

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Winston Gereluk

Interviewer: Dave Werlin

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Index: Ukrainian immigrants - Western Ukraine - first/second/third immigration waves - Austro-Hungary - Romania - reading clubs - National Policy - western settlement - sod huts - railways - coal mines - internment camps - trade unions - Cold War - *No Streets of Gold* - Northwest Mounted Police - Myrnam - Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Canadian Ukrainian Congress - name change - United Labour Farmer Temple Association - Association of United Ukrainian Canadians - racism - discrimination - Edmonton Hunger March - PC 1003

I was born Wasyl Gereliuk, a name that an English teacher later changed to Winston, because it's the only other name he could think of immediately that began with a 'W'. I have gone through my life as Winston Gereluk (the last name was also anglicised). I was born to John Gereluk and Stephania, two immigrants that came from the Western Ukraine. That's interesting, because in the history of Ukrainian people in Western Canada, almost all of them came from the western part of what we call Ukraine today. That's the area roughly known then as Galicia, Haliciana, Bukovina, and Transcarpathia as well as being called by names of other parts of the Ukraine.

My dad came over in about 1905 from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was born in a village called Sniatyn, close to the Romanian border, right by a larger city called Chernovtse which was, at that time, under Romanian sovereignty and part of the Austro-Hungarian political regime. My mom came from a little further north, and she fell under the Polish regime. She came from west of Lvov in Bukovina, and she came over about 1914 with her parents; she was just a young girl. They came right at the height of Ukrainian immigration to Canada that began in 1891; just 11 years ago we celebrated the 100th year anniversary of the Ukrainians coming to Canada. At that time, it's estimated, there was something over 1 million people of Ukrainian descent in Canada. My dad and mom were part of that first wave.

Why many of these people came was fairly typical of why people came to Canada at that time, and tells us a lot about why the Ukrainians formed such an important part of the trade union and radical working class movement in Western Canada - which is something they've been known for ever since, even though it's not true of a great many of them. When my dad and mom came from the western Ukraine, just what I've told you already would indicate part of the reason. It was a terribly disturbed part of Europe at that time. You were never quite sure who your political masters were. The Ukrainians from the

southern part of the Ukraine, for that reason, hated the Romanian gentry more than they hated almost anyone. Later on they came to hate the Russians. The Ukrainians from the northern part of Ukraine hated the Polish worse than anyone. Later they came to not like the Russians either. I was raised not liking anyone very much. The people in the eastern part of what we call Ukraine today were part of the Russian empire. So you see right there some of the political divisions that existed.

The Ukrainians in the western part of Ukraine learned to make do under a variety of situations. It was really terribly disturbing. One thing they did, which explains what they did in Canada as well, is that they formed a lot of cooperative movements. Many more were formed in that part of the Ukraine than anywhere else. They really dealt with each other through a variety of cooperatives, associations, and learned how to do things that way. It's largely a survival technique. They couldn't count on any government to give them anything, only to take. They also formed a large number of reading clubs, what they call Chitanye, which is essentially a reading place. That's also a tradition that they carried to Western Canada when they came. That partially explains why they were so quick to form clubs and associations and unions in Western Canada. They had a tradition of that kind of activity. Under Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior under Wilfred Laurier, the decision was made with the CPR to bring as many settlers into Western Canada as they possibly could - an extension of John A. Macdonald's National Policy.

When they circulated an immense amount of propaganda through that part of Europe in the late 1800s, the Ukrainians responded en masse. They sent out a couple of pioneers to look at Western Canada, to see whether or not any of the promises were true. Two of the first pioneers arrived in 1891. Later on a professor in the Ukraine wrote a book, which was essentially entitled *Free Land*, and pictured Western Canada as being a pretty nice place where all this land was available under the homestead policy for a mere \$10 a quarter section. People came over like mad. They went north into Hamburg, to Amsterdam, and left there on ships. Generally they travelled in steerage, which is the way my mom came. She came as a little baby who slept like the baby Jesus in the straw every night for weeks while the ships came west. They all came into Western Canada. Just for the record, I want to tell you that Canada wasn't their first choice when this immigration started; Brazil was. But they found they could not put up with the situation in Brazil. Before pioneers came to Western Canada, a lot of them came to the United States, mainly to Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania didn't have farmland that they wanted to fill up, but they had coal mines that they wanted to fill up. So they came about 15 years earlier into Pennsylvania and found that the situation there wasn't exactly hospitable.

Western Canada had a very good reputation as being a place where they'd give you land and largely leave you alone. So in a period from 1896, or a little earlier, when the mass migration started, until 1914 when the war broke out and the first wave of immigration was pretty well completed, approximately 170,000 Ukrainians migrated to Western Canada. Put that on top of the 250,000, which was the total population of the Prairie Provinces, when this whole plan was hatched by the government, and you get an idea of the immensity of the population increase that the Ukrainians were responsible for. So they came here with that spirit of cooperativeness, they came here with the spirit of educating themselves through these Chitanye, these reading clubs. They came to Western Canada where they all settled in blocks. It was block settlement. They settled in a

crescent that runs from Winnipeg, Manitoba all the way up to Edmonton, along the fertile crescent and generally on the edge of the Canadian Shield. The last land to be opened up to block settlement was in Western Canada. There were other blocks opened up, but this was for the huge migration to the farmlands.

My people were generally sent to land that in many cases had absolutely no services. There was nothing there for them. Anything that they wanted they had to provide for themselves, build for themselves. Most of them were dirt poor when they came. They were peasants, a certain kind of peasant in the Ukraine. They came here and they had nothing. So very often when they settled down on their quarter section of land, they would actually, in some cases, live in caves. In other cases they would build very quick sod houses by literally taking their little one bottom plough, ploughing out a furrow, and building up the sod huts by cutting the furrow into chunks and piling it up and building up their little sod hut. Then later they'd improve their housing. They'd start cutting down trees, and then sod may be used just for the roof. So a lot of people grew up with sod huts and listened to the sound of insects all day and all night as they tried to sleep. My parents were amongst them. My mom married my dad, first of all because my dad asked her. He was 16 years older; she was 16, he was 32. He was well known in the area that she settled into, which is Stara Ukraina, Old Ukraine, which is right by the little town of Myrnam east of Edmonton. Many Ukrainians settled in that flashlight beam that radiates east out of Edmonton. Myrnam is interesting, because it's one of the few Ukrainian named places in Western Canada, and it means 'peace to us'. The Soviet space station was called Myr - peace. Mom's parents, the Bukowskis, settled a few miles away by a little town called Derwent, which is an English name, as most of them were. My dad asked her to marry him when mom dropped out of school and was working on the land. Dad had a grade 8 education, mom had a grade 3 education, and that's pretty typical of what Ukrainian immigrants would expect for their children at that time.

Just to push it forward a step, Ukrainians were brought to Western Canada, the CPR and the Dominion Government spent all that money propagandizing the West, not because they wanted to be good to people and take them in, but because they needed help. They brought people in because they needed the labour to open up the West, and that's pretty well been the history of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada. They were brought in under one or another form of bulk labour scheme. That was the first bulk labour scheme. At the same time, there were fairly active coal mining and other industries going on. The railways and coalmines, but particularly coal mining in Southern Alberta and all the way up to Edmonton and beyond. A lot of Ukrainians found themselves going to work in those coal mines. They would literally leave the mother with the small children on the homestead, not just to raise the children but to actually chop down the trees, open up the land, build the fences, take care of the cattle, do all the chores. And my mom, to a large extent, was that sort of person. She had 15 children which she raised on a small farm with no labour-saving devices, doing the farm chores. That was the plight of the Ukrainian woman.

Helen Potrebenko writes about it in her book, *No Streets of Gold*. Does quite a good job of it actually. The men meanwhile would go off and live together in bunkhouses attached to the mining camps or the railway camps. Many of them were socialists, and they discussed socialism. It wasn't very difficult to understand why people, with a history of

cooperative movement, reading and corresponding societies, stuck together in block settlements and then in bunk houses, would begin to form unions and take action whenever a reason to do so was presented by the boss. That's what a lot of Ukrainians did. The regimes they were fleeing from at that time in Europe were pretty well totalitarian regimes, which didn't give very many political rights to the peasants. It's natural that a lot of them had a propensity towards socialism or some form of working class organization.

In the old country, they were less than sharecroppers; there was a form of feudal system in place at that time. But, you had a wealthy peasant class emerging in the Ukraine at that time, actually being encouraged by the Austro-Hungarian empire. Western Ukraine was a breadbasket. There are places in the western Ukraine where the black soil is as much as one or two miles deep. Here we're used to 6 inches of soil; there it's one or two miles deep. So it was just determined that that would be the breadbasket of the empire, and it's always served that purpose. I have to say that it was also a very ethnically diverse area. People were not incestuous or jingoistic at all. First of all they couldn't afford to be, because they were divided up amongst so many empires. But they also had lots of history with people traveling back and forth through their land. Ukraine and Kiev are the crossroads of Europe and Asia. So they had everything from the Mongol hordes to the Danes and Scandinavians. So when you look at a Ukrainian, you can't tell whether they're a Tatar or Scandinavian or what they are. I suppose my blonde hair was due to the fact that somewhere in my background a Scandinavian warrior happily embraced a Ukrainian woman. They had a history of cosmopolitanism that was forced upon them. So they were not the kind of backward people that's sometimes depicted in the books that are written about these men in sheepskin coats.

The Ukrainians were well liked by the authorities, because they never asked for anything. There are many accounts written by Northwest Mounted Police as they were going through the Ukrainian communities, just to see if anybody was starving to death, writing back to their superiors saying they don't know how these families are going to survive. They'd be facing a winter with the father away, the mother taking care of a small farm, and facing the winter with nothing but maybe one cow, half a sack of flour, and one or two other staples in the home. In the Ukrainian community around Myrnam, all kinds of people tell you stories about how their father would walk all the way to Edmonton, walking on foot, to pick up a sack of flour and bring it back all the way to Myrnam or Derwent in those early days. They certainly put up with their share of hardships. They come from an area where they certainly knew what it was like to be bossed over by a person with an alien tongue. Whereas in the Ukraine they'd be talked to by a Polish person who might call them a 'caban', a pig, and in Romania by a Romanian speaking person. Here they would meet the English, who dad taught me to have a distinct dislike for. I don't dislike them. I just tell you that it was very hard for the Ukrainians to constantly be dealing with an overlord that spoke a different tongue than theirs. There was a great deal of solidarity.

When the First World War broke out, it came to the attention of the authorities fairly quickly, in spite of the fact that about 10,000 Ukrainians registered to fight for the British Empire in that war, that many Ukrainians came from the Austro-Hungarian empire. Those that were not naturalized were seen as enemy aliens. They've got records of over

8,500 being interned, in internment camps, during the First World War, because they were deemed to be enemy aliens and could not be trusted. There are projects now to catalogue who was there; in fact the Government of Canada was asked to apologize, which it did. An apology came kind of late. That actually brought Ukrainians closer together than ever. The internees were mainly Ukrainians, once again. There were, of course, your average other suspects mixed in, some Russians. But the pattern of settlement brought mostly people from those two or three areas of the western Ukraine, Halitsiana, Bukovina, and Transcarpathia into Western Canada. When they were put together into internment camps, they also talked. The Tzar in Russia at that time found out what a mistake it was to send his political enemies away and put them all together in bunkhouses, when he found himself facing a firing squad. That's what these people did with my ancestors. They put them together and they talked about the gross injustice that they were facing and the work they were forced to do. Very few people know how many projects they built. When you go into the mountains to vacation now, you go to the Jasper Park Lodge. Jasper Park Lodge was built by people in an internment camp. In behind the golf course is a huge rock with a plaque on it that explains it to you. That was the site of one of the internment camps. You can go through all the mountain projects, I don't know them all. Kananaskis was built by slave labour, the internees.

The sentiment that Ukrainians weren't to be trusted derived, first of all, from the knowledge there were so many socialists amongst them. They were also considered enemy aliens, and the idea that Ukrainians had to be watched and segregated carried right through. I've just described, in sketchy terms, the first wave. The second wave came after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia created the Soviet Union. The Ukraine's problems didn't end at that time. First of all, an independent Ukrainian state was created, but that was only part of it, because a part of it continued to be called the Ukraine and remain under Romania. Another part remained under Poland. Part was given to Czechoslovakia. The rest of it was an independent Ukrainian state. Later on, after 1922, it was brought into the Soviet Union as another Soviet Republic. You then had people coming to Western Canada. Then immigration tailed off for quite a while. After the Winnipeg general strike and those kinds of actions, they didn't want Ukrainians very much. But then low and behold if another great demand for labour didn't arise. That was building of the railway branch lines primarily. There was also demand for miners and people like that. Western Canada was opening up, as was the rest of Canada. But the branch lines in Western Canada particularly stand out as important. In the late '20s they began allowing in thousands of Ukrainians again, who at this point were still wanting to leave their country for all kinds of reasons. It was kind of a mixed bag, but by this time many of them, because of the vicious civil wars that raged during the time of the Communist Revolutions that were taking place in their part of the country, had developed an anti-communist tendencies. Those that favoured communism and socialism would've tended to remain, and those that wanted to get away from it all would have come in that immigration wave..

There had been a transformation in their own country. The small Ukraine that was the independent republic, was now a Soviet Republic. They didn't particularly care for their political regime, because it was communist and they'd been told by the priests and others that communists were not very good people. Therefore they fled. They came over primarily for the reasons they came over before. They wanted work. Of course religion

played a large role in their attitudes. You could see the division between the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches occurring right in the Ukraine. When people came over they were one or the other. Another sector or group, the Ukrainian Orthodox was formed in Canada in about 1918 with agreement of the Orthodox Church. I'm not quite sure what the relationship was to the Catholic Church at that time, but the priests and the church were always a very important part of the community..

In fact, a part of the Ukrainian Orthodox emergence had to do with their desire to express themselves, and not to remain true to people that they thought of as being treasonous to them. In the Ukraine at that time, among the churches, there had been a vicious civil war that took place and continued all through the years. The priests, whether they were Orthodox or Catholic, played a certain role in that, and the crackdown on the priests which was inevitable, led to the idea that the communist regime was anti-religious. There was quite a vicious struggle.

In 1918, the ULFTA, the United Labour Farmer Temple Association, was formed. I suppose you'd have to be told that the people who formed this organization were largely the trade unionists and socialists who got together after the First World War, just as it was drawing to a close. Pulling together all their experiences in those years when they were discriminated against as being part of the enemy alien camp. Being forced to rely upon their own devices, dealing with people who spoke an alien tongue, they formed the United Labour Farmer Temple Association, bringing farmers and trade unionists, working class people, together on a common basis. That was one of the earliest organizations that have been singled out as being a working class organization of Ukrainians in Western Canada, and far ahead of its time. 1918 was the time the trade unionists in Western Canada met to form the One Big Union. It was part of general militant unionism that arose across Western Canada. They would organize all kinds of activities. On the one side, they engaged in benevolent community activities, while on the other side, protest marches and rallies in which people in all the small towns used to gather and form their own ULFTA. Some of those exist to this day under their current name, which is the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians, which is a successor organization.

What we see is the other side of the split. The Ukrainian community is badly split - always has been. But the split really started to create problems in about the late '20s and 30's, when the 2nd wave of Ukrainians started coming. For the most part these were people who weren't terribly sympathetic to the communist regime at home, and weren't liking the political turmoil they saw there. A lot of it had to do with the fact that Ukrainians have such a history of trouble, strife, turmoil, hardship. I can remember being lectured to by my mom and dad, who asked me why I couldn't just sort of relax for a while? Take it easy, build a better life for ourselves, and don't cause trouble. That's sort of a slogan in the Ukrainian community, which had to do with what they had gone through. The civil war in the Ukraine was so disastrous in so many ways. So many good people were killed on both sides - people who just got 'sucked in for whatever reason. You know how political arguments evolve. People who were united today are not united tomorrow - in fact they're killing each other. You had the followers of Nestor Machno and all that stuff emerging. I was raised to believe that all of it was simply bad.

You could definitely see the formation of right-wing movements in the late 20s. There was a Hetman's association, which is a term associated with the Cossacks. They were the leadership of the Cossack clans, and they got together and formed their own association. Gradually, through the second and third wave of immigration, which came after the Second World War, you could see the emergence of a coalition of right-wing groups under the Canadian Ukrainian Congress. The outcome of all this is we had two major tendencies. The Association of United Ukrainian Canadians on the one hand, uniting the progressive groups including some communists. On the other hand you had the Canadian Ukrainian Congress uniting a whole plethora of right-wing groups, generally anyone who was anti-communist. This would include a lot of the religious based groups including all three of the dominant Ukrainian churches. About the time of the first wave there was very strong insurgency of Protestant religions into the Ukrainian communities. Mainly of the fundamentalist varieties. I remember the part of the country I come from having the 'Subotnokes' come in, the Seventh Day Adventists, who took Saturday as their Sabbath. Converting people to what amounted to an Anabaptist kind of religion, also becoming part of the mix. Generally speaking, the religious people allied with the CUC and the progressive people with the AUUC.

The main brute labour needed at that time was on the branch lines of the railways, but they came everywhere. Generally they came almost as an indentured form of labour. After they put in their period of service they would find the money to buy a farm. There was still some homesteading going on. They'd go homestead a little further out, where the economic decision makers wanted the land to be opened up, is where they'd ship them.

The trade union movement was terribly weakened for a period of time after the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919. Ukrainians were among those people who were named by the authorities as being generally troublesome. This is after the First World War, after the internship. You had the Winnipeg General Strike and the whole general strike movement in Western Canada, and governments coming down with decisions such as you couldn't print any of your meeting minutes in Ukrainian. Ukrainian was one of the languages, Finnish was another one; there were seventeen or eighteen languages that weren't allowed in public meetings. The Ukrainians got together with other groups to publish their news. In the case of the Ukrainians, I can remember the Manitoba Farmers Association getting involved in printing up a lot of the ULFTA literature for them. As the second wave progressed, they got gradually more and more right-wing. News came out about the Stalinization of the Ukraine, which meant something to a lot of people.

Reading the Western Press you could never be sure exactly what it meant, but we do know that there were famines. There was one particularly bad famine in the early '30s in the Ukraine. The press had it that certain decisions made by the Soviet Union didn't help or even exacerbated it or used it for political purposes. There were continual reports of the Russification of the Ukraine. Well that one is a bit unfair; we always had the Russification of the Ukraine long before there were any communist governments.

I'm not going to debate communism here and the merits of the communist state. We do know, however, that for the longest time communism in the Soviet Union was forced to develop on a war footing; it was a form of war communism. Among other things, it grew from the fact that all of the Allied powers ringed the fledgling Soviet state and tried their best to put it to death before it grew too healthy. All of that, I believe, had something to

do with Stalin and the movement we call Stalinization. The brutality that people attribute to Stalin had, at least in part, to do with the fact that Stalin and the Soviet state did actually have enemies. Many of them were internal. The Cold War, as far as Ukrainians were concerned, began well before it was declared by John Foster Dulles, Winston Churchill and all of these nice people.

The second wave of Ukrainian immigrants came over largely as industrial labour. Many of them ended up on the farms as well. That ended with the Second World War, as well. A lot of Ukrainians joined the communist party, and a lot of the unions that arose after that severe crackdown that occurred in the early '20s were led by either communists or socialists, and had more of a communist analysis to them. In the depression which occurred, a lot of Ukrainians were able to rely on their cooperative movement, their study halls, their reading groups, to get themselves together to discuss some of the problems that were taking place. There's so much that can be said about the depression. The progressive Ukrainian groups at that time were very active in mobilizing the unemployed; The On-To-Ottawa Trek in 1935 for instance, or the Edmonton Hunger March in 1932. The events that we read about these days had a great deal of Ukrainian content. In fact, the day before the Edmonton Hunger March took place on December 20, 1932, and was crushed quite brutally by the militia and the police, there was a raid on the Ukrainian Labour Temple. They were worried that this was part of the Bolshevik plan for Canada, for the world. The Ukrainians looked suspiciously like Russians, and the Ukrainian hall was known as being a centre for radical activities. So they literally crashed into the hall looking for guns, but all they found, ironically enough, was a lot of food, because the ladies had been cooking food and preparing sandwiches for the next day's March, knowing that thousands of people were going to be coming to Edmonton. Indeed that day about 13,000 people gathered for a rally in Market Square. It's when they marched toward the legislature that they were later crushed somewhere along Jasper Avenue. Those kinds of events stand out in the history of the Ukrainian people.

The third wave of Ukrainian immigration came over after the Second World War. I don't think too many people know how badly the Slavic and Russian people suffered during the Second World War. It is estimated that some 21 million people from Ukrainian and central and eastern Europe lost their lives in the War. There was something that was tantamount to genocide taking place. They were caught in that horrible vice. We know that the Germans just hated them. In fact they looked upon the Ukraine as tantamount to a waste of breathing space. The experience Ukrainians had with the Soviet Union and with their continued domination by Romanians, Poles, Czechs, everybody that could get a hand in, meant that they weren't too fussy to return to their country after the Second World War was over. It was quite a desperate situation. There were some 2 million Ukrainian people outside the borders of the Ukraine who were ex-patriots. Some wanted to return, a great many did not. A great many, over a million it's estimated, were returned to the Ukraine forcibly. The rest is what forms the part of the immigration that became the third wave of immigrants.

Going back to pre-Mongol times, the area from which my parents came was at the crossroads of Europe. There was something about Lvov, it was known in fact as the crossroads of Europe. If you go to Kiev today, you will find that it's a very cosmopolitan city. It's often called a little Paris. It was always in the crossroads of the trading routes.

People all had dibs on the Ukraine in one form or another. There were all kinds of communities. I read an ethnic breakdown once of the Ukraine. It's incredible, the number of different ethnic groups that made it their home. So, it's largely a geographic issue, and a lot of empires as well. For the longest time Rus was the Scandinavian name imposed upon the area from the time the Scandinavians had colonized it, coming down the Volga River into that part of Russia, then into Ukraine. The main river in Ukraine is the Dneiper River.

I've started talking about the Cold War already, when I talked about the fact there was in effect a Cold War going on with the second wave of Ukrainians and with the experiences that they brought over. After the Second World War, you have a third wave of people who didn't want to return to their country and these were mostly staunch anti-communists. Many of them were just people who wanted to get out of the turmoil and come to someplace where it would be nicer. At this point Canada was not inviting people in anymore. The immigration policy had begun to tighten up. But they did need Ukrainian labourers in the northern resource camps, the mining camps, stretching all the way from northern Ontario into BC. You had a lot of people coming into those camps and later becoming active in the trade union movement. A lot of those are very strong union towns. You had them going into some of the resource towns in BC, but also into the agricultural communities; go working on the beet fields in southern Alberta, or working in some of the packing plants. Many Ukrainians became part of the trade union history in Alberta that way. We had several of the executive of the Alberta Federation of Labour coming from the Ukrainian community, and from the meat packing plants as well. They became the backbone of the union movement in Alberta that way.

Then you had the beginning of the Cold War. It's really hard to trace that one. We do know that after the Second World War there was heightened internationalism in the air. That internationalism was supposed to include working people. Not only would we have a world of peace and prosperity, but working people would be part of all the decision making structures. That was very strongly understood. We had all kinds of internationalist organizations beginning. But at the close of the Second World War, the one that the authorities found most troubling was the World Federation of Trade Unions. They found that troubling because it would include the Soviet Union as well as other countries. So the Cold War brought to an end a lot of the talk of internationalism that was in the air. The Ukrainian community was very much at the centre of this talk of internationalism, because Ukrainians always retained their international perspective, because of their history, because of their continuing allegiance to the old country, and their continuing attention to what was happening there.

So you had two things happening together; refugees coming from the Second World War, fleeing the old country, strongly anti-communist for the most part at this point, and the Cold War fuelled and fired at every opportunity by people who were trying to cut off whatever progressive movements were happening. Cut off the expansion of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian problem was exacerbated by the fact that the Soviet Union literally occupied the Ukraine. There were all kinds of movements happening in the Ukraine. They occupied the Ukraine, and that was the point at which Russification took on a whole new meaning. The Cold War sharpened the fight between the right-wing Ukrainians. They're not all right-wing. Many of the people who belonged to the Canadian Ukrainian

Congress were simply people who were interested in the cultural affairs. They tended to identify with the Ukraine back home as it used to exist.

Then you had the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC), which is very interesting. During the Cold War when the Western powers were treating the Soviet Union and Ukraine largely the way the Americans are treating Cuba today, the semi-official contact for the Ukrainian government in Canada was the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians. Often when an official would come from the Ukraine to Canada, their first contact would be with the AUUC. That of course, as you can guess, did not endear them to the authorities. It was at that point that many of them started to be looked upon with a great deal of suspicion as being leaders of almost a fifth column here in Canada, friends of the Soviet Union and the friends of the Ukraine. There are all kinds of reports and activity we'd call skinhead activity today. Members of AUUC, people who were Ukrainian were looked upon as enemy aliens. The notion that Ukrainians were enemy aliens that led to their internment in the First World War was never quite lost. You had Ukrainians suffering severe discrimination in the 20s, 30s, and this discrimination against Ukrainians went on into the third wave. Especially with the notion that the Ukrainians were some of the first people the communists would visit when they came to Canada. That really exacerbated it. You had all kinds of Ukrainians changing their names: Chorney, which means 'black', would become Black, Zelanyi would become 'Green'. So you had all kinds of Greens in Edmonton whose names were not Green at all. It's part of the forcible name change that took place, because with Ukrainian names, many could not get jobs. It was rather funny. You'd go to the trade union meetings or the progressive rallies and see many Ukrainians wearing suits. That's because they couldn't find employment and were forced to go into business for themselves, and so they'd come to these rallies and marches wearing business suits and ties.

Ukrainian immigrants, just like so many immigrants to our country, were the subjects of unabashed ethnic discrimination and racism. The official Canadian government position was that there were 'desirable immigrants' and 'less than desirable immigrants.' The Ukrainians were down at the bottom of that list. It's something to read the textbooks that were put out for the naturalization of Ukrainian immigrants at that time. They would reflect official Canadian immigration policy right in the textbook they gave people to read which would indicate what is a good Canadian. A good Canadian is one who does all of these things. Then it would actually list the most desirable ethnic groups down to the bottom. Ukrainians fit just above the Chinese and the "Hindoos" - Hindu spelt with two 'o's. This racist propaganda - it was something that they would give all of these people to read. That exact official racist and ethnic discriminatory line was carried through in employment patterns. You'd find these people bidding for jobs, trying to get into positions, and kept right down at the bottom of the class structure that existed in the mines. So at the top you'd have the desirable classes, the English speaking, the Scandinavians in some cases. At the bottom you'd have Ukrainians and the other people nobody wanted, which were the Chinese and the East Indians. The Ukrainians in the mining camps - and I was raised with all kinds of these stories - really did stick together closely. And they stuck together with other discriminated groups. Another highly discriminated group was the Italians who immigrated to Canada in great numbers too.

It's interesting when you read some of the descriptions that I believe formed part of official Canadian immigration policy and treatment of new Canadians. They would list some of the features you don't want. Some of the features you don't want are the darker skin, the swarthy skin, the dark coloured hair, terms used to depict the Italian people as well. The Italians, Ukrainians, and other discriminated groups stuck together pretty well in the Crows Nest Pass and in the other mines. They formed enclaves so that the politicization of the Crows Nest Pass and the areas where the workers lived is very much a reflection of the way they were treated as ethnic groups, and literally barred from certain kinds of employment, mixing in certain social groups.

The legislation that McKenzie King brought in to force in 1944, PC1003, is largely responsible for the kind of labour law regime we have in Canada today. Under McKenzie King, who was an evil genius when it came to labour law, you had a pluralist regime in order to properly take care of descent and conflict and everything else in the workplace. The first department of labour was formed in Canada in 1900. It was formed largely in response to the troubles they were already beginning to encounter in Western Canada. When McKenzie King made his way out to the west in 1906, it was to investigate a strike that had taken place in Lethbridge. It was really a violent strike, which they tried to settle the same way Rockerfeller tried to solve things in the American mine fields. When Rockerfeller tried to solve them in the American mine fields, he also had a nice fellow working for him who's name was William Lion McKenzie King. But the Ukrainians were part of this and were named and thought to be problematic enemy aliens. When the strikes took place in Lethbridge, Drumheller, and other mining areas, it was seen as being tied in with this enemy alien problem. When McKenzie King came out in 1906, he brought with him the blueprint for the first piece of major labour legislation that laid the blueprint for modern labour legislation. That was the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, which was declared in 1907, which put into place a regime where you had to register and report all your activities to the government if you intended to go on strike. It also contained provisions that meant you'd have to wait for a long time. It required a cooling off period. It required compulsory mediation and conciliation. All the things you see in place today were put in place by McKenzie King in 1906 and 1907 when he was Canada's first deputy minister of labour, responding to a wave of radicalism that grew up in the coal mines in Western Canada and in the Crows Nest Pass, in that area we call District 18 of the United Mine Workers of America.

When McKenzie King became Prime Minister after 1935 and was Prime Minister for the Second World War, there was a series of War Measures Acts coming out. Many people refer to Privy Council Order 1003 which was passed in 1944 and gave us our present form of collective bargaining legislation, which they see as being the quintessential piece of labour legislation. There were dozens of Privy Council (PC) orders that came down before that, many of them modeled on the IDIA of 1907. That should surprise nobody, as William Lion McKenzie King was the evil genius behind each one of these PC orders. He had the idea that if you can force working people into reporting all of their activities, doing it all according to the book, waiting for conciliation and mediation, and then going through a compulsory cooling off period, where you would then strike under carefully prescribed conditions, then you sort of had them. So after 1943, when one out of every 3 industrial workers in Canada had gone on strike, Privy Council Order 1003 was introduced.

The establishment was really fearful. They were fearful for all kinds of reasons. The industrial organizing had taken place in Canada, stretching all the way to Western Canada. You had all kinds of radical movements in place. The CCF was growing in popularity. The Communist Party was growing as a force in Western Canada. They had all kinds of fears that the political economic regime was in trouble. William Lyon McKenzie King understood nothing as well as how to put an end to that kind of foolishness. It was a challenge to capitalism.. He had already made several other concessions. The movement to bring people under this kind of regime in 1944 was just part and parcel of a certain number of concessions to put in place, which formed the basis of Canada's current social safety net. Family allowances and other social legislation came after 1941, because people were simply demanding it and gaining militancy. In Western Canada, ask any Canadian who pays attention to politics, the Ukrainians were seen as being behind these demands. They had played such an important role in these movements. I go back to that first wave where you have 170,000 Ukrainians coming into Western Canada that, when the National Policy was formed, had only about 250,000 people in it.

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