

Craig Heron

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Alvin Finkel, interviewer Camera, Don Bouzek

Q: Tell us about what was going on in Toronto during the war that led to the General Strike.

CH: What was going on was largely what was going on in all industrialized parts of Canada, in the sense that industry after 1915 took off, boomed, and absorbed just about anyone who wanted to work and find a job and wasn't already in the army. Full employment, and that was particularly good for the metal-working sector, because the munitions industry was very big in Toronto, and the garment industry, which was also very big in Toronto, which was producing uniforms and whatnot. Surprisingly, although they'd never really been in trouble, the construction trades were also able to really strengthen their position. Also, Toronto had a fairly vibrant radical community, especially following the Russian Revolution, that had revitalized itself quite a bit. There was quite a lot of agitation on the Left around a variety of issues, particularly against conscription. There was a really large Socialist resistance to conscription that they made central through 1917. Well into 1918 it was clear that there was an organizing momentum going on with workers who had not been organized before. So at the beginning of 1919 there were all sorts of new sectors being brought into the labour movement. Most importantly, I think, the tight labour market was allowing for a new level of organizing in the Toronto working class that hadn't been there before. It was interesting to look around in the first part of the war, that as unemployment disappeared it didn't automatically lead to lots of organization. What it led to was a kind of chaos in the labour market, where employers complained that the turnover of labour was tremendous. Working in a munitions plant was not fun, and it didn't take people long to realize that you could get out of there and find a job somewhere else and get better wages and so on. Or they'd complain that guys would take a day off to go to a baseball game, knowing full well that their job would be waiting for them the next day. This was unheard of, a very rare time when the whip of poverty isn't there to keep workers on the job. But as you got deeper into 1917, the second half of the war, there's a growing sense

that the war isn't going to last forever and we're going to have to come back to a peacetime existence in which we don't want to go back to 1914. So there was a lot more interest at that time in organizing workers. The workers they first organized were the ones who had experience, the more skilled workers of the established unions. The metalworkers had a major strike in 1916-- sorry, they didn't have a strike in 1916. They had a major confrontation in 1916 over the nine-hour day, which did lead to a strike in Hamilton, but in Toronto they were able to get the employers to agree to a nine-hour day, which was a great base for moving on. Hamilton workers didn't have that.

Q: Victory always spurs people.

CH: Exactly. There was a similar kind of pattern of organizing the garment industry as well, so that by late 1917 on through 1918 you find that the long-established unions are doing much better. The machinists' union is bursting at the seams. By January 1919 you've got all of the metal trades workers coming together to form a metal trades council that is within a few months proposing common demands to employers, which is a great step forward. Part of what was happening with craft workers was that they were thinking more outside the box, trying to get employers to think of all of them together, that they should negotiate together. I'll come back to that, because that was a critical part of the General Strike context in the spring. The metal workers were at the forefront of it but the construction trades did the same thing, creating a building trades league that went even further in making common demands across the board.

Q: Very similar to Winnipeg.

CH: Absolutely. Twenty years ago when I edited a collection of essays on what this looked like across the country, the similarities were really striking. Basically you were seeing workers who were coming together in acts of militancy and solidarity which were unprecedented. Walls were breaking down all over the place and they were trying to find ways to come together. So, in addition to the established unions doing much better and soaking up many new members and

taking on these new forms of thinking about how to organize, there were whole new sectors coming onstream. In Toronto, by far the most impressive was the meatpacking industry, which by the spring of 1919 probably had created the biggest union in Toronto. It's radical leadership. They were briefly on strike at the beginning of May and then sucked into the IDIA conciliation process, which ended up working for them by the end of the month. They actually got an agreement that for the first time ever unions were recognized and they were able to bargain some conditions within that industry, a horrible, vile industry to work in. A whole range of workers in the service industries, like Bell Telephone operators got organized. There were domestic workers, just an enormous range. Bank clerks were organizing. There was a momentum that was in some ways echoing the willingness of workers in Winnipeg who weren't organized to join the General Strike, in the sense that there was a consciousness that you had to work together with other workers and you had to reach out more. Toronto's context, however, was somewhat different in the sense that there was a very entrenched union leadership that had deep connections to the American Federation of Labor and had jobs as business agents and whatnot, who hung around the labour temple day and night and had solidarity amongst themselves to keep this from getting out of control. It was interesting to watch as the Toronto General Strike starts to build. They couldn't completely stop it and they felt they had to respond to this new mood that was there, especially when they had meetings and there were eruptions of support for that kind of idea. It all gets triggered in April when the metalworkers' council sends a memorandum around to 230 manufacturers and says, okay we want to negotiate. Silence. They get one response from the secretary of the Toronto Employers Association on behalf of all the employers saying, nothing doing, we're not going to talk to you; we'll talk to individual unions, but never to everybody together. So on the first of May they walk out on strike. Same day, there's a big May Day meeting in which some of the strike leaders are speaking, because the leaders of the machinists are fairly radical at this point. The leadership of the carpenters is fairly radical at this point. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of May they go to the Labour Council and say, okay this has gone on for two weeks, we want some support; we would like you to call a general strike. The existing leadership had already been battling the Left up to this point in a number of confrontations the previous winter, and had held on. They weren't prepared to say, no we won't show any support at all, but

they were trying to keep it to the level of, we'll just pass a resolution saying that the employers should negotiate. Instead of that, a resolution was passed that they should call a convention, and all the unions should go back and poll their members on whether there should be a convention; they scheduled a meeting of this for one week later. This is a breakthrough in terms of how you organize in Toronto. It's a step outside the Labour Council but it's authorized by the Labour Council. It's definitely new stuff going on in terms of labour organizing. In that week that they have allowed for, there's meetings going on and the press is following closely who's going to support it and who isn't. The public rhetoric seems to be very supportive of the idea of a general strike. There's a march on Queen's Park between those two meetings, with 5,000 people even though it's pouring rain, in which all sorts of loud militant rhetoric comes down. They meet but Mayor Tommy Church has decided he has to intervene to try and get this settled so it doesn't generate a general strike. He spends most of a week going back and forth. The employers won't actually sit down with the unions; they want nothing to do with the metal trades council. Eventually, although I think there's yet another meeting of the general strike convention that is put on hold again because negotiations are getting more serious, Tommy Church ultimately takes them off to Ottawa to sit with Robert Borden. Throughout this whole conference I've been interested in how little anyone has mentioned Robert Borden. The assumption is that he's off in Paris in the midst of peace negotiations and trying to salvage Canada's international reputation. But he spends a whole day talking to 27 guys from Toronto – employers, workers, and the mayor – and he's unable to get anything resolved. But it goes on for hours. So they come back and the General Strike is therefore going to happen. On Friday the 30<sup>th</sup> of May at 11 in the morning it starts. The metalworkers are already out, the garment workers go out, the carpenters go out, and on the first day that's about it. It's not clear how many that amounts to, probably 10,000 or 12,000 workers. The metal workers were probably at 8,000 themselves, and 2,000 carpenters, and 2,000 to 3,000 garment workers. There are a number of strike votes happening over the weekend that will continue on. I'm going to just say one thing that's very important. At the last convention in which they decide to go ahead, the report of all the votes that had taken place comes in. Just under 10,000 vote in favour, 5,500 vote against, 15,500 abstain. More than half of the votes cast say they don't want to commit themselves one way or the other. This is not the best

circumstances under which to start a general strike. So the first day out, it's not entirely surprising that there's fairly limited participation. Over the weekend the plumbers come out, the marine federation comes out, but critically – and even decades later when the Days of Action happened in Toronto – it was critical the Toronto Transit Commission was shut down. There was a meeting late on Saturday night of this first weekend and only weekend of the strike, in which the Amalgamated Transit Union meets. The strike leaders of the General Strike try to be admitted to that meeting and the leadership, which includes a city controller, who's a member of the Conservative Party and is totally opposed to all this radical stuff--he won't let them in. They vote against participating in the strike, and that's critical, because it means that transportation is still going to flow and there'll be no overturned streetcars to match what happens in Winnipeg. So by Monday morning it's not looking good. And one other thing happens. On the weekend, the streetcar service folks bring together something called Public Service Council, which includes civic labourers and a number of other unions that work for the City. They announce they're going to follow safe and sane ways, clearly an attempt to undermine the strike momentum, and none of them join. So the whole public sector stays out of the strike. By Monday and Tuesday it's pretty clear that it's not building any momentum. On Tuesday morning the metal trades council, led by the machinists, basically say they think it should end, and they ask the strike convention to do that, and Tuesday night they do. The garment workers stay out until noon the next day. There's a story there that will probably never easily be told, but they had no trouble getting their workers out. The Jewish-led garment union, the International Ladies Garment Union, primarily had the young women and a small number of men out of Spadina for that whole time.

Q: They had had strikes before the war as well.

CH: They had, but the ILG was new in Toronto and it was also about to go on strike itself at the beginning of July. That's the momentum that happened and then fizzled out. There was a bit of afterthought. There was a Trades and Labour Council meeting where they were batting around what they could keep going. But it was over. The question becomes: why? What held it back? The easy answer is, well it was a bunch of union conservatives, paid staff of international unions,

that were holding people back. That's certainly part of the story, because compared to Winnipeg there were many more of those who were intervening in the debate to try and keep things from happening and who had enough sway within their own unions to do it. But there was also a question of, to take for example the packinghouse workers, who were just newly unionized and had a radical leadership yet didn't join the strike. They didn't join the strike because they had finally just got this contract. The industrial legality of organizing contract by contract and enterprise by enterprise was playing out. The street railway workers partly didn't go out because they knew their negotiations were going to lead to and ultimately did lead to a strike within two or three weeks after the General Strike. So they were all playing out their own scenarios with their own employers. Several of them, the steam railway workers, had cemented a much stronger position during the war, and they weren't willing to risk that. A lot of it had to do with not wanting to risk the fairly fragile negotiating relationships that they had.

Q: What about the other public services?

CH: The other ones, the City labourers didn't come out as well, which was really surprising. I think that the street rail men had sort of worked on all of those unions to keep them from doing it. The civic Municipal Employees Union wasn't very old; it had been created at the end of the war and again was in its own negotiations. In a lot of ways, it was an episode in a longer struggle. It wasn't as decisive as the Winnipeg one was. But in terms of the battles between who's going to control the labour movement, in July they had their annual elections for the leadership of the Trades and Labour Council. All of the left-wing candidates who had supported the strike won, and all the more conservative ones were thrown out. So there had been some kind of momentum, and over the next year or two the Toronto Trades and Labour Council is a voice of pushing new radical ideas in the labour movement – they support industrial unionism, etc. But I think the most important thing that they had learned out of this – and this was generally true in Central Canada and certainly true in Eastern Canada – that there was no real possibility of winning if you just pulled out and went into One Big Union. There were local supporters of the One Big Union but you had a sense that you had to keep your progressive forces together and

keep pushing, because you still had some chance of winning. The metal trades workers were out for weeks and weeks and weeks, and had strike pay coming from the international headquarters. So there was another incentive not to pull the plug on that connection.

Q: So it wasn't as popular as in the West where workers weren't making any gains and they considered their union a sellout.

CH: Which it was. Yes, that didn't ever resonate in Toronto or really anywhere else. There was an attempt to pull together a One Big Union equivalent in Southern Ontario; they had a meeting I think in Guelph. One of my favourite figures in the Hamilton movement, Frederick Flatman, was really pushing this. He organizes an OBU unit in Hamilton and starts publishing a separate labour newspaper called *New Democracy*, which is the eastern voice of the One Big Union. But that folds, or at least his editorship folds in October or November of 1919. There was fairly limited support for that option. Someone like Jimmy Simpson, for example, who was a national figure of a Socialist and had been vice president of the TLC and was very well known, he was very intrigued with the One Big Union. But his view was by the summer of 1919 that that wasn't the route to push. I've done some research on the Nova Scotia steelworkers, and the same thing was being worked out among steelworkers and miners in Nova Scotia. They really felt they'd won a lot by staying inside. I'm not even sure that debate went on, but it was clear that they were winning and they weren't going to respond very positively to a suggestion that they should pull out and go on their own in a new organization.

Q: Did the metalworkers' strike achieve any gains?

CH: It was a complete defeat. It would be interesting if someone studied the metalworker strikes across the country, because they saw it as a national project. They really thought the metal workers were going to be pushing the buttons. They were also trying to get a general strike started in Montreal at the same time. Some of the toughest and nastiest employers were those metalworking manufacturers, no question.

Q: What were some of their demands?

CH: There were two central demands: one was that they should negotiate through the Metal Trades Council; the other was for the eight-hour day. I should have emphasized that much earlier – that was really central to drawing broader support in the city. People would get up and say, we have to support them because we all believe in the eight-hour day. The carpenters said, we support you because we've already got it and everyone should have it. It was a moment where the eight-hour day was a kind of flashpoint for all sorts of aspirations that workers had.

Q: Also, that could create more jobs.

CH: Supposedly. But they believed it. They also believed, given the intensity of work during the First World War, that it would take some strain off. If you worked in metalworking in the munitions industry, you worked long hours and really hard. Intensification of work had really been noticeable, and this would be one way of getting some relief from that. Interestingly, there were other demands that they made of the metalworking employers, but they were insignificant. These were the two that were always talked about and the ones that the employers made the bottom line – we will not talk about these ever. The interesting thing is the Toronto strike starts about two weeks after the Winnipeg one, and they pick up on certain models. A committee of 15 is created to run the strike, which really gets the feathers ruffled of the standard leadership, because they don't like this idea of creating something different. It's a bunch of radicals who get chosen as the committee of 15.

Q: Who's choosing them?

CH: The General Strike Convention, which is standing outside the Trades and Labour Council. As I've said, the leadership of the Trades and Labour Council is fairly conservative, but the president, Arthur O'Leary, continues to chair these conventions – he obviously thinks he needs to

keep some control over this – until about Sunday or Monday of the General Strike when he says, I'm out of this, as does H. J. Heavey, who's the secretary and a really nasty bugger. He, within a few weeks, has launched, with the help of employers in the iron industry, a Conservative labour newspaper called the *Labour Leader*. It's just a vicious attack on the Left week after week after week, and it's well supported and got high production values and all that. But those guys pull back at that point. There are just echoes of a strike. If it had gone on a bit longer it might even have become clearer. They had a whole carefully worked out agenda of which workers should stay on the job and which shouldn't. There was a rumour on the first day of the strike that a citizens' committee was being formed to help the powers-that-be. Nothing ever emerges in the press about who they were, because it never was really needed. But the whole Winnipeg situation was starting to move over. But all of this happens before the worst nastiness of the Winnipeg General Strike; it's in the first two weeks of the strike.

Q: The Winnipeg General Strike should've been an inspiration, but there's very little evidence of that.

CH: I wouldn't go so far as to say that. It's on the front page of the newspaper every day and people are joking about Winnipegitis. The president of the Metal Trades Council speaks to the rally they hold at Queen's Park and says something like, the capitalists are soon going to know that Winnipegitis has hit us too. They were conscious of it, but none of the violence that was going to come down on the Winnipeg strikers had happened yet; that all happened the week after the start of the strike. I think the day the Toronto strike ends is when the first big veterans' march happens in Winnipeg, and then a week later the strike leaders are arrested and so on.

Q: Did Toronto separate workers more on the basis of ethnicity?

CH: The *Toronto Telegram* says it's a Jewish Communist conspiracy. What's different though is one of the things in terms of comparison between these different experiences across the country needs to be played out. The progressive politics of the North End of Winnipeg, that I'm sure the

Ukrainian and Jewish Social Democrats had a lot to do with, doesn't have its model in Toronto in the same sense. I think there are large sectors of the immigrant population that are not as well politicized and aren't being urged to be part of this in the same way. There was no participation by unorganized workers in the Toronto strike as there is in Winnipeg. As you look at the other general strikes across the country, that's not unusual. In fact, when you look to the sympathetic strikes that develop in Edmonton and Regina and Vancouver and so on, it tends to be mostly the organized workers who are out, and even then, not all of them. It's a more complicated picture. So Winnipeg is very special. You start to recognize that without mythologizing it the politics of the North End really were quite different from a lot of working-class life in central Canada. By comparison, the strength of the Conservative Party in Toronto in the working class was amazing. The following fall when there's a surge of organizing for the Independent Labour Party across Ontario, they elect 11 members across the province but not one from Toronto; they elect Conservatives again. There could be lots of gerrymandered reasons for that, but I think it runs deeper than that. There are people even in the organized labour movement who still think that an attachment to a mainstream party like that is going to pay off, not just in personal terms but pay off for their membership. That's obviously how the street railway union leadership had constructed what they were going to get. They had a good deal and if they played close with the right political forces around City Hall they were going to end up with a good deal. It's a very complicated mix. It wasn't the right convergence of circumstances. But I have to say, to read through the *Toronto Daily Star* as I did quite recently again to look at what people are saying and read the rhetoric of the meetings, it echoes all the things that you guys are used to hearing in Western Canada at the same point. It just didn't quite congeal and the forces against it were so much stronger.

You also didn't have such a substantial craft union leadership that is so entrenched and so tightly linked to the American international unions in the States.

Q: Did you have people who were connected with the Socialist Party in the craft unions? In Winnipeg, particularly the machinists, were led by Socialists. Did they manage to avoid that in Toronto?

CH: The Labour Council was split. So there were definitely people on both sides of the political divide. Jim Naylor has done research on this, and his sense is that if you hung around the labour temple a lot you'd get a sense that those guys were the leadership that was least interested in a general strike, to say the least, and most concerned about their own jobs and the dues and everything else. But the president of the Metal Trades Council, Richard Brown, was a worker; he wasn't a fulltime official. The president of the Building Trades League, which was the equivalent, was a carpenter named John Duggit. He was a worker; he wasn't a paid official. They were both very radical. In the 1921 census, Brown and his wife declare themselves under the religious category as Christian Socialist. His rhetoric is definitely radical in the period. He's energized by the possibilities.

Q: It's interesting that 15,000 didn't vote at all, versus 96 unions that went out. That's a pretty different ethos between unions.

CH: I've tried to explain that just in terms of where industrial relations was going in the case of a number of those unions. I think if the street railways union had gone differently, if the meatpacking union had not already had a mini-strike and then gone through this conciliation process that got them to a contract, that could've been different. That would've been huge, because that would've been another big industry. Construction and garments alongside metalworking was big, but it wasn't enough.

Q: And construction wasn't total either.

CH: No, it wasn't. It seemed like it was going to be in the weeks up to it, but I think only two of the unions went out and then the carpenters. Carpenters usually are the most progressive in these confrontations.

I don't think we should ever underestimate the power and determination of the employers in South Central Ontario. When I did my study of Hamilton, this was shockingly clear. There was

almost nothing happening in May of 1919 in Hamilton. The moulders went out and they stayed out all summer and eventually lost their strike as well. The unions had made no dent in all the big employers in the East End of Hamilton, and to a great extent that was true in Toronto; 230 firms were approached by the Metal Trades Council, but they weren't really organized in the sense that there'd been any collective bargaining relationship with them or that the employers had ever acknowledged them. The Ontario Employers Association was created in 1902 and had already had 17 years of union-bashing history behind them, and they were quite prepared to continue. This guy, James Merrick, who's the secretary, is the only voice you hear until just the very end of the strike when he announces that he's no longer going to speak, and another employer steps forward. But he's a nasty piece of business. He will be quite blunt about how this is just an outrage and there's not a moment they should be spending considering these demands.

Q: What influence did the Bolshevik Revolution and general uprisings in Europe have in Toronto?

CH: I think the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council was clearly already much more radicalized than the Toronto one would become much later. The moment of greatest concern for the Toronto labour leaders was in the fall of 1918 when the anti-strike and anti-immigrant orders-in-council came down from Ottawa. They had protest meetings against that, which were quite loud and critical.

Q: So free speech and the right to organize pulled people together?

CH: It did. But resolutions in support of the Bolshevik Revolution didn't go anywhere. There were elements, no question, just from reading the reports of meetings. There were elements within the Trades and Labour Council who were inspired, no question. But they weren't in the leadership and they hadn't won over anything like a majority. On the other hand, as I've already said, the council does shift in its leadership later in the summer and continues to have a more radical bent for many months after that. Sometimes it's the timing of things. When I put together

this collection of regional essays back in 1998, the timing was different in every region in some ways. Winnipeg was so decisive, but in many ways the peak for some other regions was early 1920. Definitely for Nova Scotia that made much more sense. The timing of the miners' strikes tended to be much later; the defeats came much later. Part of what was going on in the spring, the general strike was an attempt at something that didn't work. But it wasn't the end. It wasn't a decisive break that led to the outcome of the Winnipeg strike where people were in jail and unions are not going to make any new demands for ages to come.

Q: In Western Canada people were encouraged by the general strikes that had been successful in 1918. Were there parallels in Toronto?

CH: There was in the fall. Maybe it was the freight handlers strike; sorry, I've forgotten. There was in the fall of 1918 a flicker of interest but it didn't lead to anything. There was no call for a vote or anything that went that far.

Q: The railway workers in Toronto didn't play a role in 1919?

CH: No. I should mention that two delightful things happened in the course of the runup to the strike. The mill trades workers are out and the general strike is all being discussed; it's in the press every day. The students of Humber College go out on strike. They want a shorter day. They would like a shorter lunch period so they can leave school at 2:30 in the afternoon. That peters out after a couple of days. The other is Lord Baden Powell happens to be in Toronto and he loudly promises that he'll use his scouts as strike breakers if needed.

Q: Despite the abstentions, the vote was still two to one; the leadership played a big role.

CH: That's true. I think there was a sense amongst the most positive general strike supporters that some of those unions that had abstained could be won over, and you needed to get some momentum going to get them off the fence. The momentum didn't happen; that was the critical

question. I'm not sure why they decided to start on a Friday, because you've got the break of Sunday and by Monday and Tuesday it's a dribbling-off effect. But it wasn't possible to dislodge any of those groups. Very few came over, but not very many, not significantly enough.

Q: What was the impact of the decision to have a Western Canadian labour conference separate from the TLC?

CH: There's no question that there are members of the Toronto labour movement who know about the One Big Union idea and are talking about it. Even in a Trades and Labour Council meeting someone will say, we need a One Big Union and that kind of thing. But it's a very distant thing. One of the things we can never underestimate in Canada is that lines of communication in the labour movement between regions are minimal. What they know, they're reading off the front pages of newspapers. It's been too early for very much human communication. Eventually the OBU supporters are going to send people east, but it's going to take a while. In that April-May period leading up to the General Strike in Toronto, I'm not sure that the Western Labour Conference had made much of an impact. I don't say that definitively, but that's my general impression.

In Toronto they weren't successful in holding it off. As you said earlier, there was a two to one vote in favour. What they had done is parked their concerns amongst all those non-voting ones. I think they still saw it as a fluid situation.

Q: What was the power of this convention?

CH: That's an interesting question. It's the Trades and Labour Council that calls to have the convention, and the president of the Trades and Labour Council presides over it. It's out of that convention that they choose the committee of 15 to run the strike. It's as if they're on the spur of the moment inventing new institutions in the labour movement that will deal with this unusual situation. It's not the One Big Union, because it hasn't been created as an alternative. It's an extension of. . . From the descriptions of the debate that went on, I don't know why they went

that route instead of just coming back to a TLC meeting. But they didn't; they decided to have this special thing. It may in fact have been the labour movement leadership that was most cautious about it, thinking, this will scare off more people. That's speculation. I don't know.

Q: It may have been a delay tactic, too.

CH: Oh definitely. Once the mayor gets involved, they're raising that argument repeatedly, saying we have to hold off. There's still possibility here; the metal trades are going to get a deal very soon. So for a whole week they sort of dither. It's kind of lost time. If they'd had more momentum around the first time they raised the issue on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May. . . A week later is when they had their convention and decided not to proceed at that point. If they'd done it then, they might have had more support.

H. J. Heavey, who was secretary of the Trades and Labour Council until the summer, was the driving force behind it, along with a couple of other guys. He's a sleezy bastard. The same thing develops in the fall of 1919 in Hamilton when an equally private deal is worked out. I said there was a labour paper created called *The New Democracy*, which was an OBU paper. When that fails, it's taken over by one of the most conservative members of the local labour scene. He trots around with a letter to the steel company and everyone else saying, wouldn't you like to put in ads to my paper to be able to sustain it? This is safe and sane unionism, etc., etc. He continues on until he denounces the ILP in 1923 and after that he's supporting the Conservative Party. That's the kind of route that some of these guys go on.

Q: How did they organize after the failure of the general strike?

CH: The details of it are not at the forefront of my memory at the moment. But in 1920 they organize an agenda for labour basically. I'm not sure if they take it to the TLC but definitely it's broadcast widely as the new agenda that includes industrial unionism, amalgamation of crafts, and other progressive things. I think there's that emphasis. But increasingly by 1920 what they're doing is fighting defensive battles on every front. The garment workers are hammered; the metal

trades have already been pretty well wiped out. Employers must realize this. Welfare capitalism starts to flow like a torrent at this point. Massey Harris brings in its works council, which has half employee representatives and half employer representatives, and they're allowed to discuss important things like baseball games and health and safety and such. But when they try and talk about the eight-hour day, they're told, no that's not appropriate. But this is seen as an alternative to craft unionism. Massey Harris is the biggest or one of the biggest employers in the city, especially with metalworkers. So there are many fronts on which this is going on. But with the collapse of unionism, that is, facing this kind of resistance from employers combined with, starting at the end of 1920 the collapse of the economy into a serious depression, unions lose members. By 1921 we're into a serious trough of unemployment. Unions are collapsing, the more fragile ones. The meatpacking union is destroyed by 1922. Whatever agenda or whatever vision the radicals might have had in the spring of 1919, it's a chimera by the early '20s.

Q: The ILP doesn't have much impact on politics.

CH: No, it's quite sad that way. However, the other thing to keep in mind is the campaign in that election of October 1919 was exhilarating. There was no question there was a real sense of momentum. Toronto may not have benefitted, but so many industrial centres sent new employees, overturning long-existing politicians and sending real working men who had worked with their hands for their whole lives into the legislature. They thought this was a big deal. The words "new democracy" were being used all over the place, taking the rhetoric of the war and saying, we've got all of this possibility for a new kind of reconstruction after the war, whatever it might be. It was very vague.

Q: That group did push for a variety of things, but had no real strategy to pull it together.

CH: It wasn't a coherent ideology, it didn't have a particularly coherent set of demands. There were a number of things that they put forward, but partly because labourists were a little bit suspicious of the state and didn't want the state to do too much except it should be as democratic

as possible. . . They should help the helpless, like the elderly and the widows and such, but they really thought that well organized working people should be able to negotiate their own future without having to go through the state.

Q: Is there anything else you wanted to talk about?

CH: I don't think so. I hope that you're going to be able to hammer home that this was something going on nationally that had regional variations. That's what I'm struck by so much.

[ END ]