “needlework” demonstrations to encourage young mothers to make their children’s clothes.⁶⁸ In fact, the experience of older women, some of whom were ‘women of ’58,’ was invaluable. As several scenes in *A Wives’ Tale* demonstrate, older women often knit clothes for the clothing drive, or showed other women how to do so.⁶⁹ Additionally, when the strike became difficult for women of the WSS due to the double day of work, it was often the older women, who had experience in balancing auxiliary work with housework and mother-work, that came to support the younger wives.⁷⁰

As membership increased, the demographic make-up of the WSS became more diverse, and the WSS used this as an opportunity to allow women of different backgrounds to offer different skills to the group. For example, Lane recalls the WSS organizing itself in a way so that each member could play to their individual strengths. For example, women comfortable in their

Strikes Support – 1978-1985,” 2. See also Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender*, 105. A quick note on sources: while the WSS and Local 6500 had a weekly publication of their own, the information they shared in their newspapers cross-pollinated with another community group supporting the strike, the Citizen’s Supporting the Strike Committee (CSSC.) Their weekly publication, *Strike Support News*, often ran many of the same advertisements for pickets and community events, as well as covering the same victories and potential for further activism as the WSS’ paper. Copies of *The Striker* can be found in Ontario Archives, F 4180 – Ontario Federation of Labour Fonds, Box 101, “Inco Strike Newspaper Clippings – 1978-1979,” and *Strike Support News* can be found there, as well as in McMaster University Archives, Edward Seymour Fonds, Box 11, “Inco Strike 1978-1979.”

⁶⁵ Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender*, 106.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender*, 107.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *A Wives’ Tale*, 1980.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

“traditional roles” as homemakers were responsible for bookkeeping, administration, and raising donations via telephone, while more “politicized women” gave public talks and used their connections with shopkeepers, merchants, and financial institutions in Sudbury to secure discounts and delayed interest payments for striking families.⁷¹ Lane notes that the internal organization of the WSS allowed for a level of community mobilization to be achieved that “would not have happened” without the talents and expertise of individual women.⁷² Vanstone describes this internal organization as highly democratic, influenced by the WHW in that its meetings were decentralized and informal.⁷³ One of the main mandates of the WSS was to ensure that “a few individuals” would not end up running the committee.⁷⁴ Preventing picket line attrition was a top priority of the WSS. “When the men go on strike, the women are on strike too... and our workload doesn’t ease at all,” Lane told the *Globe & Mail* in October of 1978.⁷⁵ Lane understood that success in this strike would mean an advantageous bargaining position with Inco in the future, regardless of whether or not the WSS had to “tighten [their] belts” through the strike for the time being.⁷⁶ “Emotional support” was provided to striking men by creating a “skills exchange” where striking husbands could provide home repairs for other striking families.⁷⁷ Lane saw this and other early efforts of the WSS as a way of managing the “tension” that would arise in the home due to their husbands’ unemployment.⁷⁸

Like the WHW, the IWDC provided organizing support to the WSS. The IWDC had long been planning “a campaign around unemployment,” and saw the Inco strike as an ideal

⁷¹ Lane, “Wives Supporting the Strike,” 326.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies*, 104.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *Globe & Mail*, 10 October 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

opportunity to mobilize around the issue.⁷⁹ On December 8, 1978, a benefit was jointly organized by the WSS and the IWDC in Toronto which raised awareness of the Inco strike and called for worker and feminist solidarity as well as donations.⁸⁰ The benefit provided WSS organizers Kuyek, Linda Obonsawin, and union member Kathy Duhaime a platform on which to share their experiences, and network with feminist organizers for future mobilizations.⁸¹ The benefit was used to solicit donations from all attendees in order to cover upcoming Christmas fees for striking families.⁸² The benefit also highlighted and drew national attention to the mobilization techniques employed by the WSS, with the event flyer showcasing the committee's creation of baby-sitting co-ops, car pools, food shares, potlucks, and entertainment, noting that many of the committee's efforts "eased the pressure that the strike caused."⁸³ The December solidarity benefit also exemplified the partnership of a number of important women's groups coming together during the strike. OWW was also a prominent organizer and contributor to the benefit, but Local 6500, WHW, the IWDC, the OFL, and the NDP Women's Committee all played an integral part in organizing and raising funds.⁸⁴

The IWDC also encouraged the WSS to make clear to the public, as well as any potential supporters, that the WSS viewed the Inco strike as "their strike too."⁸⁵ Here, the IWDC drew attention in its flyer to the fact that the WSS had to stretch \$30 strike pay over one week, and that the previous strike in 1958 culminated in a mistrust of women's organizing in the community. The support provided by the IWDC was crucial: it brought the WSS' mobilization efforts to the

⁷⁹ IWDC Committee, "IWDC chronology," *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, 1978-1982.

⁸⁰ "IWDC chronology," *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, 1978-1982.

⁸¹ IWDC Committee, "Women Fighting Inco," *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, 1978.

⁸² "Women Fighting Inco," *Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, 1978.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ "Women Fighting Inco Solidarity Benefit," City of Toronto Archives, Organized Working Women fonds, Box 3, File 238790-18, "Series 663, File 5, Strikes Support – 1978-1985."

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

attention of the Canadian women's movement, and it offered financial and organizational support as well as avenues for members of the WSS to become feminist organizers later in their activist careers. The involvement of the IWDC did prove problematic, however, due to the IWDC's stance on several controversial feminist issues, namely sexual freedom and abortion. Lane claimed that International Women's Day of 1979 was a divisive issue for the WSS. Even though the WSS did end up "putting together choruses, practicing songs of solidarity," and "bussing down to Toronto," many within the WSS saw their affiliation with International Women's Day as "perverted and unchristian" as well as the IWDC itself as a group of "communist hippies."⁸⁶ When one producer of *A Wives' Tale* characterized the WSS as partly a "women's lib group," one WSS member quickly interjected, "don't say that to the others," obviously aware of the political divide within the committee on certain feminist issues.⁸⁷ The difficulties posed by the WSS' diverse membership mainly stemmed from the lack of unity on broader women's issues, and this proved to be difficult when it came to settling internal disagreements.⁸⁸

Early on in the strike, Sudbury's Flaconbridge mine, represented by the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union, pledged to double the union dues of its membership in order to contribute to Inco's strike support fund.⁸⁹ Falconbridge also permitted members of Local 6500 to solicit donations at Falconbridge's plant gates twice a month, a role which would primarily fall under the purview of the WSS members.⁹⁰ Lane recalled the potential explosiveness that could

⁸⁶ Lane, "Wives Supporting the Strike," 327.

⁸⁷ *A Wives' Tale*, 1980.

⁸⁸ Lane, "Wives Supporting the Strike," 327.

⁸⁹ On Cooke's support of the Inco strike, see *Globe & Mail*, 11 October 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979"; for more on the Mine Mill vote and its solidarity with the USWA, see *Globe & Mail*, 19 October 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

⁹⁰ *Globe & Mail*, 7 November 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

have resulted from the WSS soliciting workers at Falconbridge, given the fact that Mine Mill – like the Port Colborne Inco mine - had accepted its company’s offer and was therefore not on strike.⁹¹ Fortunately no such tensions were present and the Mine Mill workers proved incredibly supportive of the Steelworkers. Following Falconbridge’s example, Laurentian University professors “allowed a voluntary deduction” to be taken from their pay and donated to Inco strikers, the United Electrical Workers donated \$1000 in strike support funds to the USWA, and the Steelworkers local in Algoma matched Falconbridge’s \$10,000 donation and promised an additional \$5000 per month.⁹² In mid-November, at the Ontario Federation of Labour’s convention in Toronto, Hamilton Steelworkers donated a sizeable \$12,000, which was matched by the Ontario Hydro local of CUPE.⁹³ Later that same month, the Oshawa local of the United Auto Workers (UAW) donated \$9,000 and pledged \$200 in strike support per week.⁹⁴ This is not to say that the WSS was at the center of a chain reaction in charitable donations from union locals, but it is worth remembering that many unions were following Mine Mill’s example, and that the WSS was mainly responsible for securing Mine Mill’s support in the first place.

December of 1978 proved to be a psychological battle between the WSS and Inco. As in 1958, WSS members were encouraged (this time via mail) to pressure their husbands to return to work. Obonsawin was confident that the WSS was able to handle any psychological warfare that would be waged by the company. With a membership of 100 women, it organized a Christmas toy drive to combat holiday strike attrition. The WSS saw the toy drive in December as being not only for the children, but for the children’s fathers who felt “guilt” over being unable to provide

⁹¹ Lane, “Wives Supporting the Strike,” 325.

⁹² *Globe & Mail*, 7 November 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979.”

⁹³ *Globe & Mail*, 15 November 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979.”

⁹⁴ *Montreal Gazette*, 21 November 1978, LAC RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979.”

for their family. Lane recalls “truckloads of toys” coming by donation to the union hall from a number of cities that the WSS solicited donations.⁹⁵ She also described the literature that was handed out to children at the toy drive, which was illustrated and explained the strike “in terms [children] could understand,” so as to educate families about the purpose and consequences of the strike.⁹⁶ One such piece of literature, in the form of a comic book, explained to children why they may be bullied at school for having striking parents.⁹⁷ The pamphlets and leaflets designed for children were not the only educational endeavors that the WSS embarked on, however: theatrical demonstrations, long a tool of feminist organizing, were staged depicting Inco management “on trial for their crimes,” where they were found guilty of causing financial ruin in the strikers’ lives.⁹⁸ In this demonstration, ‘Inco management’ sat adjacent to a jury of wives, their faces masked. Testimonies were given freely by the WSS and Inco strikers, one of which – given by an Inco striker who lamented the loss of friends and family killed and injured in the mines – evoked a powerful emotional response from the audience.⁹⁹ Obonsawin gave testimony of her own, which highlighted the level of control that Inco held over Sudbury due to the fact that it employed more than half of the city. “When Inco doesn’t hire, no one hires,” she exclaimed; “Inco runs this town.”¹⁰⁰ Obonsawin’s testimony also shamed the company for “relying on the labour” of the community’s children and families, and declared that she one day hoped to be proud of her affiliation with a company that paid its workers well and took care of them.¹⁰¹ Her testimony, as shown in *A Wives’ Tale*, is solemn, well-spoken, and confident. She

⁹⁵ Lane, “Wives Supporting the Strike,” 324.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ “What’s a strike?” City of Toronto Archives, Organized Working Women fonds, Box 3, File 238790-18, “Series 663, File 5, Strikes Support – 1978-1985.”

⁹⁸ Lane, “Wives Supporting the Strike,” 325.

⁹⁹ *A Wives’ Tale*, 1980.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

told the producers on-camera after the mock trial that “there’s a whole workforce out there that I didn’t know about,” which she explained was true of most members of the WSS before its formation, thus demonstrating the transformative capacity of the WSS as a body *autonomous* from the Steelworkers.¹⁰² The toy drive and Christmas party proved to be one of the most impressive mobilizations organized by the WSS due to the number of allies it relied on for success. Vanstone lists the various organizations, people, and groups contributing to the Christmas campaign, revealing that local department stores donated “toys and candy,” local school boards collected toy donations from parents, the Citizens’ Strike Support Committee donated to the party fund and set up an auction for a power boat, a local McDonald’s restaurant “donated 10,000 coupons for free hamburgers,” and “unions from Peterborough, Sarnia, Oshawa, Port Colborne, and Sault Ste. Marie” donated to the toy drive.¹⁰³ These groups no doubt made the Christmas campaign successful, but it was the WSS that organized, oversaw, and facilitated this mass cooperation.

Key organizers within the WSS used the failed negotiations between Inco and the Steelworkers in December as a rallying cry in their address to a public rally held in Sudbury. Kuyek criticized Inco’s disregard for women in the Sudbury community, noting that until 1975, “Inco had never employed women in anything other than office work.”¹⁰⁴ Kuyek also cited the failed negotiations as another example of Inco’s inability to provide for the women of Sudbury. In her address, Obonsawin declared that “the fight for a decent contract is not just the fight for the Inco worker, it’s a fight for the wives, children, and families as well.”¹⁰⁵ Not only was this

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender*, 113-114.

¹⁰⁴ *Ottawa Journal*, 9 December 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

rally a highly politicizing event in the lives and careers of the WSS organizers, it was also politicizing event for the women in the Sudbury community who were called to action by the WSS.

Negotiations resumed as planned on December 17, 1978, but they remained strained due to Inco's notice that Steelworkers "no longer should expect wage parity with steel industry workers because nickel prices [had] dropped on the world market."¹⁰⁶ Inco's stockpile had effectively backfired. Its surplus in Sudbury and the opening of two new mines in Guatemala and Indonesia drove the price of nickel down. As a result, the union was doubtful that a settlement would be reached before Christmas.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, "the Christmas break marked the first time since the strike began that gates leading into the various mines and surface plants were unattended by the usual five or six man picket crews."¹⁰⁸ During these difficult rounds of renewed negotiations in January of 1979, cracks began to show in Local 6500's membership as militant Steelworkers were at odds with the 'conservative' leadership of the union. A noteworthy example was the Hamilton Labor Council's decision to host a rally to show solidarity with the Inco strikers.¹⁰⁹ Membership of both Local 6500 and the Hamilton Labor Council were "overwhelmingly" supportive of the idea, but "established" Steelworkers leadership advised against the rally, encouraging supporters instead to continue donating to strike relief funds.¹¹⁰ Despite the leadership's hesitation, the rally was held in Hamilton on February 22, 1979, and Obonsawin

¹⁰⁶ *Montreal Gazette*, 18 December 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

¹⁰⁷ *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 December 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

¹⁰⁸ *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 December 1978, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

¹⁰⁹ *Hamilton Spectator*, 12 January 1979, LAC, RG027 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June, 1979."

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

once again used the opportunity to speak publicly on behalf of the WSS and call for solidarity and support from organized labour and the women's movement.¹¹¹

Only nine days into the new year's negotiations, however, contract talks between Inco and the Steelworkers yet again broke down, this time due to Inco's unwillingness to change its stance on the grievance procedure.¹¹² Cathy Mulroy, a Steelworkers member and supporter of the WSS, commented that the lengthy negotiations in Toronto, which excluded the WSS and the Sudbury community from the bargaining table, attributed to the attrition felt by strikers and their families.¹¹³ Mulroy suggested that it was in this period where cracks once again began to show in the WSS' membership. Anxiety over doing too little or too much arose within the WSS: "some thought we were getting too radical, while others thought we weren't doing enough," she wrote.¹¹⁴ "Some wanted to hold more rallies and plays to get the people out, to communicate what was happening, some wanted to block all the oil trucks going through Inco's gates."¹¹⁵ Mulroy herself had a complicated relationship with the WSS. As a Steelworker, she – like her male colleagues – saw the WSS' calls for autonomy and separate organizing as an intrusion into the politics of the union.¹¹⁶ In *A Wives' Tale*, Mulroy also appeared to have reservations about the effectiveness of the WSS' organizing, maintaining that the union was the most effective vessel through which to end the strike.¹¹⁷ She only became convinced of the WSS' importance

¹¹¹ *Hamilton Spectator*, 20 February 1979, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979."

¹¹² *Ottawa Journal*, 13 January 1979, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979."

¹¹³ Cathy Mulroy, "My View from the Blackened Rocks," in David Leadbeater, ed., *Mining Town Crisis: Globalization, Labour, and Resistance in Sudbury*, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 269.

¹¹⁴ Mulroy, "My View from the Blackened Rocks," 269.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *A Wives' Tale*, 1980.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

when Obonsawin pleaded for her to support their work to the union, justifying the WSS' position as "union's should be a family affair."¹¹⁸

Despite the infighting that occurred within the WSS in January of 1979, the level of success achieved by the Christmas campaign would be achieved once again on Valentine's Day, 1979. The goal was to provide a bean supper for strikers and their families. To feed the 5000 strikers who registered, the meals had to be organized "on a neighborhood basis," requiring "15 halls, schools, churches, and communities" to be booked and staffed with volunteers.¹¹⁹ Though the WSS took on the main responsibility of cooking the meals, using their own kitchens, they required massive donations of food from Sudbury grocery stores and unions. In a generous demonstration of solidarity, the National Farmers' Union donated 933 pounds of beans to feed the striking Steelworkers.¹²⁰ 100 WSS members volunteered to run the dinners taking place across town, and they distributed the "Stretch Your Nickel Cookbook," (which they wrote themselves) to teaching striking families how to cook on a strike pay budget.¹²¹ Once again, this campaign required the solidarity of organized labour and the Sudbury community, but the campaigns were all constructed and executed under the close supervision of the WSS.

In March of 1979, Obonsawin and the WSS charged both Inco and the provincial and federal governments with "not taking any responsibility" in the betterment of the Sudbury community, claiming that the responsibility instead fell on the WSS and other citizen-led groups to revitalize the region.¹²² The WSS stood with Local 6500 on the picket line and burned an effigy they made of Bill Correll, Inco's chief negotiator in the contract battle, and were

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender*, 117.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies of Gender*, 118.

¹²² *Toronto Star*, 15 March 1979, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 "Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979."

instrumental in organizing a march of 1,000 people from the Copper Cliff mine to the Sudbury suburbs that housed Inco officials.¹²³ Despite the attrition that many Local 6500 strikers felt, they found solace in the jeopardy of Inco's profits. The company shareholder meeting in April of 1979 revealed some alarming information, namely: a mere \$500,000 net gross in 1979's first quarter, "compared to \$34.9 million during the strike-free first quarter of 1978"; Inco's growing debt, demonstrated by the \$38.5 million worth of employee salaries not showing "as profit" in Inco's pocketbooks; and the mounting public criticism of Inco's environmental degradation and "sweatshop"-like working conditions.¹²⁴

By May of 1979 the Steelworkers had managed to get a revised contract offer from Inco, one which boasted a \$3.50 per hour wage increase, "a no-restrictions right to full pension after 35 years [of] service," and a cost of living increase of \$1.65 across the first three years of the contract.¹²⁵ Union leadership found the contract acceptable, but the Steelworkers' nearly 300 union stewards advised the membership against accepting the contract.¹²⁶ "We made a lot of gains, there's no question about it, but it hasn't been worth the eight-month wait," one steward told *Macleans*.¹²⁷ Neither the proposed cost of living benefits, nor the wages, seemed capable of satisfying the Steelworkers after the eight-month strike, and a 35 year pension, as opposed to the 30 year pension offered by Inco, was thought to be more reasonable by the Steelworkers. Many strikers had gone into debt as a result of their meagre strike pay, and the union suffered financially as well.¹²⁸ Obonsawin and the WSS promised, however, that the wives group would

¹²³ Vanstone, *Rethinking Discursive Geographies*, 116.

¹²⁴ "Time marches while the nickel's piled high," *Macleans* April 30, 1979, 36-37.

¹²⁵ "A turn in the long road back," *Macleans*, May 21, 1979, 40.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

help to relieve the projected 18-month debt that workers would fall into by donating their surplus funds raised during the strike effort.¹²⁹

The WSS and the Sudbury Community After the Strike

On June 3, 1979, 67.5% of Local 6500 voted in favor of a new collective agreement that increased their hourly wage by a substantial \$4.07 per hour.¹³⁰ Other benefits won by Local 6500 included “a cost-of-living allowance and settlement pay of \$300,” along with a 30-and-out pension that allowed “workers with 30 years [of] service to retire on a minimum pension of \$600 a month.”¹³¹ Additional benefits awarded by the settlement package included increased vacation bonuses, unemployment benefits of \$40 per week, and “a better sickness and accidental plan.”¹³² Inco was also prevented from meddling with grievance procedure protocol.¹³³ One *Toronto Star* editorial reminded readers that the women “did the begging” at the banks, hydro and telephone companies, and local shops, as well as the fact that the WSS were the first ones to organize plant gate donations at Falconbridge and (later) other Ontario mines.¹³⁴ The centerpiece of this editorial was a young newlywed named Joyce Digout, who managed to care for her newborn child and provide emotional support for her husband due to the aid she received from the WSS.¹³⁵ “Joyce got... clothes from the baby depot....; Pablum paid for by money raised by the [WSS] at bean suppers and dances; a recycled carriage stroller” as well as “love, fierce

¹²⁹ *Ottawa Citizen*, 7 May 1979, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September, 4 June 1979.”

¹³⁰ *Canadian Labor*, 29 June 1979, 3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Toronto Star*, 8 May 1979, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September-4 June 1979.”

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

reassurance... and comfort,” all while the WSS rallied, fed, and picketed with the Steelworkers during the long eight month strike.¹³⁶

It did not take long for the “major social change” that the strike precipitated to be noticed in Sudbury. For members of the WSS, such as Sherry Perron, the strike was her “first time out in the world.”¹³⁷ As a founding member of the WSS, present at their first meeting in 1978, Perron became something of an ‘organizing affairs officer’ within the WSS. As she revealed to the *Toronto Star*, her main role in the organization was to “rally members to family picket lines, meetings and other activities.”¹³⁸ Perron, like many other members of the WSS, became highly politicized by her experience as she “soon knew more about the strike than her husband,” and by the strike’s end, sought regular employment outside the home.¹³⁹ Lane recalled having similar sentiments once the strike had ended. She commented that “the external forces” that precipitated and shaped the strike were discovered by the women of the WSS, namely the fact that many MP’s, members of local government, and bank shareholders were also shareholders at Inco, thus explaining their hesitancy to offer a decent contract.¹⁴⁰ *A Wives’ Tale* shows footage of the women going over public company files and making this conclusion themselves, much to their shock and anger, with their feelings best captured by Obomsawin’s testimony during the mock trial: “Inco runs this town.”¹⁴¹ “Most notably, however, Lane recalled feeling “used” by the male breadwinner ideology prevalent in not just Sudbury, but Canada in the 1970s: “understanding that my contribution... was to help “my man”... and to make babies so that “the family” would be more likely to stay,” she wrote, “made me feel used in a worse way than any individual man

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ *Toronto Star*, 18 July 1979, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September-4 June 1979.”

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Lane, “Wives Supporting the Strike,” 330.

¹⁴¹ *A Wives’ Tale*, 1980.

had ever made me feel.”¹⁴² *A Wives’ Tale* captures the prevalence and longevity of this attitude poignantly when a striker and his wife are interviewed by the producers. As the striker explained with confidence, “man is in charge. Ask [anyone]... God made it that way. Men were number one since the world was made.”¹⁴³ Having to contend with the reluctance of the striking men’s acceptance of the WSS’ strike support work, Lane recalled coming to the understanding that the victory against Inco was one small victory amidst many battles that women had yet to fight all over the world.¹⁴⁴

When Inco opened new mines in Guatemala and Indonesia in 1979, Duhaime worked with Local 6500 to raise consciousness about the exploitation of workers that occurs when multinational companies move business to the Third World.¹⁴⁵ Kuyek’s feminist and community organizing after the strike expanded into global issues. Her 2011 book *Community Organizing: A Holistic Approach* is a testament to her growth as both a feminist and labour activist. In it, she demonstrates a critical understanding of how modern capitalism has oppressed workers across the globe, and a continued desire to mobilize communities towards emancipatory action against this reality.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Lane, “Wives Supporting the Strike,” 330.

¹⁴³ *A Wives’ Tale*, 1980.

¹⁴⁴ Lane, “Wives Supporting the Strike,” 330.

¹⁴⁵ Inco’s Guatemala and Indonesia mines were a major issue and rallying point for the union, and there is much coverage devoted to it in the Citizens Supporting the Strike Committee’s publication, *Strike Support News*. See *Strike Support News*, Vol. 1, No. 5 in City of Toronto Archives, Organized Working Women fonds, Box 3, File 238790-18, “Series 663, File 5, Strikes Support – 1978-1985.”

¹⁴⁶ Joan Kuyek, *Community Organizing: A Holistic Approach*, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2011), 12-13. One such passage that demonstrates Kuyek’s global consciousness as a feminist and organizer reads as follows: “the current global context is a frightening one. The unfettered greed of globalization and the financial casino has deepened poverty and misery around the world, further weakened governments and strengthened a global elite. The welfare state is under attack. China... has emerged as a global power, owning most of the American debt and buying up resource properties around the world. The environmental crisis has intensified, as governments find themselves unable and unwilling to act to reverse climate chaos, pollution and the depletion of water and food supplies. Forced migration of entire populations has become endemic; civil wars, water shortages, and famine threaten much of the world. In 2001, the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York launched the “war on terror,” increasing state surveillance and public paranoia, justifying sophisticated spying and the suspension of hard-earned civil liberties, and creating new theatres of war... [And yet] peoples from around the globe have laid siege to transnational corporations and the institutions that serve them, gathering in unprecedented numbers outside the meetings of the

Even those who were on the periphery of the WSS observed the politicization of its members. Mulroy, who could only be considered an “honorary member” of the WSS due to her membership in the Steelworkers, recalled that a number of women sought employment outside of the home after the strike, with one woman in particular opening up her own accounting firm doing income taxes.¹⁴⁷ Mulroy also wrote that despite going back to “casting copper,” she and the WSS “were not the same people” from the beginning of the strike.¹⁴⁸ Mulroy recalled that when she later became involved in future Steelworkers mobilizations, her experiences with the WSS helped her confidently assert herself as a labour leader.¹⁴⁹

Immediately after Local 6500 accepted Inco’s offer, Obonsawin expected to feel more relief, and felt disappointed with the outcome despite the fact that the WSS and the Steelworkers had won. “It just kind of ended,” she told the producers of *A Wives’ Tale*; “no boom, no fireworks.”¹⁵⁰ Others shared Obonsawin’s sentiments, and recommended that the WSS keep in touch, as they had “done too much to just [split up.]”¹⁵¹ Those who shared Obonsawin’s desire to keep organizing in Sudbury kept good on this promise, and met regularly, which six months later resulted in solidarity mobilizations alongside striking RadioShack workers.¹⁵² The remnants of the WSS also worked locally to aid the female teachers of the Sudbury teacher’s union, organizing a satirical play similar to their mock trial against Inco as part of their support, and were instrumental in creating a local Francophone women’s group to address the issues of

powerful, from the WTO conference in Seattle to the meeting of the G20 in Toronto in 2010. All around the world, people have been working at the local, regional and national level to create changes they want to see in the world and to resist the predations of global capital.” Here, Kuyek demonstrates that while militant global activism *should* be on the decline, it is instead strong and resilient in the face of several oppressive circumstances.

¹⁴⁷ Mulroy, “My View from the Blackened Rocks,” 269.

¹⁴⁸ Mulroy, “My View from the Blackened Rocks,” 270.

¹⁴⁹ Mulroy, “My View from the Blackened Rocks,” 272.

¹⁵⁰ *A Wives’ Tale*, 1980.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

French-speaking women in Sudbury.¹⁵³ Obonsawin also reflected on the personal growth she attained from joining the WSS, specifically the personal confidence and independence she gained in her everyday interaction with men due to her leadership role within the committee. She told the producers of *A Wives' Tale* that she was no longer “scared to go to meetings or be by [herself] any more,” and she could carry on “decent conversations alone,” without her husband speaking on her behalf.¹⁵⁴ For Obonsawin, the WSS was her first step on a path towards a career in feminist activism as well as her liberation from the restrictive life of housework and mother-work in the 1970s.

Opposite this enthusiasm, however, came a brand of defeatism voiced by older female activists who experienced the 1958 strike. An anonymous ‘Mrs. X’ recalled her involvement in the 1958 strike and remained convinced that Inco would merely find ways to “punish” the male workers upon their return to work.¹⁵⁵ This sentiment (and others like it) were present throughout the WSS mobilizations, with many of the older women criticizing what they perceived to be as inaction on the part of the WSS. They felt that Christmas parties and bean dinners were inconsequential in comparison to what could be achieved by working *through* the union.¹⁵⁶ Members of the WSS who were former “women of ‘58” were accustomed to a union-auxiliary relationship, which required frequent union oversight and supervision when it came to any strike support work. Regardless, the Sudbury community remained inherently transformed by the 1978-79 strike and saw positive change at the strike’s conclusion. Inco workers returned to work

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ *Toronto Star*, 18 July 1979, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September-4 June 1979.”

¹⁵⁶ This contention is displayed prominently in *A Wives' Tale*. Meetings of the WSS, particularly the ones held during the attrition of the winter months, were particularly heated, as many of the former women of ‘58 were fearful that diverging too far from the union’s agenda would result in the women’s blame for any wrong turn of events.

under the new agreement on June 5, 1979, but the reputation of the company remained “tarnished” – even for those who voted in favour of the strike.¹⁵⁷

The social changes precipitated by the strike were also measured by a sociological study conducted by Laurentian University professor Henry Radecki, who – along with a “small army of undergraduate students” – interviewed 649 striker’s wives and found that the predicted marital and community collapse did not occur.¹⁵⁸ Radecki’s study relied on the oral testimony of WSS members and other striker’s wives, which revealed the Sudbury community’s resiliency during the strike.¹⁵⁹ Alcohol and tobacco consumption decreased; wives and husbands agreed that their marriages felt stronger coming out of the strike; and stricter budgets (even with an increased income) were adhered to by mining families.¹⁶⁰ The study found that “many families grew closer during the strike,” and that “strikers’ families gained new respect for the union.”¹⁶¹

In May of 1980, just shy of one year after the strike had formally ended, Inco and the Steelworkers donated funds to a second Laurentian University study to “determine how strikers’ wives [had] coped economically since the strike ended.”¹⁶² Radecki once again led the study. Patterson had hoped the second study would yield information that the Steelworkers could use to

¹⁵⁷ For more on Inco’s “tarnished reputation” in the community, see *Montreal Gazette*, 5 June 1979, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979”; there was also coverage of the back to work payments being delayed in *Toronto Star*, 7 June 1979, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979”; and coverage of the union’s disagreement over health premiums can be found in *Toronto Star*, 6 June 1979, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979.”

¹⁵⁸ *Globe & Mail*, 8 December 1979, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979.”

¹⁵⁹ *Hamilton Spectator*, 8 December 1980, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979.”

¹⁶⁰ *Globe & Mail*, 8 December 1979, LAC RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979.”

¹⁶¹ *Globe & Mail*, 30 May 1980, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979.”

¹⁶² *Globe & Mail*, 30 May 1980, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979.”

provide any necessary support to the wives and the broader community, with the additional hope that the “study could be used by other Steelworkers locals in similar circumstances.”¹⁶³ The second study strengthened the findings of the first by revealing important transformations in familial structure. 85% of the women interviewed in the second study considered themselves “joint-heads” of the household with their husband.¹⁶⁴ Striking husbands who took responsibility of meal preparation, cleaning, and childcare continued to do so after the strike.¹⁶⁵ In his interview with Radecki, Patterson stated that the WSS were “the unsung heroines” of the strike, noting that while “Sudbury was a rough and tumble, beer drinking town,” miner’s wives were “just as tough as their husbands,” and “have always been.”¹⁶⁶ The second study confirmed that 44%, almost half of striking families actually felt stronger, closer, and more resilient after overcoming the strike.¹⁶⁷ Both of Radecki’s studies demonstrated that the autonomy women gained by organizing themselves led to stronger and happier marriages with their husbands.

Conclusion

The WSS helped to stabilize the Sudbury community during the strike, and many of its members felt that their traditional roles as wives were challenged. Like several mining communities across North America in the 1970s, Sudbury repeatedly proved to be resistant and slow to adopt the social change precipitated by the women’s movement. Once the city’s livelihood became jeopardized by a lengthy strike, however, it fell to the Sudbury women – specifically, the wives of striking miners – to support the strikers. Like women’s social roles in

¹⁶³ *Globe & Mail*, 30 May 1980, LAC, RG-27 Vol. 4309 78-0,721 “Inco Metals Co. Sudbury, Ontario, 15 September- 4 June 1979.”

¹⁶⁴ Henry Radecki, *One Year Later: The 1978-79 Strike at Inco: The Effects on Families*, (Sudbury: Laurentian University, 1981), 44-45. Here, I use my own personal copy of the report, but a duplicate can be found in Ontario Archives F 4180 – Ontario Federation of Labour fonds, Box 101.

¹⁶⁵ Radecki, *One Year Later*, 54.

¹⁶⁶ Radecki, *One Year Later*, 131-132.

¹⁶⁷ Radecki, *One Year Later*, 56.

mining towns, the WSS' leadership was carefully negotiated. It relied on the legitimacy granted by the USWA and the broader Ontario trade union movement, but its campaigns, activities, and mobilizations were all of its own making. The 1958 strike demonstrated, if anything, that women's union auxiliaries were no longer the ideal way to represent working-class women while on strike, and a new kind of feminist activism had to be forged from its failures. Wives committees became, like the auxiliaries before them, the similar though *separate* organizations necessary to work outside the trade movement and provide strike support in the 1970s. Their struggle was by no means easy, but it certainly was effective, demonstrated by the fact that the WSS' membership not only graduated into larger international feminist groups and unions, but also left behind traditional gender roles after the strike. The WSS made very clear that strikes are not just about workers: they are the concern of mothers, children, and the entire community.

CONCLUSION

None of the strikes outlined here brought a definitive end to the problems in their respective workplaces. Despite the Kitchener Dare workers' victory in 1973, female employees' positions in the plant were still insecure. In September 1977, a Kitchener plant nurse, Joan Voll, was fired "without notice" for refusing to divulge the details of an employee's medical records to management despite being pressured by several of her superiors to do so.¹ The explanation given to Voll after her firing was that she was (among other things) uncooperative and "incompatible with management."² Furthermore, one of Voll's superiors shared their thoughts on her replacement during testimony to the Ontario Royal Commission on Confidentiality of Health Records, revealing that Voll's successor was "more enjoyable without such an energy output."³ Clearly, Voll was fired due to her resistance to management's violation of employee confidentiality, and replaced by someone more amenable to Dare's preferred complacency. The certification of a BC&T local at the Kitchener plant in 1974 was thus a promising step towards the security of female workers at Dare, but by no means a catch-all solution to management's abuses of power.

Similarly, the CTCU's victory at Puretex served as only a brief reprieve from the exploitation and precarity experienced by immigrant workers in textile jobs. Early in the 1980s, Puretex management declared bankruptcy amidst the economic recession that marked the arrival of the decade, as it was unable to pay back the various bank loans it had compiled. Management

¹ This case was well-documented in *The Globe*. See: Thomas Claridge, "Krever told of disputes at Dare plant: Nurse says she was fired for protecting workers' files," *The Globe & Mail*, 8 December 1978, 5; Paul Knox. "Krever asks nurses for medical tales," *The Globe & Mail*, 25 October 1979, 20; and "Could be no need for reporter to testify, Krever counsel says," *The Globe & Mail*, 9 January 1979, 5.

² Claridge, "Krever told of disputes at Dare plant," *The Globe & Mail*, 8 December 1978, 5.

³ *Ibid.*

was rendered inert by the impending shutdown and refrained from direct action, which led the CTCU to mobilize. Approximately 15 union members “drove up on either side of the plant... and on signal, mounted the snowbanks [outside the plant] and entered the reception area, much to the surprise of the woman on the reception desk,” marching straight past her to “sit-in on a meeting of the owners,” refusing to leave until an agreement was struck with the banks to forgive the loan.⁴ A simultaneous “contingency” took place in downtown Toronto, where other CTCU supporters “marched in on the TD bank” there and “took over the office.”⁵ The overall goal of these simultaneous mobilizations was to force the bank into authorizing a stay of execution on Puretex’s loans, which was eventually granted after a meeting set-up in response to the dual occupations.⁶

The stay of execution was granted, but nonetheless, the Puretex plant officially shut down in March of 1984.⁷ A taskforce was formed in April 1984 by job placement firm Manpower Consultative Services (MCS), and included the CTCU, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, and what remained of Puretex management. The goals of the taskforce were manifold, but its main focus was to provide professional development workshops to the laid off workers in order to prepare them for new jobs, to put those who were unable to find work on employment assistance, and to provide language training in English to the many Italian and Portuguese workers that made up the Puretex workforce.⁸ Of the 135 Puretex workers who

⁴ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Puretex Placement Committee: Final Report – Nov. 1984,” LAC, MG31 K 9 29, “Labour Market Development – Manpower Consultative Services – Puretex Canada, Ltd. File 7485/Ont. 1082,” 2.

⁸ These details, as well as additional objectives of MCS’ taskforce, are laid out in pages 1-8 of the “Puretex Placement Committee: Final Report – Nov. 1984” document. The appendices attached to this document were compiled by the leaders of each objective of the taskforce, and provide even more detail on how job training, professional development, employment assistance, and language training were facilitated.

signed up with MCS' taskforce (128 of whom were female), only 60 found employment by November 1984.⁹ 45 workers either remained out of work, retired, took a maternity leave, looked for work elsewhere, took worker's compensation, or dropped off MCS' radar entirely.¹⁰ 26 workers remained in professional development and language training 7 months after the taskforce was established.¹¹ The new jobs available to Puretex workers were mostly piecework, which made the 45 unemployed workers unable or unwilling to accept such positions.¹² Additionally, the language barrier and the distance from new job sites to the workers' homes made new work placements undesirable.¹³ As a result, less than half of the Puretex workers that remained in the plant by 1984 were able to find jobs after the plant's closing.

Even the Inco strike in Sudbury, which after 1978 became a *cause celebre* of the labour movement, attained only a limited victory. Though Local 6500 won a solid contract in 1979, "soup kitchens had returned" to aid striking Steelworkers at Inco and Falconbridge in 1982.¹⁴ As in 1978, Inco was resistant to a proposed wage increase.¹⁵ Due to the "soft markets" for Canadian nickel created due to the global economic breakdown post-1974 and Inco's outsourcing to Guatemala and Indonesia, the plant stopped operating for nine months, as did the Falconbridge mine for similar reasons.¹⁶ Effectively, one quarter of Sudbury's workers were left jobless, and Sudbury became known temporarily as the "unemployment capital of Canada."¹⁷ Inco's decline in the early 1980s was temporary, however, and as C.M. Wallace argues, was

⁹ "Puretex Placement Committee: Final Report – Nov. 1984," 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Puretex Placement Committee: Final Report – Nov. 1984," 8.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ C.M. Wallace, "The 1980s," in C.M. Wallace and Ashley Thomson, *Sudbury: Rail Town to Regional Capital*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 276.

¹⁵ "Inco workers go on strike," *The Globe & Mail*, 1 June 1982, 8.

¹⁶ Wallace, "The 1980s," 276.

¹⁷ Ibid.

followed by an economic “renaissance” that saw Inco emerge once again as a nickel giant in Canada due to “technological and managerial creativity.”¹⁸ To cut the costs to production, several jobs were slashed and replaced by machines.¹⁹ As one *Globe & Mail* editorial described it, “fears [marred] the return to work in Sudbury” as the Steelworkers who went back to work in March of 1983 realized that “many jobs were either eliminated or left vacant.”²⁰ 1,000 jobs had been lost by April 1983, and Inco announced a 3% job reduction every year for five years.²¹ The end of the 1982-83 strike was therefore met with a lingering fear that jobs in the mining industry were precarious as ever, due for mechanization or cuts whenever a renewed and powerful management saw fit.

This did not mean, however, that the strikes at these workplaces in the 1970s were insignificant. On the contrary, many important developments occurred within the labour movement, feminist movement, and the left as a result of the mobilizations around Dare, Puretex, and Inco. First, each strike represented the strengthening of the alliance between organized labour, feminism, and the left. In the Dare strike, UBW Local 173 was able to muster the support of several unions to its cause, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Teamsters, and the Steelworkers. Alongside organized labour were women and feminist groups (both within and independent from government) such as the OCSW, the Women’s Bureau, the Guelph Women’s Centre, the Toronto Women’s Place, the Toronto Beautyshop Quartet, and the IWDC, all of whom were influential in organizing pickets, maintaining the boycott of Dare products, and mobilizing the broader women’s movement around the Dare women’s cause. Similarly, a number of left-wing

¹⁸ Wallace, “The 1980s,” 277.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Rudy Palatiel, “Fears mar return to work in Sudbury,” *The Globe & Mail*, 20 April 1983, 14.

²¹ Ibid.

organizations, both independently formed by citizens and affiliated in the broader New Left milieu of the 1960s and 1970s, defended the strikers in local and student presses, joined them on the picket line, and condemned management publicly when it tried to coerce strikers back to work. The support provided by student activists at the University of Waterloo, the University of Toronto, and York (and their written work in *Chevron*, *the Varsity*, and *Pro Tem*) was amplified by the work of other leftist groups such as the Kitchener NDP, the Waffle, the Kitchener-Waterloo Human Rights Caucus, and the Ontario Anti-Poverty League. All proved to be invaluable assets to the strike.

Indeed, the Dare strikers did struggle with maintaining an overtly feminist agenda, but it at least had no shortage of allies. The Puretex workers, despite receiving the support of OWW, found themselves without the support of the CLC because they were represented by CTCU. As a result, the Puretex strikers had to rely on the political and legal acumen of CTCU organizers such as Madeleine Parent and Laurell Ritchie, and leftist labour lawyers such as Frank Park in order to effectively mobilize around the issues of workplace surveillance and immigrant labour force exploitation. Park's involvement was not novel in the period, as post-war industrial law in Canada and the United States ensured that all unions could rely to some extent on legal counsel, but Park stands out as a particularly dedicated ally of the CTCU. What the Puretex mobilizations demonstrated was that left-wing nationalist unions were independently capable of mobilizing both their own workers and allies outside of the trade union movement.

Like the Dare strike, the Inco strike received support from a number of labour, feminist, and left-wing organizations such as the Mine Mill workers at the nearby Falconbridge mine (and the myriad unions who donated to Local 6500's strike fund), the IWDC, and the Ontario NDP. Unlike the Dare strike, however, the Inco strike managed to maintain a feminist agenda

throughout its many mobilizations, mostly due to the prominence of the WSS on the picket line. Feminist strike support was key to the Inco strike from the start, and while the WSS had to initially grapple with Local 6500's expectations of them, they eventually formed a cooperative partnership that ensured the WSS' autonomy in mobilizations against Inco. The presence of a small but influential feminist movement in Sudbury represented by WHW and led by Joan Kuyek fostered the WSS and ensured that feminist principles were built into the committee's foundations.

Second, the transformative experiences encountered by many working women in these strikes encouraged them to remain active in the labour and feminist movements for the remainder of their careers. Dare striker Pauline Breen, Puretex organizer Laurell Ritchie, Puretex striker Maria Iori, and WSS members and Steelworkers alike, including Joan Kuyek, Arja Lane, Linda Obonsawin, Kathy Duhaime, and Cathy Mulroy, all either stayed active in their respective unions, the feminist movement, or both, after their time on the picket line. *A Wives' Tale*, and to some extent *Maria*, are evidence of this. *A Wives' Tale* ends on a note of optimism that highlights the transformation of the WSS which, after successfully mobilizing against Inco, refused to disband simply because the strike ended, and instead found more issues to act on. While a fictitious account, *Maria* speaks to this transformation as well. The vote to certify the union in Maria's plant does not pass, but that does not deter Maria and her fellow workers from continuing the drive towards unionization. She is informed by the union executive that a six-month period needs to pass before attempting to certify again. Maria's response is one of optimism and hope, but one that shows awareness of the multiple issues in the plant that can still

be fought for without a union: “six months, that’s what you said. We have got to do some organizing in the meantime.”²²

For Breen and the women of the WSS, the strikes at Dare and Inco were their first ever forays into the conflicted realm of industrial relations, and the fact that they were not deterred from future activist work after their hard-won victories speaks to the transformative capacity of labour-feminist activism in the period. As each case has demonstrated, the alliance between labour, feminism, and the left was strong, but not entirely unified, making partnership difficult. Nonetheless, these women saw the way forward and continued their activist work beyond the confines of their own workplaces. Even experienced organizers like Laurell Ritchie grew and learned much from their experiences in these strikes. Ritchie noticed that “once women’s eyes opened, they were opened forever,” and has reflected that despite initially being “intimidated by the financial [clout of business,]” she eventually “saw through the mask” and realized that the “illusion” of business’ “superior understanding of what makes the economy run” no longer existed after Puretex.²³ Additionally, Ritchie has reflected that despite having some experience in organizing, the Puretex strike taught her how to “work with people that weren’t her immediate... community,” and that she could “put lessons [learned at Puretex] into play during other strikes,” as she did in another CTCU strike at McGregor’s Hosiery.²⁴

In many ways, the successes of these strikes were dependent on the strength of alliances and relationships built between labour, feminism, and the left in the 1960s. Partnerships between these three groups were not new developments in the 1970s, since the 1960s was host to many labour, feminist, and leftist protests across Canada. But, as Judy Rebick has argued, the

²² *Maria*, 1977.

²³ Laurell Ritchie, Interview with Author, 11 April 2019.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

partnership between these groups (particularly the New Left and the women's liberation movement) were not always as emancipatory as promised for everyone.²⁵ It was not until the relationship between labour, feminism, and the left had time to develop and grow into the 1970s that each group became more autonomous. Likewise, some of the workplace activism and mobilization strategies established in the 1970s carried over into the 1980s. OWW, for example, continued to mobilize women workers well into the 1980s at workplaces such as Eaton's, Mini-Skool, and Irwin Toys, and provided the same kinds of support that it had provided to the Puretex and Inco workers such as establishing "solidarity pickets" for Mini-Skool, and boycotting Eaton's and Irwin Toys' products.²⁶

Like the 1970s, the 1980s hosted unique economic, political, and social circumstances that influenced the form that mobilizations by labour and its allies took. The "breakdown" of the standard employment relationship (SER) that typified male work in the post-war period was clearly visible by the 1980s, and as a result, women's place in both the workforce and unions were jeopardized.²⁷ Capitalism had effectively "turned the tables" on labour in the 1980s by using the precarity of private sector work to their advantage.²⁸ "Instead of simply reacting to union's concerns," Craig Heron argued, management "marched into negotiations with their own

²⁵ Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution*, (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2005), 8. On the relationship between the New Left and the women's movement in the 1960s, Rebick writes that "the young women in these radical movements played just as subordinate a role to male activists as their mothers did to their fathers [and] when they got tired of walking three steps behind their men, they too revolted [and] called their movement women's liberation."

²⁶ There is a wealth of information on OWW's involvement in these strikes in the OWW fonds at the City of Toronto Archives. The particular information cited here was retrieved from: City of Toronto Archives, OWW fonds, Box 3, Series 663, File 5, "Strikes Support – 1978-1985."

²⁷ Judy Fudge and Leah Vosko, "Gender, Segmentation, and the Standard Employment Relationship in Canadian Labour Law, Legislation, and Policy," *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 22, 2, (2001): 287. Fudge and Vosko list some of the macro-economic factors that led to the "fall" of SERs, and identify the oil crisis of the mid-1970s, "the end of the Bretton-Woods system," and the move towards free trade as some of the key factors.

²⁸ Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History*, 2nd Edition, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1996), 122.

long list of demands,” thereby “restructuring power relations” in collective bargaining scenarios to their benefit.²⁹ As a result, unions with a large density of female members by the 1980s, like the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), struggled to solve issues outside of “the traditional field of conflict for unions,” such as the establishment of women’s committees and efforts to curb sexual harassment.³⁰ The 1980s, as described by Joan Sangster, therefore became “an era of competitive austerity,” one that forced labour, feminist, and left-wing activists closer together in the search for even more allies.³¹ It can thus be said that the alliance between labour, feminism, and the left has been a historical constant, yet this alliance is influenced by the different contexts provided by each historical decade.

The 1970s was therefore a distinct period in the history of the alliance between feminism, labour, and the left. The feminist movement forged a strong linkage to the labour movement, as evidenced by the emergence of feminist-labour groups that advocated specifically for working-class women. Likewise, a strong left, exemplified by the students, workers, and youth of the New Left were active during this period and saw the importance of working-class organizing. Though relatively strong in this period, the relationship between these three groups would continually fade and re-unify under the ever-changing social and economic circumstances of each successive decade. As Karl Marx proclaimed long ago, “men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past.”³²

²⁹ Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 122, 126.

³⁰ Julie White, *Mail and Female: Women and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers*, (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1990), 199.

³¹ Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 5.

³² Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 595.

In the context of this study, the alliance between labour, feminism, and the left has been moulded by the shifting political, economic, and social contexts of different historical periods. The forms of militant strike activism that occurred in the 1970s were no exception to this pattern: they were shaped by economic crisis, and the need for new forms of mobilizing in an age of increasing economic austerity. Despite the ever-changing historical circumstances surrounding labour, feminism, and the left, however, unions have never been alone in their confrontations with capital. Feminists and leftists have repeatedly been counted on to provide invaluable support to the labour movement, especially during strikes. The form that this support takes, however, is always changing, and with each succeeding generation of activists joining the fray, promising new alliances continue to be built upon partnerships of the past.

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