Foreword

About 1974, as one of a series of short historical essays I was writing for publication in The Paris Star, I decided to research and describe the 1949-strike against Paris Penmans Ltd. But when I tried to get information from three employees, I ran up against a stone-wall. The first said flatly, "I don't want to talk about it. If you had any sense, you'd let it alone."

The second said, "You won't get anywhere with that. A couple of years ago a professor from a university tried to get some people to talk who were mixed up in the affair. Nobody would say a word. People want to forget about the fiasco."

The third exclaimed with heat, "For God's sake, Don, lay off that. Don't open that can of worms. You'll only start a big stink. Why cause trouble? I say you should let sleeping dogs lie."

Discouraged by these responses, I dropped the project.

In 1979, again feeling an urge to write about the strike, I decided I might be more successful if I began each interview by emphatically promising not to mention to anybody the names of my informants -- excepting local union-officials. To my surprise and gratification, almost all of the 26 people I approached were friendly and co-operative, and not one expressed opposition to my design. At this point I'd like to thank very much these informants, as well as the people who lent me newspaper clippings.

While at university in 1927, I took two courses that to me were of great interest -- one labor problems in the U.S.A. and England; the other on the effects of the Industrial Revolution upon the English population. As a result, in 1929 when I began to teach history at Paris High School, I hoped that in dealing with economic problems I'd be able to enlarge upon the material contained in the textbooks and supplementary reading-books. But to my surprise and disappointment, I soon learned that although there was considerable information about conditions in factories and mines and the formation of unions in England, there was virtually nothing concerning Canada. Indeed, our working class was virtually ignored. Moreover, when I tried to borrow relevant material from nearby libraries, I discovered that almost nothing was available -- that even eminent Canadian historians ignored the wage-earners and their problems and struggles. As a result, I felt that there was a sort of conspiracy to silence, and that most of the middle class looked upon the workers as being non-citizens existing apart from the nation, like slaves in the American South before the Civil War.

Because of this lack of source material, during my eleven years of teaching Canadian history, I seldom mentioned Canadian workers and their problems, beyond now and then referring to strikes that were then in progress.

It was not until 1976 that I first came across material relating to the history of the Canadian working-class. While doing research for an essay on the early mills and shops of Paris, I chanced upon the reports of the Royal Commissions of 1881 and 1886; and about the same time, blundered upon what to me was a very interesting and informative book -- "The Trade Union Movement" by Chas. Lipton, first published in 1967. These "discoveries" revived my urge to write an essay dealing with the 1949-strike against Penmans Ltd.

Because I'm opposed to exploitation and tend towards identifying with the underdog, I usually sympathize with labor. This feeling was re-inforced in 1950 when we teachers at Paris High School asked humbly for a small increase in pay to offset the effects of inflation. When we were brusquely refused both a raise in pay and the opportunity to negotiate, we threatened to resign and have the Federation pinklist the board. We then had to endure a barrage of verbal abuse including the charge that we were putting a little money before the interests of our pupils -- as though our critics weren't. Incidentally, some of the criticism was delivered by employees of Penmans Ltd.

From my study of past and contemporary events, I long ago formed the opinion that economic exploitation of man by man -- usually for the purpose of creating great disparities in wealth, power and status -- is one of the main causes of human misery, and that when the exploiters are ruthless, it usually creates cruel dictatorships by the rich with accompanying censorship, violence, repression, jail terms, torture, assassinations, massacres and bloody revolts. Today, for example, events in a number of Central and South American countries support this opinion. It's probably significant that, according to a recent report of the UN Economic Council, in this troubled area the very affluent 5% of the population seizes virtually by force 33.4% of the gross product, and leaves the poorest 50% with only 13.4%. This gross disparity appears to be the main cause of wide-spread suffering and political violence.

To me, heartless exploitation of man by man is a cardinal sin.

"Woe unto you who build your palaces with the sweat of others! Each stone, each brick of which it is built is a sin."

Book of Enoch (the Bible)

"Money is the root of all evil."

1 Timothy Vl (the Bible)

"Pride, envy, avarice -- these are the sparks that set on fire the hearts of men."

Dante

"Is the great working-class oppressed? Yes, undoubtedly it is. God has intended the great to be great and the little to be little."

Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887)
American clergyman and writer.

"A Government to perform even a minimum of service to its people must take steps to suppress avarice, to strike down privately built-up schemes of economic exploitation or oppression, to uproot privilege, and to assure justice and economic opportunity for the masses."

Robert H. Jackson (1892-1954)
U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

February, 1980

D A Smith

CHAPTER ONE

ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION IN GREAT BRITAIN, 1770 - 1840

"Wealth in modern societies is distributed according to opportunity; and while opportunity depends partly upon talent and energy, it depends still more upon birth, social position, access to education, and inherited wealth; in other words, upon property."

Richard H. Tawney, English educator and economist.

"What has destroyed every previous civilization has been the tendency to the unequal distribution of wealth and power...."

Henry George (1839 - 1897)
political economist and sociologist.

Probably because I taught high-school history for 23 years, I hold the opinion that even a little knowledge of past attitudes and events enlarges one's understanding of those of today. Accordingly, before dealing with the 1949-strike against Penmans Ltd. in Paris, I'll try to outline very briefly (Chapter 1) the main relationships between employers and employees in Great Britain between 1770 and 1840, and (Chapter 2), in Canada between 1820 and 1948. Anybody not interested in a survey should turn to page 18.

British history is significant because our first provinces were initially British colonies. English common-law was instituted in all but one of these provinces and for years governed the legal dealings between capital and labor. Furthermore, after 1763 the majority of our immigrants came from Great Britain and brought with them their ideas and attitudes.

As a number of historians have stated of the past, and as seems to be clearly evident today, the main cause of civil disorder is class-conflicts over the division of the gross national product. In England, about 1814, the titled aristocracy was seizing the lion's share; according to an estimate made by Patrick Colquhoun, out of a total product valued at 297,000,000 pounds, about 83,000 affluent landowners took as their share 20%, whereas roughly 4,500,000 agricultural laborers received only 25%. As a result of this inequitable distribution, the rich landowners lived in luxuriously-furnished mansions, were waited on hand and foot, and squandered huge sums on an invidious display of their status and opulence. On the other hand, the farm-laborers, who created the wealth, almost starved in dingy hovels.

Nearly all of the aristocrats idled away their time -- were parasites who contributed nothing to the national income. But the laborers toiled from dawn to dusk; and many of them with children were paid only enough to buy bread: they had to "pray" for relief-funds from the parish.

Evidently most of the aristocrats saw nothing wrong with this inequitable division of wealth and the resulting extreme poverty. Edmund Burke (1730 - 1797), a renowned spokesman for the aristocrats, maintained that:

"The whole business of the poor is to administer to the idleness of the rich; and that of the rich, in turn, is to find the best methods of confirming the slavery and increasing the burthens of the poor."

But a growing number of other intellectuals were appalled by the glaring contrast between affluence and penury. For example, Percy Byssche Shelley (1792 - 1821), evidently unable to understand why the laborers accepted their subservience and abject poverty - why they allowed themselves to be ruthlessly exploited wrote:

"Men of England, wherefore plough
For lords who lay you low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear,"

The "best methods" (Burke's words) that the lords used to arrogate to themselves a disproportionate share of the national product were indeed effective. Local magistrates, who were usually wealthy landowners, set wages for the laborers of their parishes. Of course, to get more for their own class, they set them at starvation levels, and in effect forced the lesser taxpayers of the district to subsidize families that couldn't survive on the pittance they received. And in some areas, farm-laborers who deserted their villages in search of higher pay were charged with vagrancy, flogged and sent home. These laborers were close to being serfs.

The powerful aristocrats, since they controlled parliament, could make and enforce the laws that gave them high status and wealth. Most of the "top" members of their class were members of the House of Lords; and although about 160,000 well-to-do property-owners ostensibly had the power to elect the members of the House of Commons, in fact 723 of the most powerful of the land-owners, if they acted together, could choose a majority, and so have almost full control of the making and enforcing of the laws.

In this connection, Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), the famous English poet and novelist wrote:

"Law grinds the poor and rich men make the laws."

Among the laws the parliament passed to make sure that the workers would remain subservient and that the exploiters would continue to receive the lion's share of the national income were the following:

In 1797, the court interpreted the Mutiny Act to mean that if a number of workers secretely met to form union for the purpose of demanding higher wages or resist in efforts to pay them less, and if they required each member of the group to swear that he'd conceal the names of the other participants, everybody present could be charged with the crime of sedition -- the penalty for which varied from a flogging and a term in jail to transportation to Australia. The latter was looked upon as being a terrible punishment, for it involved a hellish six-month's voyage in chains, during which as many as a third died of disease; and then, for those who survived, as many as 15 years of forced labor sometimes with sporadic floggings.

Furthermore, in 1800 parliament passed the Combination Acts. By these (to quote G.D.H. Cole) "any working-man who combined with another to gain an increase in wages and fewer hours, or solicited anybody else to leave work or objected to working with any other workers, for the first offence was sentenced to 90 days in jail with hard labor, and for the second, transportation."

Of course the provisions of the Combination Acts were not enforced against the landowners. They were free to combine for the purpose of setting wages and hours. Adam Smith (1723-1790), a renowned economist who is honored as being the first great British advocate of individualism and free enterprise, wrote:

> "Masters are always and everywhere in a sort of tacit, but constant but uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labor above the actual rate.
>
> "The masters, being fewer in number, can combine much more easily; and the law, besides, authorizes, or at least does not prohibit their combinations, while it prohibits that of the workmen."

Towards the end of the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution rapidly led to the establishment of an ever-increasing number of work-shops, factories and large mines. And during the same period, the agricultural revolution and the enclosure acts forced thousands of farm-laborers off the land. Desperate for bread, many flocked to the towns and cities in search of work. Most of those who found jobs were ruthlessly exploited by their employers. They and children as young as six years of age slaved from 12 to 16 hours a day in dreadful surroundings.

According to John Finnemore in "Social Life in England," after the passing of the Corn Laws (designed primarily to increase the price of grain and thus the incomes of the landowners) the weekly wage of an average farm-laborer was scarcely enough to buy six loaves of bread. Unless his wife and children worked, the family couldn't survive without a subsidy from the parish. The wage of an average industrial worker was equally low, and his wife and children also had to work.

Evidently the vast majority of employers saw nothing wrong with paying starvation wages; for they were quick to embrace the wage-theory of David Ricardo (1772-1823), who in effect argued that workers should be paid only enough to ensure their being able to produce sufficient children to serve the needs of the wealthy landowners and industrialists.

Finally, to maintain their status and wealth, the aristocrats made sure that they controlled the police-force (such as it was), the militia, the regular army, and the law-courts. With these, they could crush rebellions.

According to G.D.H. Cole, between 1790 and 1840, at least 62 dissidents were hanged, 42 killed and hundreds wounded during the breaking up of demonstrations, and other hundreds were arrested and confined in filthy, dank jails or transported overseas.

Included among those who were sentenced to jail were a number of radical writers who supported the workers. They were accused of spreading Jacobin ideas and thus of seditious libel. For the British elites, the Jacobin symbolized the threat of revolution, the confiscation of large estates, division of these among the poor, the driving out or execution of many aristocrats, and the spreading of egalitarian ideas. The Jacobins were the Communists of their day.

After 1824, when the repeal of the Combination Acts allowed the formation of unions, life for the British workers gradually improved, especially when in 1867 a considerable number were granted the right to vote. Partly because of the activities of the unions and partly because of the tremendous increase in the national income, wages increased. But the unions have failed to achieve a more equitable distribution of the total product: according to an article in the Toronto Star (1975) about half of Great Britain's productive wealth in that year was owned by only 5% of the population, and the wealthiest 20% got 43% of the total income; whereas the poorest 20% got only 6.2%. Many people think that as long as such gross inequalities exist there will be bitter class-conflicts.

To conclude this chapter, I'll quote the relevant words of five well-known writers:

> "Power gradually extirpates all humane and gentle virtues."
> "All wealth is power."
>
> Edmund Burke

> "Wealth is power usurped by the few to compel other men to work for their benefit."
>
> Percy Byssche Shelley

> "Of all beasts the man-beast is the worst,
> To others and himself the cruelest foe."
>
> The Rev. Richard Baxter (1775-1840) English divine.

> "Man, biologically considered... is the most formidable of the beasts of prey, and indeed the only one that systematically preys on his own species."
>
> Wm. James (1840 - 1901) psychologist

> "There never existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other."
>
> John C. Calhoun (1782-1850) American statesman defending slavery in the South.

CHAPTER 2

CONFLICTS IN CANADA, 1824 - 1948

Oligarchy: "A government resting on the valuation of property, in which the rich have power and the poor man is deprived of it,"

Plato (427 - 327 B.C.)

"Long ago we stated the reason for labor organizations. We said that union was essential to give the laborers opportunity to deal on an equality with their employers."

United States Supreme Court

In 1824, Upper Canada (Ontario) was a British possession with British customs and laws. The ruling-elite was a wealthy financial and commercial oligarchy (The Family Compact) which, like the British aristocracy, was wealthy and privileged. In general, the factory-owners (the industrial elite) weren't part of the ruling-class. However, since the attitudes of the two groups towards wage-earners were similar, they usually were in agreement regarding the laws that governed the relationship between capital and labor.

The great majority of the bread-winners in 1824 were farmers; wage earners formed a relatively small minority; indeed, as late as 1867 only 13% of the population. Since most of the workers had left Britain because they were dissatisfied with conditions there, many brought with them radical ideas. In particular they agitated for the right to vote so that they could effect the repeal of anti-labor laws such as the Combination Acts. These were repealed in England in 1824 -- a concession that allowed workers to form unions, though their right to strike was severely restricted. But in British North America the acts or their equivalents were in force until 1872.

Another measure that the workers wanted the government to amend was the Master and Servants Act, by which an employee who broke his contract by quitting one job for another could be charged with "deserting employment" -- a criminal offence punishable by a term in jail. To the workers, it seemed unfair that an employer who broke a contract by refusing to pay an employee's wages, was charged only with committing a civil offence, and if the court ruled against him, was required to pay only what he owed.

From about 1824 to 1837, the industrial workers of Upper Canada continually demanded the right to vote. By 1837 they had become so deeply discontented and frustrated that many joined Mackenzie's rebellion for the purpose of establishing a democratic government. The number that rebelled is indicated by the fact that, after the defeat of the uprising, of the 885 men arrested on the charge of treason, 425 had worked in shops or factories. Thus we see that early in our history there were conflicts between employers and workers over political equality, and, of course, wages and hours of work.

After the defeat of the rebellion, the more militant workers began to rely more on direct confrontations with their employers. Since the Combination Acts applied to Ontario, men who formed a union and went on strike ran the risk of being dismissed or arrested and imprisoned. Indeed, legally any organizer who dared to approach a shop or factory for the purpose of persuading workers not to enter could be charged with "watching and besetting," even though this could mean no more than to look at steadily and intently."

Despite these formidable obstacles, between 1825 and 1872, an ever-increasing number of workers were able to combine and make gains. For instance, between 1825 and 1835, the majority of skilled construction-workers, who had previously worked from sun-up to sun-down, won a ten-hour day. Many employers were infuriated by having to yield. At a meeting, they agreed that the Mechanics' Protective Society was "dangerous to the peace and safety of good citizens," and that its activities were "arbitrary and injurious."

In 1845, the printers of the Globe, despite the fierce efforts of George Brown (the owner and editor) to break their strike for higher wages and fewer hours, also won a 10-hour day, and in addition, a weekly wage of $7.00 -- this in the face of being charged with the crime of seditious conspiracy.

Incidentally, although until 1872 Canadian workers who met secretely to form a union could be accused of the crime of seditious conspiracy, employers who secretly met to agree to act together to resist demands for a shorter working-day and higher wages weren't found guilty of breaking the law.

"Conspiracy" is the major crime of secretely agreeing with a group to commit an unlawful or evil act; and "sedition" means the inciting of others to rebel against one's government.

Since in both Great Britain and Canada the employers were in effect the government, they made the laws and punished offenders. Naturally they seldom legislated against themselves for offences against labor.

Some of the arguments used by the employers against higher wages and a shorter work-day are excellent examples of special pleading. For example, in 1872, an Oshawa manufacturer, enraged by a drive for higher wages, stated that "The working-class could do with less pay if they did with less luxuries." Of course this logician declined to set an example.

And a Hamilton employer averred that "Any man who can put money in a savings bank or buy himself a house has too much already," He, too, excepted himself from his pronouncement.

In reply to ideas like these, John Hewitt, a spokesman for labor, asserted that "2% of our population possess half of the wealth" -- thereby implying that there should be a more equitable division of the total income.

The year 1872 is a milestone in the relationship between Canadian labor and capital in the sense that labor began slowly to gain more freedom to organize and strike, and capital turned to using more intimidating methods, including violence in its drive to check the growing power of the workers.

These trends began with the 1872-strike against the Globe. The printers demanded a nine-hour day, overtime pay, and a weekly-wage of $10.00. George Brown countered vigorously. He brought in strike-breakers from outside of Toronto, hired a detective to spy on the union-leaders, persuaded the authorities to arrest and punish some of the strikers for vagrancy or breaking a contract, and finally had 24 arrested and convicted of seditious conspiracy.

At this point, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald made a significant decision. Although only a relatively few workers had the right to vote, in a tight contest there were enough to swing an election. To gain labor's support, Macdonald led in the passing of emancipation legislation, which stated that simply combining to raise wages and reduce the hours of work wasn't a crime. As a result, the 24 Globe workers were released from jail, and the strikers, together with employees in a number of other shops and factories, got the nine-hour day and an increase in wages.

Furthermore, Macdonald extended the right to vote to more workers, thereby increasing their political influence; and he introduced the secret ballot, which prevented an employer's threatening to dismiss employees who didn't vote for the candidate of his choice.

Incidentally, a considerable number of affluent property-owners had as many as five votes each. In some constituencies, they decided the outcome.

Workers now had the legal right to form unions and to strike, but they were still virtually denied the right to picket; for Macdonald's government of 1872 also passed the Criminal Admendment Act, which penalized intimidation during organizational campaigns and strikes. By this act, "watching and besetting" and "coercion" remained as crimes. This law was repealed in 1878, but restored in 1892. While it was in force, some workers who advocated strike-action were charged with trying to coerce employers. But employers who used the threat of dismissal to coerce employees weren't charged.

In 1876, the workers gained another important concession: "deserting employment" was made a civil offence and thus was no longer punishable by a term in jail.

During about 15 years after 1872, the workers strove to persuade the government to forbid the employment in factories of children under the age of 10. Their motives were mixed: some objected on humanitarian grounds, others (perhaps the majority) because they knew that the employment of children condemned many adult workers to unemployment and lowered the general wage level.

"Exploitation" means "the selfish and ruthless use of others for one's own gain." Particularly in the textile and tobacco industries, employers were ruthlessly exploiting children. About 1875, the more greedy began to import pauper-orphans from Great Britain, ostensibly as apprentices, but actually as little slaves.

In 1881 and 1886, moved by many complaints, the federal government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate conditions in factories. Some of the findings were as follows:

"We are sorry to report that in very many instances, having no education whatever, children could not tell their ages, this applies most particularly to those from 12 downwards -- some being found as young as 8 and 9 years....
"The appearance and condition of the children in the latterpart of the day was anything but inviting or desirable. They have to be at the mill or factory at 6:30 a.m., necessitating their being up at 5:30 to 6:00 o'clock....This undeniably is too heavy a strain on children...and is utterly condemned by all except those who are directly benefitted by such labor...
"Children go to work so young, have so little outdoor exercise, and inhale so much dust that weakens them, that you find more old men and women here at 30 than in most places at 50."

The commissioners reported that in a number of mills and factories the work-day was from 14 to 16 hours; that the rooms were gloomy, stuffy and dusty; that there were no fire-escapes; that the toilets were filthy; and that, to prevent both adults and children from "wasting" precious seconds, some mills had no toilets.

They discovered too, that in a number of mills cruel foremen punished children as young as eight years of age for ignoring orders, breaking rules, and spoiling materials. They struck them with hand or stick, and occasionally imprisoned them in a dark dungeon. During the questioning of a witness, the following exchange took place:

Question: "Have you seen little girls whipped?"
Answer: "Yes, sir."
Question: "Why were they whipped?"
Answer: "Because they talked among themselves while at work."

Incidentally, it should be mentioned that a considerable number of heartless parents were just as callous as the employers. Wanting to live in idleness, they sent their children to the factories and mills in ragged clothes and shoeless, confiscated their earnings, and beat them. Indeed, proportionately there were probably as many exploiters among the workers as among the capitalists. The main difference was that the latter had the power, wealth and talents for exploiting on a big scale.

"We are the wisest, strongest race:
Long may our praise be sung--
The only animal alive
That lives upon its young."

Charlotte P.S. Gilman (1860 - 1914) sociologist.

Influenced by the commission-reports, union-agitation, and the criticisms of humanitarian members of the middle-class, in 1886 the Ontario government passed a law forbidding the hiring of boys under the age of 12 and girls under the age of 14. By the same law, the maximum number of hours a day for children was set at ten; and to prevent their being torn and mangled, they were legally forbidden to clean machinery while it was in motion.

Since the penalty for an employers breaking any of these regulations was only a maximum fine of $100., and since only a very few inspectors were appointed to enforce them, violations were commonplace, often with the connivance of middle-class citizens and the indifference of working-class parents.

It's obvious that greedy employers who ruthlessly exploited children would have no compunctions about exploiting adults. The commissioners reported that these capitalists were dismissing, blacklisting and charging with criminal conspiracy workers who tried to organize; and that many also forced job applicants to sign a statement to the effect that if hired they'd have nothing to do with union activities. All possible devices were used to terrorize workers into submission.

In general, such tactics were effective for ensuring that the employers and financiers received the lion's share of the total income. One of the commissioners stated:

> "Statistics seem to denote that an inordinate proportion [of the total product] goes to the capitalists." In 1881, the Ontario Bureau of Industries, reported that in 1880, out of the total industrial output, $59,400,000 went to a few capitalists and only $70,000,000 to thousands of workers. And in 1889 the Hamilton Palladium of Labor estimated that an investment of $1000 in an average industry yielded an annual profit of $386.00 as compared to $425.00 in wages -- "Which", said the Palldium "was robbery and swindling."

In 1880 (as today) a majority of middle-class Canadians were antagonistic towards unions. The owners and editors of the major daily-newspapers, who were particularly hostile, did their best to justify the motives and activities of the employers. If we may judge by the two Paris (Ontario) weeklies, most of the smaller papers echoed the sentiments of the larger ones. For example, in July, 1884, Editor A. A. Allworth, publisher of the (Paris) Brant Review, wrote:

> "It is high time that our working men had a better knowledge of what is in their best interests....There is not the least necessity for a trade-union to regulate the rate of wages of labor....It is alleged...that on the whole they have done great damage to the workingman. The strikes have generally proved to be failures, costing the workers great losses and bringing them on corresponding benefits. The workingman who has joined himself to one of these societies is no longer his own master, but has virtually sold himself as a slave to the Trade Unions. He cannot make his own contracts.
>
> "If the workingmen will study the question of capital and labour, they will see the imprudence of letting any society of men manage for them and attempt to force an artificial value on labour, which, like everything else must be regulated by the law of supply and demand."

Clearly the gist of this editorial can be reduced to one short sentence: "Workingmen! it is foolish to challenge the employers' God-given right to big profits at your expense."

Paradoxically, although Editor Allworth was an ardent supporter of Toryism and laissez faire, he felt a deep sympathy for underdogs -- especially for the "deserving poor" and ruthlessly exploited workers. His editorial of December 11, 1879, illustrates how distressed he was by the workers' lack of self-esteem. Realizing that this self-contempt was caused by their unconsciously accepting middle-class values and attitudes, he deprecated the "pernicious opinion of many of the affluent towards labour," and continued: "So long as honest labour in earning a living is looked upon askance and deemed humilating by a portion of the working-class themselves, darkness will abound."

In the light of these sentiments, it is somewhat ironic that Allworth in his news-columns should now and then have unconsciously demeaned labor. For example, when writing about a group of middle-class people, he would use the word "respectable"; but when referring to labor, the phrase "lower orders" or "lower class" -- for instance:

> "Intense interest is felt in the operation of the Salvation Army... not only by the lower classes, but by the more respectable part of the community...."

It would seem that Allworth shared the attitudes of his class -- looked upon the workers as being inferior beings with regard to intelligence, judgment, manners and morals. As in his 1884 editorial on unions, he talked down to them as though they were children. He implied that they weren't wise enough to know where their true interest lay -- that they needed the benevolent guidance of affluent respectables. Perhaps the workers didn't always know where their true interests lay; but they were astute enough to understand that their advisers had a crystal-clear comprehension of what would increase their own incomes, status and power -- namely, a docile, unorganized work-force that tamely accepted a long working-day and near-starvation wages. The attitudes of Allworth and his class are significant because they are those of a large part of today's middle class.

> "Everywhere a poor man is despised."
>
> Ovid (43 BC - AD 18) Roman poet.

> "Forever must the rich man hate the poor."
>
> William Morris (1834 - 1896) English poet and artist.

By 1885, the number and strength of unions had begun to grow rapidly, and many members were becoming more radical in their political and economic thinking. For example, in 1883 an editorial in the Hamilton Palladium of Labour stated that "We have endeavored to enforce the doctrine that as labour is the source of all wealth, no man is entitled to what he does not earn in the sense of giving positive value for it, and that the plea of acquiring something for nothing by which many speculators, usuers, land grabbers and other classes of idlers live on the labour of other classes is a fraud and a wrong to those by whose toil they subsist."

In 1870, there were 38,898 Canadian mills, shops and factories, and 181,679 industrial workers. The average number of employees in each establishment was only about five, and the average investment, about $1900. In general, the owner of each shop or factory was the manager and the chief salesman. This was the period when individual enterprise really flourished.

Soon after 1870, the concentration of industrial organizations into fewer hands got underway. Wealthy men began to secure financial control over small concerns and to merge them to form large establishments. According to T. W. Acheson, by 1885, 168 industrialists -- who for the most part financed and managed their establishments -- dominated manufacturing in Canada.

Towards the beginning of the 20th century, a new development was set in motion; namely, the intrusion of the rich and politically powerful financial elite into the industrial field, and its formation of big corporations. In 1905, for example, a group of 16 financiers bought control of and combined four cotton mills to form the Dominion Textile Co. As a result of this trend towards concentration, by 1910 fewer than 50 members of the financial elite controlled over one-third of Canada's national wealth.

The formation of monopolistic corporations brought with it the beginning of large-scale absentee-ownership of industry. Before 1900, for the most part, the owners of industries (as mentioned above) were also the managers. Indeed, many of them worked alongside their employees, endured their long work-day, shared some of their opinions about employer - employee relationships, and were interested in their welfare. But the men who controlled the corporations were interested in only one thing -- higher profits. Evidently most of them cared nothing about the welfare of their employees. Their aim was the maximum exploitation of human beings. They were much like the wealthy British land-owners of the 18th and 19th centuries, almost all of whom played no part in production yet received a big share of what was produced. Probably the editor of the Hamilton Palladium would have called the Canadian financiers "heartless parasites."

The formation of corporations, with its resulting concentration of large numbers of workers, led to the growth of bigger, stronger, and more militant and radical unions. Alarmed by this development, the financiers resorted increasingly to the use of dismissals, lockouts, blacklistings, labor spies, detectives, company police, injunctions and immigrant strike-breakers. And being as it were part of the government, they were able to use the police and the army to protect strike-breakers and harass and subdue pickets. Also they depended upon the courts to issue injunctions and to convict labor-leaders and strikers of criminal acts such as sedition. As a result, during the 50 years after 1890, there were many violent strikes and a number of deaths.

In the conflicts, the workers had to fight on the picket-lines; but the financiers, far from the violence, fought through proxies. In general the strikers directed their hatred and aggression against the proxies, not against their real adversaries. In fact, they seldom even knew the names of their absentee employers. Incidentally, those members of the middle-class that were always bitterly hostile towards unions also didn't know (and didn't seem to care) who controlled the strike-bound plant and from behind the scenes directed its campaign. They automatically sided with the company -- which to most of them was just a word.

The following is a very brief outline of some of the more significant conflicts between 1891 and 1947:

1891: When Valleyfield cotton-workers went out on strike, the militia was sent to defeat them. Three strikers were killed.

1892: The law was revived that made it a crime to approach a factory to give information to employees regarding a union. Union organizers who defied the law were charged with "watching and besetting."

1904: Between 1900 and 1914, partly because of inflation, labor's real wages sank and profits soared. An example of the [illegible] in the establishment of Dominion Textile in 1904. Sixteen capitalists jointly put up $1,000,000 and in return received stock valued at $5,000,000, thereby making an immediate profit of 44%. Mr. Justice Turgeon, who in 1936, after violent strikes in the textile mills of Quebec, was commissioned to investigate conditions, revealed that as a result of very low wages and a long working-day, the profits on the original investment had been an average of 93.4%. Evidently the capitalists were increasing their share of the gross national product.

1908: During a coal-handlers strike in Port Arthur, the police shot one striker seven times and another, five. The wounded men were later charged with attempted murder and sentenced to 10 years in a penitentiary.

1914: The workers made an important gain when the Workman's Compensation Act was passed despite the frenzied opposition of a group of free enterprisers. Senator Edwards called the Act "a vicious measure...socialism of the worst kind."

1919: During the Winnipeg General Strike, a peaceful parade of strikers with members of their families and supporters was attacked by RCMP officers and a militia detachment. The attackers, who fired 120 bullets into the ranks of the marchers, killed two and wounded a number. Some were shot while running away. Later 100 were arrested for taking part in a "riot".

1925: When some Cape Breton miners were on strike against the company's decision to lower wages, the company goon-squad charged the pickets with clubs and fire-arms. One worker who, with hands in pockets was walking along with his small son, was killed by a stray bullet.

1931: At Evanston, Saskatchewan, when 500 miners went on strike to win an eight-hour day and a daily wage of $5.40, RCMP police constables armed with machine-guns, rifles, revolvers and steel rods attacked a peaceful parade. They killed three, wounded 12, and arrested 50. Despite this violence, the miners, refusing to be cowed, won a partial victory.

1931: A number of leading labor-organizers were imprisoned in penitentiaries.

1933: To break a strike in Stratford, Premier Mitchell Hepburn of Ontario sent troops with machine-guns and tanks. This force failed to cowe the workers: they made worthwile gains.

1937: The workers of General Motors went on strike to gain union recognition, the 40-hour week, and time-and-a-half for overtime. Premier Hepburn, asserting that this CIO strike was part of a Communist conspiracy to overthrow the social order, sent a contingent of police to crush the pickets. He said that "if necessary we will raise an army too."

The union finally won a 44-hour week, an increase in wages, and union recognition.

1936: The Quebec employees of Dominion Textile Company went on strike to get a shorter work-week and higher wages. At this time they toiled 64 hours a week for very low pay -- as little as $3.50 a week for women. After a violent strike they won a 50-hour week and higher pay.

This was the strike that caused the federal government to commission Justice S.W.A. Turgeon to investigate the reasons for the bitter conflicts and violence in the textile industry. His counsel, E. E. McRuer, after cross-examining some of the company directors and executives, castigated them in his report: "A shameful, sickening story of heartless exploitation and wholesale robbery by men prominent in the public life of Canada. Inordinate, barefaced lying, general fraud, characterized the careers of this gang of high-placed crooks...."

During this period (1891-1936) there were many other strikes. The above are only the outstanding.

From 1939 to 1946, as a war-measure, the Dominion government set wages. The only increases allowed were directly related to the rise in the cost of living. On the other hand, it placed almost no restrictions upon the making of profits. War-orders greatly increased the wealth of millionaires and created a flock of new ones. Consequently, after the Nazis had been defeated, many workers became militant, especially returned soldiers who had risked their lives for low pay while fighting for "freedom and a better world." The discontent of the workers was aggravated between 1946 and 1948 by a 10% rise in the cost of living.

In 1946 the employees of Dominion Textile Company went on strike in Montreal and Valleyfield. Premier Maurice Duplessis, who as usual strongly supported the capitalists, maintained that the revolt was part of a "communist conspiracy." However, despite the violence of his police, the Montreal workers won a victory: they were awarded union recognition, the check-off of union dues, a wage increase varying between seven and eleven cents an hour, overtime pay, and the eight-hour day. But the company refused to make the same concessions to its Valleyfield workers. There the strike continued.

Determined to smash the union, the company, aided by the local Roman Catholic clergy, recruited a force of strike-breakers and company goons, and Premier Duplessis contributed a large contingent of police. This "army" by charging the picket line was able to open a way into the mill for 300 scabs. But when at noon this force tried to escort the scabs out for lunch, a fierce battle began. The police fired barrages of tear-gas bombs; the workers counter-attacked with volleys of stones, chunks of pavement, and police gas-bombs that were late in exploding. Overwhelmed by the bombardment, the police sought refuge in a nearby building, against which the bombardment continued -- until late in the afternoon they had to show a white flag and sue for an armistice. The workers had

won a victory.

Duplessis then ordered the arrest of the union organizer, Kent Rowley, on charge of incitement to riot. He was convicted and sentenced to six months in jail. Madeleine Parent then became the leader. Finally, after many confrontations, the company gave in and agreed to concessions similar to those made to the Montreal workers.

In 1947, the employees of the Lachute woolen-mills striked for higher wages and better working conditions. Here, as in Valleyfield, the company planned to crush the rebellion by importing strike breakers and calling for provincial police to smash a way through the picket lines. These policemen, dressed in civilian clothes and followed by the strike breakers, charged a line of about 50 pickets, beat many with clubs, arrested 40, and forced an entry. Then Premier Duplessis, to disorganize the union by removing its main leader, ordered the arrest of Madeleine Parent. After five months of conflict, the strike was broken.

On the other hand, in Windsor, Thorold, Stormond, Collingwood and Cornwall, despite the attempts of provincial policemen to herd strike-breakers through the picket-lines, the workers were victorious and made worth-while gains. Especially they won the sympathy and support of part of the middle class and a few government officials. For example, the mayors of Cornwall and Thorold protested against the tactics of the police; and David Croll, the Ontario minister of welfare, when speaking of the Cornwall strike, said that the treatment of the workers was marked by "brutal underpayment and shameless exploitation".

For the most part, during this period the workers of Ontario and Quebec made small financial gains. Between 1945 and 1948, the average hourly wage rose from 64.4¢ to 91.3¢ -- an increase that was partly offset by the decline in the dollar-index from 172.41 to 133.16. And during the same period, the number of work hours a week fell from an average of 44.3 to an average of 42.2.

In general, the wage earners of 1948 especially those belonging to large unions were much better off than those of 1867. The Combination Acts had been repealed, "deserting employment" had been made a civil offence, universal and free education had been established, a compensation act put into effect, the right to vote conceded, a number of social-security measures instituted, holidays with pay granted, and job security improved.

Between 1939 and 1945, some of the obstacles to forming a union and to negotiating were removed. For example, during the Second World War, to compensate labor for the tying of wage increases to the rise in prices, the Dominion government made it "unlawful for employers to seek by overt acts of intimidation, threats or conspiracy to prevent workers from belonging to unions." And by Order-in Council PC 1003, if a majority of workers in a plant voted to form and join a bona-fide union, that union was to have sole bargaining rights for the whole group. In addition, company unions were made illegal.

In 1945, Chief Justice I. C. Rand, in arbitrating a strike at the Ford plant in Windsor, enunciated The Rand Formula, which laid down guide-lines for the forming of unions, negotiating, and going on strike. The main details that were particularly favorable to labor were:

- If a majority of employees in a plant voted to join a bona-fide union, that union should be certified by the Ontario Labour Relations Board and given exclusive bargaining rights;
- Dissident workers could decide not to join the union, but they must pay union-dues;
- A strike would be legal if, as a result of a vote conducted by the Labour Board, a majority of the workers in an industry favored a walk-out.

Except for a feeling among labor leaders that the weeks required for taking a vote, being certified, and being legally able to go on strike, gave employers plenty of time to stock-pile their product and create doubts, fears and dissensions among their employees, the unionists were in general pleased with the gains they had made.

The workers won most of these concessions by agitating for them. However, the gains didn't come wholly from their own efforts: the agitators were helped by empathetic members of the middle class (many of whom were intellectuals) and by competition among the political parties for labor support -- the price being further concessions.

But despite labor's winning the right to vote and hold public office, the levers of power remained almost wholly in the hands of the elites. In 1948, as today, very few bona-fide workers were members of the legislatures, and almost none were judges.

In 1881, Lord Acton, a British historian and philosopher, declared:

> "We are forced in equity to share the government with the working-class. If there is a free contract, in open market, between capital and labor, it cannot be right that one of the contracting parties should have the making of laws, the management of the conditions, the keeping of the peace, the administration of justice, the distribution of taxes, and their expenditure, in its own hands exclusively. It is unjust that all of these securities, all these advantages, should be on the same side."

"In 1975, the Canadian labour force averaged 10,060,000, or 61% of the total population 15 years of age and over....Membership in labour organizations....totalled 2,875,464." (Canada Handbook)

In general, the big unions, especially those composed mostly of men, made the biggest gains in relation to wages, hours and security. When they go on strike, their picket lines are small and seldom harassed by the police. But small unions, and groups or workers that strike to win recognition, especially those made up mostly of women, are sometimes harassed.

In a number of ways the workers are still regarded by a large part of the middle class as being something like second-class citizens. For example:

- they are expected to suffer much more during a depression from unemployment; and when unable to find work through no fault of their own, are charged with being lazy free loaders;
- when they strike to get higher wages, they are accused of being greedy, of being the main cause of inflation, and of "holding up the public to ransom";
- they often can't get higher wages to offset inflation without enduring the strains, tensions and loss of income caused by going on strike. On the other hand, most industries can arbitrarily raise their prices;
- they have no effective means for presenting their point of view to the general public. It's perhaps significant that even though only 10% of Canadians are stock-holders, the media regularly gives information regarding markets and financial trends. And they quote agricultural prices and present talks and discussion on matters of interest to farmers. But they virtually ignore labor and give it little opportunity to present its point of views. And the media is usually hostile in the sense that they present the middle-class attitude towards issues, take the side of the employers during strikes, and blame labor for beginning the conflict and for most of the violence.
- despite the fact that labor makes up 61% of Canadians over 15 years of age, it has, in comparision to the middle class and especially the elites, very little political power, and so can't effect changes in what to it are "unjust" laws.

Why hasn't labor realized its potential political-power? Some observers think that most workers have been so effectively brain-washed by the educational system and the media that they can't see where their interests lie. Others think that psychological reasons, such as voting as their parents voted and unconsciously following the lead of their "betters", are the deciding factor. And many workers believe that as long as a small elite own and control most of the banks and industries, little can be won by political action -- and much more by direct action such as strikes.

As has been already stated, the principal aim of labor has been to bring about a more equitable distribution of the gross national product. In this it has failed; for although most workers today are financially better off than those of 1900, their share of the total income is declining. According to Leo A. Johnson, "In the 1958-1968 period, the bottom ten percent of income earners suffered a loss of purchasing power of 35.6 percent, while the second decile [next ten percent] lost 6.6 percent. On the other hand, the top decile of income earners greatly increased their purchasing power...the top decile received in addition to a 51.4 percent increase in purchasing power, 72% of all capital gains from the appreciation of share capital."

The drive of both labor and the middle class is to get a bigger share of the gross national product has in the past, and will in the future, lead to industrial conflicts. As we shall see, it was the main cause of the 1949-strike against Penmans Ltd. of Paris.

"The propertyless of antiquity and the Middle Ages protested against monopolies, pre-emption, forestalling, and the withholding of goods from the market in order to raise prices. Today the central issue is the determination of the price of labor."

Max Weber (1869-1920)

"The prestige carried by people in modern industrial society varies in inverse proportion to their closeness to actual production."

E. D. Schmacher in "Small is Beautiful"

"What they [the middle class] inveigh against most often is overt attacks on property or against the 'good order of society'. They rarely see violence in defence of the status quo in the same light as violence directed against it."

Newton Garver

"We feel that only they are violent. We insist, often with anger, that they be kept in their place and that they are the cause of all the trouble... We are unable to look at ourselves in the mirror and see ourselves as we really are."

Thomas Rose

CHAPTER 3

PENMANS, 1865 - 1949

About 1860, Daniel Penman moved his family from New York City to Woodstock, Ontario. There he established a small textile mill. It proved to be so profitable that about three years later he was able to set up a second -- a small one containing three cards, one jack for spinning, and two knitting heads; and he made John, his son, the manager.

By 1868 business was improving so rapidly that more water power was needed, so the Penmans moved to Paris and established a mill on the Ninth River. This mill was also a big success.

In 1881, when Daniel died, John took over the sole management of the concern. Then, in 1883, after reorganizing it, he renamed it The Penman Manufacturing Company. A short time later he began to buy small shops and mills on the Grand River, together with their water rights. By 1892 he had combined these into two large mills. The following are the main steps in the further expansion of the company:

1893 - Textile mills in Thorland, Coaticook and Port Dover were bought;
1897 - The Watson mill of St. Catharines was taken over, the operations moved to Paris, and then to Brantford;
1903 - A St. Hyacinth plant was added;
1906 - The company was incorporated under the name of Penmans Limited with an issued capital of $3,000,000;
1906 - After 38 years as the chief executive, John Penman retired;
1907 - 1949 - Additional plants were established or bought in Ayr, Drumbo, Ingersoll, Parkhill, Hamilton, Strathroy, Thorland, St. Hughes and Dixville. By 1949, the total number of employees was about 2700, 650 of whom lived in the three Paris mills.
1965 - The company, together with all its assets, was sold to Dominion Textile Co. Ltd.

A pamphlet issued by the company about 1949 reads as follows:

"Long experience in the textile industry, and with the company, is characteristic of the executives and directors of the firm. The President is Arch F. Baillie, with B. K. Gunn as General Manager and L. P. Roberton, Secretary-Treasurer. Board of Directors: Arch F. Baillie, J. P. Black, G. Blair Gordon, G. W. Grier, J. H. Laing, Hon, George B. Foster, Q. C., C. B. Robinson and B. K. Gunn. "

Author's note: The above sketch is mainly a compilation of details contained in three advertising pamphlets issued by the company. Since these are undated and contain minor differences, my version may not be wholly accurate.

REASONS FOR STRIKING AGAINST PENMANS LTD. OF PARIS IN 1949

"Let all the learn'd say what they can
'Tis ready money makes the man."

Wm. Somerville

"Those who know the normal life of the poor...will realize well enough that without economic security, liberty is not worth having."

Harold Laski

In researching the strike against Penmans Ltd., I interviewed 21 past or present employees of the company who were directly involved, and also a number of townspeople who were not. Since all of these have a well-deserved reputation for being sincere, trustworthy and truthful, we may assume that they relate the "truth" as they remember it, and that most of the discrepancies and contradictions arise from their seeing events from different points of view such as not working in the same mills and being a striker or a non-striker. Wherever possible, I'll quote what was said without comment and leave the reader to draw his own conclusions.

In 1948, the average hourly-wage of all Canadian workers was 91.3¢ and the average number of hours worked a week, 42.2. The average annual income was about $2,000.

In 1951, 9% of Canadian workers were paid less than $1,000 a year; 33% between $1,000 and $1,999; 40% between $2,000 and $2,999; 12% between $3,000 and $3,900; and 6% $4,000 or more. This indicates that the average annual income of Penmans employees was on the borderline between the lower 42% and the higher 58%; for according to Lloyd Adrian, Secretary-Treasurer of the CTWU, the average wage of Penmans worker in 1948 was 82.2¢ an hour, or about $1,800 a year.

Today (1980) because of rapid inflation, it is useless to try to indicate the average wage of Penmans Ltd. workers of 1949 in terms of today's devalued currency. However, one can suggest it by making a comparison between their incomes and those of the Paris High School teachers of 1949. In that year, theirs (excluding the principal and the vice-principal) averaged $2,430. A one-time fixer in Penmans recently estimated that his income at that time was about $3,400. He was among the highest paid employees.

Incidentally, it should be added that since in 1949 none of the wives of married teachers worked outside the home and a large number of the wives of Penmans workers did, the family income of many workers was considerably higher than that of teachers. For example, in 1948, a husband and wife asked the high school principal to recommend their 15 year old son for a work permit "because of financial need". The total family income, they stated on the application form was only $4,700 -- husband, $2,100; wife, $1,500; a daughter aged 17, $1,100. At this time the salary of the high school principal was $3,500. Probably the family incomes of many working families were higher than those of most of the minor Penmans executives, whose wives, according to the custom of the time, were discouraged from working outside the home.

As a non-striker said, "With a man and woman working, and perhaps also two or three children, they were able to make it very nicely."

A non-striker: "A number of Penmans employees who went overseas during the war came back with new ideas about forming a union. They were in a fighting mood. They wanted higher wages and more security, and they were in the mood to fight for them. When they heard about the big gains the textile-workers made in Quebec -- at Montreal and Valleyfield -- they became more discontented. They influenced a lot of other workers.

"At first those who wanted to form a union were afraid to organize in the open. They were scared of being fired. So the leaders went to homes at night and tried to get support. Also they got in touch with the organizers of the Quebec strikes."

A striker: "In 1948, I made $25. a week in the boarding room on piece work. A lot of day workers didn't get even $25. a week. They were getting about $18. That's why we went out on strike."

A non-striker: "About 1947, I was paid about $1.45 an hour as a fixer. I was paid more than the average. But I felt a lot of others should get more. That's why I joined the union. But later I left it because of poor leadership.

A striker: "When I went to Penmans in 1934, I was paid $16.00 a week for turning socks. About 1946, I was paid nearly $50.00 a week on piece work. I wasn't dissatisfied with the pay. What I objected to was that the company killed incentive in piece work. If you worked harder to make more money, they thought you were making too much and cut the rate. I wanted security and better working conditions."

A striker: "I don't remember what I was paid when the strike came along, but I do remember that when I started in 1941 as a girl of 16 I was paid 18¢ an hour. I didn't go on strike to get higher pay. I just lived from day to day, and I still do, I think. I went on strike because all my friends were going out and all my family were union people. I didn't have sense enough to know what it was all about. Yes, maybe I went out because my father was always strong for unions."

A striker: "I went on strike mostly for more pay and a shorter working day. We weren't being paid as much as workers in other factories. I thought the hours were much too long. I remember how tired my mother was back about 1913 after she worked ten hours a day and then had to come home and get dinner. She made only $7.00 a week, but of course that would buy more than today."

A striker: "I went out because I wanted things better for my children.... I joined the union because I wanted more money. Everybody does. And everybody wants things better than when they were children."

A striker: "The chief reason we went on strike was that we thought we could get better wages."

A striker: "Why did I go out? Well, it was mostly to get higher pay. But, also I felt helpless because for no real reason I could be given lower paying work and even fired. I wanted a union to stand up for me."

A non-striker: "I got along all right at Penmans. All you had to do was do as you were told. The boss was the boss. If he wanted you to do something, you did it. You didn't give him any back talk.
"But if you asked for a raise, you could get into trouble. I remember going and asking my boss for more money because I thought I was worth more In refusing, he said while looking out onto the street, 'I can whistle and get half a dozen fellows to take your place without any trouble at all. They'd be glad to have it.' I didn't get the raise and he was mad at me. That's when I wished we had a union to help. I really don't know why I didn't join. Scared of losing my job, I guess."

A striker: "I didn't feel that the bosses pushed us around. But I wanted more pay and more security.

A non-striker: "Management behaved in a very arbitrary fashion. If you said anything against the company, somebody was always ready to report you to the hierarchy and you were bawled out. I remember that when one of us was called down, the superintendent said, 'If I was doing my duty, I'd fire you.'
"One manager was particularly rude and vindictive. He would allow you to say not a word for yourself except in answering a question. If you tried to say something, he would butt in and cut you off and bawl you out. I sympathized with the union, but I didn't go on strike."
"I must say though that two other superintendents, though they'd fight you, were fair. If the first fellow fought with you, your days were numbered. He'd find an excuse to get rid of you.
"The foremen had no freedom to make even minor decisions. They had to carry out exactly the order of the bosses. If they didn't, they were out. They were foremen in name only. Some of the instructions were not very intellegent.
"Management behaved in a very arbitrary fashion. The workers had no rights whatsoever. That's why we really needed a strong union."

A non-striker: "Management continually held over our heads the threat that if we joined the union the mills in Paris would be closed and the work done in Quebec cheaper. That helped to keep many employees in line. But it made others like me more determined to fight for more security. That's why I joined the union and went on strike."

A non-striker: "There was very little discontent with the company itself, although there was some against one or two managers. They made some of the fellows afraid of being fired. It's not nice to live day after day with that feeling."

A striker: "I struck mostly for higher wages and better working conditions. Some of the machinery wasn't up to par. I worked in the cutting-room where all our machines ran off a big, long shaft. I had mine tied up with pieces of rag to keep the sprocket in the fly-wheel. You couldn't make as much money with a machine like that, and it was all piece-work. When I was given cloth to cut, it was often full of small holes and had other faults. This cut down on what I could make in a day.
"I was also interested in union security. Any time they wanted to they could just come along and tell you you were fired."

A non-striker: "The workers accepted low wages because often three or four in the same house were working and they all couldn't get another job in town, or maybe anywhere else. If you were a man with three or four children you couldn't afford to move somewhere else, and a lot of us owned our own homes. The company encouraged us to buy so we wouldn't want to leave Paris. And as you know, quite a few lived in company houses.
"A lot of fellows and their wives thought half a loaf was better than no loaf at all. Many felt that since they couldn't leave Penmans the best thing they could do was join the union and try to get higher wages."

A striker: "I'll say this in favor of working at Penmans: we weren't continually afraid of being laid off. Work was steady even during the Depression. We were almost sure of having enough to live on. But by 1948 it wasn't enough."

A striker: "I joined the union to get higher pay. Do you know that when we went on strike the textile industries paid less and were making bigger profits than the steel companies? Yet people said we shouldn't have gone on strike."

A striker: "I went on strike because I wanted more money. Who doesn't? I'd say nearly everybody. It's no fun having to live from hand to mouth, never being able to get ahead.
"I wanted union security because I hated being pushed around and having to toady all the time. You know! United we stand, divided we fall. Security, to me, also meant in the long run higher wages and steady employment."

CHAPTER 4

THE FORMATION OF RIVAL UNIONS

"With all of their faults, trade-unions have done more for humanity than any other organization of men that ever existed. They have done more for decency, for honesty, for education, for the betterment of the race, for the development of character in man, than any other association of men."

Clarence S. Darrow (1857-1938) American criminal lawyer.

"Labor unions are the worst thing that ever struck the earth because they take away a man's independence."

Henry Ford (1863-1947) American industrialist.

"Long ago we stated the reason for labor unions. We said that union was essential to give the laborers opportunity to deal on an equality with their employers."

United States Supreme Court.

Evidently the success of the textile workers in Montreal and Valleyfield in forcing concessions from Dominion Textile inspired a considerable number of Penmans workers to want to form a local AFL -- UTWA union, especially since the Quebec strikers had won union recognition, the check off of dues, a reduction in the work week from 60 hours to 44, a pay increase varying between 7¢ and 11¢ an hour, and union security. Evidently, too, when Penmans Ltd. officials became aware of the growing urge to unionize their workers, they encouraged the formation of a company union (the CTWU) and brought subtle pressure on their employees to join it. The following are recollections concerning the formation of the rival union. As a reader will readily observe, the "facts" are often contradictory:

A non-striker: "Soon after the decision was made to try to form an AFL union, the company, in an effort to foil it, sponsored the formation of company union, the Canadian Textile Workers' Union, Paris Division.

Harry Barrie, president of the C.T.W.U. (the company union): "About 1946 two CIO organizers came to Paris and talked about forming a union. Some of the guys at the mill said to me, 'We don't want to belong to that sort of union. It's a Communist outfit." The CIO [Council of Industrial Organization] originally named itself the Communist Industrial Organization. That's where they got the initials.
"When the guys started to talk to me about it, I said, 'There's only one thing to do -- form your own union.' So a few of us got together and they said to me, 'You take it over,' -- and that's just what I did.

"We had no trouble organizing, and we had the full co-operation of the company. We had a no-strike clause in our contract. If we couldn't agree, we would each appoint a representative and we'd have to agree on a neutral chairman, and we'd both accept the findings of that committee as binding on both sides.
"Those who were trying to form an AFL union started to buck us right off the bat. One guy, Charles Alexander, started the movement towards organizing the AFL union and called in the organizers. He started to agitate about 1946, about the time our union was formed. The reason we fought them so hard was that they were Communist controlled."

A non-striker: "Even before there was much talk about forming any kind of union, he [a mill manager] called me into his office and asked me to head an independent union. I refused. I was having nothing to do with a company union."

Lloyd Adrian, secretary-treasurer of the CTWU: "One reason the workers didn't want to join the AFL was that the fees were $2.50 a month and the other was that the majority supported the mill union. We charged only a fee of 25¢ a month, just enough to cover our day-to-day expenses. The officers weren't paid."

A striker: "The CTWU was sure a company union. Management in round-about ways persuaded some of its guys to form it. I think it was partly financed by the company. The idea was to keep out a real union.
"Yes, I remember when two CIO organizers tried to form a union at Penmans. At the time I wasn't much interested. Anyway, I believed it was Communist run -- a Communist union. Hell, was I mad when I found out we had been told a big lie. The "C" never stood for Communist. The CIO was always against Communism. I read that in three or four articles in the Toronto Star.
"I might also say that the CTWU was fooling people when it claimed it got holidays for us with pay. A lot of other companies had done that and the government was for it. The company had to grant them to make us feel we didn't need a union -- a real union. That's why it gave the credit to the CTWU."

Charles Alexander (as quoted by a friend): "The CTWU is nothing but a company union. That's why it can't be certified. It's an illegal union. It's officials are company stooges."

Lloyd Adrian, secretary-treasurer of the CTWU: "The company didn't try to get employees to join our union. It couldn't. It was illegal. I didn't approve of some of the tactics our union used. They were just as dishonest as those used by the AFL. I'll give you an example: When our representative appeared before the Labor Board to apply for certification, he had a lot of cards of Penman employees who according to him had signed to join the CTWU. But a lot of the names were of employees who worked in Penman plants in Ayr, Waterford etc. When the Board discovered this, it threw out our application.

"On the other hand, the AFL included the names of three or four workers who were under 16, and three or four of older women who worked only part-time. There was a lot of dirty work going on."

A striker: "The AFL organizers from Quebec approached us about 1947 and suggested we form a union."

A striker: "Many of us began to think about forming a union and striking two or three years before it happened. We got in touch with the AFL organizers."

A non-striker: "When the AFL got going and trying to get membership, Charlie Alexander was the prime mover in getting a union formed here. "Before the move to organize, Charlie seldom talked about forming a union, at least he didn't in the boarding-room where he and I worked. But, outside the mill, he got together with other fellows and discussed forming a union with them.
"Alexander was a quiet fellow. He wasn't bombastic or anything like that. He was very nice and sociable, very quiet."

A non-striker: "A lot was said against Charlie Alexander while he was working to organize a union and also during the strike. To me he was a good honest fellow. He was accused of being a Communist. Well, I knew from talking to him he wasn't.

A non-striker: "Alexander was a Communist crook."

Lloyd Adrian: "At the start of the strike, some newspaper comments on the subject played up the controversy as a clash between two rival unions, namely the AFL - UTWA and an independent organization called The Canadian Textile Workers Union, Paris Division. The latter had represented the Penmans workers for two years preceding the AFL certification, which came in April, 1948...."

Shortly after 1946, a group of Penmans employees who wanted to form a branch of the AFL - UTWA union and who believed that they could persuade a majority to support them, met with AFL organizers to plan a campaign. The Paris leaders were Charles Alexander, (president) and Helen Murphy (secretary). The main out-of-town organizers were Val Bjarnson, W. E. Stewart, Kent Rowley, Madeleine Parent, and Helen Muller.

The union-organizers approached some employees inside the mills and near the entrance doors, and others - especially those who feared company retaliation in their homes after dark. A non-striker related that "a lot of workers were afraid to join the union and wouldn't even be seen talking to an organizer. However, some did get up enough nerve to allow organizers to visit them at night."

When a small majority of employees had signed cards expressing their desire to form an AFL union, the organizers asked the Ontario Labor Board to conduct an election. As a result, the Board certified the union on April 21, 1948, thereby giving it the sole bargaining rights in the Penmans Ltd. mills. The

union negotiators immediately asked for a pay raise of [illegible], a closed-shop, and the compulsory check-off of dues. The company, negotiating through D.L.W. Jones (its legal representative) refused to accede to any of these demands.

The following is Lloyd Adrian's version of the above events as he recorded in 1949: "Before the Ontario Labour Relations Board, the AFL Textile Union spokesmen contended in February, 1948, that they represented 452 of the 650 Penman workers. The Independent group contested the claim, producing their work contract which had granted increased wages and holidays with pay and extra vacations etc. They also claimed a majority. A supervised vote was ordered.

"Three hundred and twenty nine Penman workers voted for the AFL, 4 more than the required 50% necessary for certification. Between February and April the AFL carried on probably the most extensive and vicious campaign that any town in Canada has experienced. Everybody except the AFL was wrong. No labour leader but the AFL knew anything.....Attacking the local group, the AFL spread disunity. The local leaders were singled out and every abuse that could be dug up was hurled at them. Instead of coming around and seeking co-operation of those who were the workers' representatives, the opposite course was followed....This union could not hope to gain full support of the workers unless some real big gain could be realized. Any gain at all was pretty hard to make. Penman workers had already received just about everything they could get before the AFL took over. The sky was the limit. By setting an unattainable program, this union tried to get the workers to stop chewing each other and start chewing the company. Negotiations continued all summer with the company. Nothing definite was attained. In November, after every avenue had been explored, both sides, company and union, agreed to conciliation."

Before negotiations began, partly to steal the wind out of the sails of the AFL union, Penmans Ltd. made concessions through the CTWU, most of which were in accord with government policy or had been granted by other employers in other towns. The CTWU naturally took credit for the gains. Lloyd Adrian wrote: "Penmans workers in 1948 enjoyed 5 paid statutory holidays, and those with 5 years or more service to their credit or more received two weeks' vacation with pay. In 1947, the latter had been won for them by the Canadian Textile Workers' Union. Early in 1948, the company granted the statutory holidays. Thus it can be seen that Paris Penman workers were on par with any organized labor movement as far as holidays were concerned."

In this connection, Harry Barrie, president of the CTWU, said, "We were responsible for the start of the holidays. The government had already made a ruling regarding them. When I quit Penmans, I had four weeks coming to me."

When all negotiations proved to be futile, the company and the union, as already indicated by Adrian, agreed to submit their dispute to three conciliators. Two of these were appointed by the Labor Board and one by the union. The two board appointees recommended only a five-cent raise in pay, and rejected all of the other demands;the union appointee voted in favor of all the demands. Since the decision of the majority was final, the company had won.

It immediately granted the 5¢ raise, for which the CTWU took the credit.

The AFL union felt that by accepting the award it would gain almost nothing, for it particularly wanted a compulsory check-off of dues and a closed shop -- both of which it believed were absolutely necessary for gaining security and eventually higher wages. In speaking of the conciliation board's decision, a striker said in 1979:

"Two of the conciliators were biased towards Penmans, the other towards us. We felt that we'd been taken. But, what else could you expect? The Tory government was on the side of Big Business. It really appointed the majority of the conciliation members. Think of the deal we'd of got if two of the members had been chosen by unions!"

From Lloyd Adrian's essay: "Negotiations continued all summer with the company. Nothing definite was attained. In November, after every avenue had been explored, both sides, company and union, agreed to conciliation.

"The recommendations did not suit the union, Five cents an hour was to them not sufficient. They wanted a closed shop and a compulsory check-off as well. Their union was woefully weak and they had to have union security. Few if any new members had joined them and only a handful of people were paying dues.

"To strike was the only step left to them. But to start one was difficult....

"The independent labour organization [CTWU] had remained silent on the matter all summer. Once a strike vote had been taken and it became an established fact that only a minority wanted to strike, opposition to the strike was organized. After all, to work is every man's right if he chooses. The AFL were not offering any choice. They turned a deaf ear to the demand for a supervised strike vote with every worker voting. They tried however to bring pressure to bear on the company through the minister of labor. In this they failed.

"They had refused to accept the Conciliation Board's report. The Company had immediately put into operation the recommendations. The Minister could not override his advisers so he stepped aside. The strike followed.

"A strike so built was a house of cards literally....The union is blaming the Ontario Government now for its failure, but we in Paris know different."

CHAPTER 5

THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF PENMANS LTD.

"Popular opinions, on subjects not palpable to the senses, are often true, but seldom or never the whole truth."

John Stuart Mills (1804 - 1873)
English philosopher

"What is done for another is done for oneself."

Paulus Silentiarius (6th century)
Greek poet

The attitude of the majority of Parisians towards Penmans Ltd. seems to have been favorable. One reason for this was the influence of John Penman, which even though he had retired in 1906, still colored the opinion that many people held towards the company.

Although his company had the reputation of paying relatively low wages, Penman, while the chief shareholder and executive, was not looked upon as being a greedy, ruthless exploiter. Rather, his image to most Parisians was that of a generous, benevolent, public-spirited philanthropist who took a kindly interest in his employees and showed a vital concern for the welfare of the town. The following are examples of his generosity:

For years before the passing of social legislation, Penman regularly sent baskets of food to needy families, and he subsidized a number of young students who would otherwise have been unable to attend a college or a university. Furthermore, he contributed large sums of money to civic and religious projects, such as the building of the YMCA, the YWCA, Paris Presbyterian Church and Central School (he paid one-twentieth of the cost of the last-named). At a Board of Trade banquet in his honor, it was truly said of him that "his purse was always open in a most unostentatious way to aid any worthy cause either public or private which stood in need of assistance."

An indication that over the years the majority of workers were in general well-disposed towards the company is the fact that between 1868 and 1948 there had been only one strike: In 1907 almost all of the employees stayed away for two days to persuade the management to close the mills throughout the year at 1 p.m. on Saturday afternoons.

At a mass meeting, after a prolonged discussion between the general manager and the workers' representatives, the request was granted. Since both sides were reasonable and willing to compromise, the strike left no legacy of bitterness.

Another reason for the good reputation that Penmans Ltd. enjoyed in 1949 was that the company gave steady work and paid wages to more than 600 workers, thereby stimulating local business activities. A one-time merchant, in explaining why he had long been favorable towards the company, said:

"They paid low wages, but they paid them steady even through the Depression. There were no real lay-offs as there were in some other places.

As far as business was concerned, Penmans was good for Paris. It helped to keep us all going through the hard times."

A striker supported this view: "During the Depression when I was just a kid out of school -- I guess I was about 15 and a half -- I started to work at Penmans for 17¢ an hour. That sure wasn't much. But, it was a lot better than bumming around the streets eating your heart out for something to do. I handed over all but 50¢ every two weeks to my mother. This helped to pay my way and support the family. I felt good about that. Quite a few kids who quit school got jobs there. Except for the low pay, most of us liked working there. It was steady work. As long as you did your duty, you felt almost sure of having a job. Over in Brantford some plants were closed down during the Depression and the workers were out on the street with nothing to do."

Before 1948, the salaries of Penmans executives and other office workers were regarded as being low, at least when compared with those of large Ontario industries. Two or three of the top executives were thought to be comparatively affluent, but their life-style didn't isolate them from their fellow citizens.

The lesser executives also lived modestly. As a result, they too didn't evoke in most Parisians feelings of envy and hostility. And the effective role they played in the religious and municipal life of Paris further enhanced the "benevolent and public-spirited" image of the company. These managers and executives were indeed an integral part of the town.

Three charges were levelled against Penmans that produced some hostility, but which, though they may be based on facts, are difficult to prove: For many years the company was charged with having made an arrangment with other local mills to the effect that if any of its employees applied for work, they would be sent back to their previous job. This, it was alleged, was to keep wages low. The charge may have been true before 1914, but was doubtful after that.

It was also alleged that to maintain a low level of wages and to keep its work-force, Penmans strongly opposed the establishment of other industires in Paris. A striker said, "Paris could have been a city if it hadn't been for Penmans' strongly opposing the setting up of other local industries. They had members on the council and wouldn't let other companies in here. They were afraid the new companies would pay higher wages, create discontent, and draw away some workers." And another striker and town-councillor said: "I went out because I disapproved of what was going on at the town council, which was secretely trying to work for Penmans."

On the other hand, a long-time employee of Penmans whose attitude towards the company was strongly ambivalent, said: "During my 20 years on the council, I never saw any indication that the Penmans members tried to look after the interests of the company. A lot of people believed that these men worked to keep other industries out of the town. I never saw any evidence of that. The company was textile. It was satisfied."

Finally, Penmans Ltd. was accused of urging some of its executives to become members of the school-board primarily to keep salaries and taxes down. A Penmans employee and board member, whose feelings towards the company also were ambivalent, said he "never heard anything to support this." However, there may have been a modicum of truth in the allegation; for twice Principal C. Ward Butcher, after attending meetings of the finance-committee at which the raising of salaries was discussed, reported to his staff that a company executive had said with heat, "We can't possibly give the teachers a raise, especially the women. Our own office workers would be enraged and discontented." In effect he was saying that they too would want a raise.

It seems that in 1949 a large number of Parisians believed that the employees of Penmans Ltd. were being exploited -- in the sense that they were paid low wages and required to work nine hours a day so (it was alleged) the stockholders could receive high dividends. But, evidently few Parisians believed that the exploitation was ruthless -- in the sense that the directors, to maximize profits, cruelly and relentlessly disregarded the basic rights and welfare of their workers, as before 1946 was done in most of the textile mills of Quebec. Indeed, compared to conditions there, conditions in Paris were almost utopian.

"The only way to compel men to speak good of you is to do it."

Voltaire (1694-1778)
French philosopher and dramatist.

CHAPTER 6

THE COMMUNIST ISSUE

"Bolshevism is knocking at our gates. We can't afford to let it in. We have got to organize ourselves together....We must keep the worker away from red literature and red ruses..."

Al Capone (1899-1947)
notorious American gangster.

"Socialists, Communists and Nihilists...strive to uproot the foundations of civilized society... These monstrous views, these venemous teachings."

"A small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses a yoke little better than slavery itself."

Leo XIII. (1810-1903) Pope

"We did not come to the working class from Communism. We came to Communism from the working class.... We became Communists because we participated in strikes."

Tim Buck (from a speech of 1931)
A prominent Canadian Communist

Between approximately 1946 and 1955, the economic elites of Canada and the United States nourished a burning fear and hatred of Communism, or any other ideas and political movements that were even faintly socialistic. This was partly due to the domination by the USSR of Eastern Germany, Poland, Czechsovakia, Rumania, Hungary, and the Baltic States, and to the abolition in these countries of capitalism -- which meant in effect the confiscation of the productive property of the rich industrialists and landowners, with the result that they lost their wealth, status and political power, and were killed or forced into exile.

However, it's doubtful whether events in Europe were the main cause of the elites' fear and bitter hostility, and doubtful too that they really feared a revolution in staid middle-class Canada -- at least in the foreseeable future. What they seemed to fear most was that the Communist labor organizers would make the workers more class-conscious and militant, thereby inspiring them to be more aggressive in demanding a larger share of the gross national product.

The rich probably had good reason for fearing the Communist labor-leaders, together with other leaders who were influenced by Marxian ideas and methods. At this time Communists and their sympathizers were, in general, the most aggressive, dedicated and self-sacrificing of the labor organizers, and probably the most effective. They were ready to face poverty, to risk having their heads broken on the picket line, and to endure months in jail. Particularly in Quebec their leadership was an important factor in the significant gains made by labor.

Another reason for hostility was that the elites, in common with many other groups, believed that most Communists were traitors if there was evidence that they felt more loyalty towards the USSR than towards Canada. For example, Fred Rose, an avowed Communist, was convicted of spying for the Soviets. There was also evidence to indicate that some Communist labor-organizers were given to subordinating the immediate interests of the workers to intensifying the conflicts between capital and labor in the hope that this would eventually lead to open rebellion.

Naturally the capitalists, through their newspapers, magazines and radio-stations, directed a barrage of propaganda against the Communists -- sought to build up in the public mind feelings of suspicion, fear and hatred, partly by linking the word "Communist" with subversion, treason, violence, atrocities, duplicity and aetheism.

In general, the campaign was successful. A large number of middle class people, the moment they were told that a striking-union was Communist dominated, became hostile and applauded the use of violence against it. As a result, Communist lost much of their effectiveness as organizers and leaders: indeed, finally most unions barred them from holding office.

Since all of the non-Paris organizers of the strike were charged with being Communists or Communist sympathizers, the Canadian Textile Workers Union, urged on (it is alleged) by the officials of Penmans Ltd., made continual use of this allegation to discredit the strikers.

Harry Barrie, president of the CTWU, said in 1979: "One reason we fought them so hard was that they were Communist controlled." And Lloyd Adrian, in his essay of 1949, wrote: "These people [the AFL organizers] are radical in their actions....Organized labor everywhere should be wary of anyone who looks even subversive. The strike in Paris proves that the time is ripe when everyone must become better informed in their views than ever before or the radical element will win a smashing victory right here in Canada.

"The object of this memorandum is to acquaint...people everywhere with the true facts of our town's crucifixion. I use this term because to gain, if possible, their ends these radicals will try every trick in the bag....

"Organized labour must choose responsible leaders who are willing to be labour's servants and not labour's masters."

The following are other statements made by Parisians about "Communist" strikers:

A non-striker: "My father went to work every day. He thought the strikers were a dirty bunch of Communists and bums. I shared his feelings."

A merchant: "Nobody I talked to believed that any of the Paris leaders were Communists, though they thought the outside organizers were. But, most people didn't care two cents. At that time The Paris Star and The Expositor didn't even mention the Communists. It was the Toronto papers that made all the fuss."

Author's note: As part of my research into the strike against Penmans Ltd., I read on microfilm the files of the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, and the Toronto Telegram. In none of these did I see even a suggestion that the organizers were Communists.

A striker: "Everybody said Bjarnason and the other outside organizers were Communists. I didn't think too much about that. To me they seemed to be honest in what they were trying to do."

A striker: "I couldn't see anything wrong with Bjarnason, Parent and Stewart. To me, they were OK. At that time anybody that wasn't up to par was called a Communist. I don't think they were Communists. Certainly I never heard them say anything about it, and I worked a lot with them. I think they were just working for working-class people. They deserved more pay than what they were getting."

A non-striker: "With regard as to whether the charge made against some of the outside organizers that they were Communists, I don't think it was an important cause of people leaving the union. It was poor leadership that caused them to leave. The charge didn't bother those who at first were members of the union. I know it didn't influence me or my friends. As far as most of us were concerned, it amounted to nothing."

The Financial Post is an outstanding organ of the Canadian capitalists. On February 19, 1949, it published an article by Ronald Williams that delighted those Parisians who were strongly opposed to the AFL. Disregarding the basic causes of discontent, Williams wrote, in effect, that the strikers were the stupid dupes of Communists -- that the outside organizers were wholly responsible for the conflict. The following are relevant quotations:

"Communists call strikes 'working class training manoeuvres for greater battles to come.'

"The small Ontario town of Paris stood this week as a tragic illustration of what the Reds and their 'class struggle' theory can mean.

"In little more than a month, a Communist-inspired and conducted strike at the Paris textile mills of Penmans Ltd. has torn the heart out of this once peaceful, friendly community of 5,000.

"Nothing like it has ever happened since it was incorporated 99 years ago. Today Paris is a town divided....

"Yet the decision to strike was made by only 27 people....Since then a mob has marched on the mayor's house. He is now in hospital suffering a nervous breakdown.

"There have been a dozen picket-line skirmishes between strikers and nonstrikers and Provincial police.

"Twenty-five persons have been arrested for intimidation, assault and threatening. All but one are strikers. Four non-strikers, two strikers have been injured.

"A woman nonstriker has died of a heart-attack, hastened, it is claimed, by the manhandling she received when going through a picketline

at the beginning of the strike.

"This was before the Provincial police were called in to restore order. Yet the Communist press is screaming that what violence there has been was provoked by the arrival of the Provincials.

"Families have been torn apart, long standing friendships destroyed: business interrupted. Men and women who used to greet each other with a cheerful 'hello' now snarl 'scab!'

"Fathers have been set against children, mothers against daughters; even children against children....

"Strikers claim they have been beaten by police. One woman said she was 'kneed' and slapped. Another claimed she was run down by a non-striker's car. These things got in the newspapers. But so far there's been nothing about the wholesale intimidation of nonstrikers.

"The police have seen a dozen threatening letters. Some are couched in the vilest language. One threatened to criminally attack a 16 year old girl (who has nothing to do with the strike) if her mother didn't stop working. A father and son were ambushed one night going home from work. They haven't shown up since...

"In less than 40 days three union organizers, [Val Bjarnason, Wm. Stewart and Kent Rowley], two of them known to be Communists, a man and a woman, have done this to Paris. Their union is the Red-run AFL Textile Workers, recognized even in labor circles as the worst Communist-controlled AFL union in Canada.

"In slightly more than a month, the strike they staged has torn down much of the warm small-town community spirit and friendliness it had taken Paris nearly 100 years to build....

"While I was talking to a group of pickets, most of them young girls of 18-26, a bespectacled young nonstriker walked by and entered. Never have I heard such foul profanity, even from men....

"Kindly old Tom Bean who has been chief of police for 22 years will never forget those first two days when he had to maintain law and order.

"Strikers, augmented by supporters from Brantford, surged around the gates of the two mills. Chief Bean saw strike leaders deliberately seek out older men and women and rough them up. Hemmed in by screeching, shouting men and women, most of them young, he was powerless....

"At the entrance to the main mill on the bank of the Grand River, which splits the town in two, strikers tried running full-tilt into the workers as they crossed a narrow causeway, trying to knock them into the mill-race below.

"Some used dirty gang-fighting tricks. A favorite for a woman was to stamp her foot on a policeman's or nonstriker's instep...two provincials were jabbed with hatpins....That night (at the end of the second day) Tom

> Bean decided things had got out of hand. He asked Mayor William England to call in the Provincials....
>
> "How did the strike start? It had its beginnings in Montreal. The union leaders decided to turn the heat on organizing Western Ontario textile mills...,
>
> "That's how things stood at midweek...Paris is shaping up like another Lachute and Valleyfield or any one of a dozen other violence-ridden strikes called by Communist-run unions since the Soviet resumed its prewar line of the class struggle."

In some other parts of his article, (not quoted above), Williams asserts or suggests that the strike against Penmans Ltd. was "Red Run" -- that Communist organizers came to Paris for the sole purpose of stirring up discontent, hatred and violence. Yet in describing the background of each of the "conspirators," he directly charges only Kent Rowley with being a Communist. The others -- Val Bjarnason, Wm. Stewart, Madeleine Parent, and Helen Muller -- he tars only with the brush of innuendo.

The facts probably are that although all of the organizers, as part of their work, associated with Communist labor-leaders and Communist organizations, only Wm. Stewart was a party-member.

With regard to William's charge against Rowley: On June 7, 1980, Wilfred List of the Globe and Mail reviewed a recent book by Rick Salutin that describes Rowley's career as an organizer. The following is an excerpt:

> "Rowley has been described as a Communist by his foes within and without the union movement. Salutin writes that Rowley was never a member of the party. Although he was closely associated with the Communist leadership of other unions, he was also critical of them for their refusal to abandon the mainstream of the labor movement in Canada."

Inspired perhaps by Williams' article, a small group of Parisians decided to form an anti-Communist league. Since all but three of the main founders are dead and the survivors can recall no details, it is impossible to describe fully the activities that went on behind the scenes. However, from bits of information given by people I interviewed and reports printed in The Paris Star, and from what I recall hearing at Paris High School in 1949, I think I can sketch a reasonably accurate account of the main events:

It appears that the impetus for organizing the Citizens' League was given by the owner of a small local factory and his right-hand man, and that among the other main organizers were two middle-management employees of other local industries, a physician, a merchant and a civil servant.

Late in February an organizational meeting was held in the YWCA. A non-striking Penmans employee, because he was highly respected by his fellow workers, was asked to attend. The following are his impressions:

"The Citizens' League was absolute bunk. I was asked to attend a meeting at the YWCA and the topic of conversation was the Communists. The chief organizer, while jumping and ranting about, said over and over again, 'Those strikers are a bunch of Commies that's all they are. We've got to stop them in their tracks'. He shouldn't have been interfering, but he was the man behind the curtain."

On March 3, 1949, the Paris Board of Trade formally sponsored the Paris Citizens' League. In an advertisement, the organizers maintained that their only aim was to fight and destroy Communism: "Let us make this point clear, the League is NOT a strike-breaking organization...it's SOLE purpose is to make sure that law and order are kept, so that no citizen need fear to either go to work or go to a show, or to go shopping etc., as some are afraid now to do."

On March 10, the Chairman of the Civic Committee presented a constitution for discussion. The first two of ten clauses are as follows:

"The purpose of the Paris Citizens' League is:

"To defeat Communism and other subversive activities, thereby assuring all God-fearing and right-thinking citizens the right to go about their normal affairs without hindrance and intimidation by those who would destroy the dignity and free will of the individual. (Note: in considering subversive activities and societies the outward manifestations of their policies must be considered as well as any declarations of their aims or constitution)....

2. "To encourage and assist the young people in a better knowledge and practical understanding of the fundamental principles that have made our Country, our Empire and our Democracy great and lasting as opposed to the easy something-for-nothing doctrines of unsound and therefore temporary forms of government."

"The meeting also approved the conditions of membership...after considerable discussion. They are as follows:

"I declare that (1) I am loyal to the King and against any form of government that is contrary to our Democracy. (2) I endorse the Town Officials recent action in calling in the Provincial Police....(3) I am against any organization, be it government, civic or labor that is controlled or under the influence of Communistic or subversive leaders.
"Anything I may do or say contrary to the foregoing automatically terminates my membership."

According to the League officials, about 1200 citizens signed its application form. Many are said to have joined because they feared that if they didn't they'd be accused of siding with the strikers and their leaders. It is perhaps significant that no strikers signed a form.

The main activity of the League was the broadcasting of weekly anti-Communist speecnes over CKPC Brantford, and bringing to town professional anti-Reds to speak to service-club members and school children.

Evidently not all local merchants approved of the League. One recalls that "The majority of us didn't take the Citizens' League seriously. We believed its purpose was to smear the strikers. I seldom heard anybody along Main street mention Communist influence."

Another merchant recalls that "Most of the people I knew thought the Citizens' League was a joke and that Communism was a red-herring, if you'll pardon the pun. They laughed when he [the chief organizer] swore up and down that its purpose was not to help in breaking the strike. I'll tell you something else: Doesn't it seem odd that most of the leaders were connected with local factories? I thought, and so did a lot of people I know, that they were more interested in keeping wages down in their own plants than in fighting Communism. They wanted to scare their own workers into not striking.

"And here's another thought: Why did no Penmans executives play a leading part in the League? Were they afraid the town would see what the League was up to? Most of the big shots in the League were Conservatives. An election was coming up. Perhaps that's why they said a lot of Liberals and CCF'ers had Communist ideas. They were after votes. They didn't fool me."

However, one merchant said: "I think the Citizens' League was a good idea. The strike was the work of aetheistic Communists from outside Paris. They had no business interfering here. Somebody had to fight them and tell the truth about them. I think the leaders of the League were public-spirited men. I gave them my full support."

Beyond strengthening the morale of a few non-strikers by supporting their assertion that the AFL organizers were Reds, the Paris Citizens' League seems to have had little effect upon the course of the strike and upon public opinion.

Because of a lack of clear-cut evidence, it's difficult, if not impossible, to assess the effect of the Communist issue on the outcome of the strike. Somehow, in thinking about the question, one is reminded of a Shakespearean quotation:

> "...full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing."

CHAPTER 7

PRELIMINARIES

"An opinion is a belief not based on absolute certainty or positive knowledge but on what seems true, valid, or probable in one's mind.

Webster's World Dictionary

"There never have been in the world two opinions alike, no more than two hairs or two grains...."

Montaigne (1533 - 1592) French philosopher and essayist.

"The average man believes a thing first, and then searches for truths to bolster his opinion."

Elbert Hubbard (1859 - 1915) American Editor.

"Truth is forever absolute, but opinion is filtered through the moods, the blood, and disposition of the spectator."

Wendell Phillips (1811 - 1884) American orator.

After rejecting the majority-decision of the conciliation board in December, 1948, the UTWA called at least two meetings (perhaps four) to consider the recommendations of the strike-committee:

Lloyd Adrian, secretary-treasurer of the CTWU: "A couple of membership meetings were called. Most people were aware that a strike was in the making. Attendance at these meetings was not large -- 82 people at the first and 51 at the second. The reason people stayed away was because they did not want to strike."

A Striker: "In December the strike-committee called three or four meetings to decide what to do. I didn't attend any of them because I was tired of meetings. A lot of other members didn't attend for the same reason. We were strong for striking, but left the decision up to the committee and those who attended because they liked meetings and wanted to get their word in either for or against striking. "Penmans and the company union made a big thing out of the fact that at the last meeting when the vote was taken, 27 voted to go on strike and 24 didn't. Penmans and their union said that only a tiny minority of the membership were in favor of going out. That's crazy. If it's true, how come on the second day of the strike, Jones [Penmans' agent] said that about 450 of us were on strike and 480 were at work?"

A Striker: "I attended the meetings where the strike-committee was authorized to call a strike, if necessary. I'm sure only union members were present. Why should anybody else be there? As to how we took the vote -- I'm not sure. It's a long time ago. But I think we used a secret ballot."

Soon after the decision was made to strike on January 3, 1949, the Honorable Chas. Daley, Minister of Labor, urged the UTWA to delay action for two weeks to allow time for further negotiations. To consider this request, on January 2nd a union meeting, with 212 members present, was held in the Community Hall.

The strike-committee objected strenuously to any change in plans. Its members argued that enthusiasm had reached its peak, and that a delay would have a cooling effect and perhaps cause defections. During the argument "many jumped up and demanded strike-action on the morrow." (The Brantford Expositor.)

But, Val Bjarnason argued forcefully in favor of a two-week's postponment. According to a report in The Paris Star (January 6, 1949) he said that "it was the purpose of the UTWA to avoid strikes if at all possible, and that if the request of the Minister of Labour was ignored, it could be fairly said that the UTWA was not willing to negotiate but had called the strike without first making every possible effort to avoid it."

Finally the majority (many with misgivings) voted in favor of a post-ponment and for the following motion:

"Whereas the Minister of Labor of the Province of Ontario has promised to do all in his power to bring about a peaceful settment of the Penmans dispute, it is resolved that this meeting postpone the decision to strike for two weeks."

A week or so before January 3, when the strike was due to begin, a number of Paris merchants, fearing that a long conflict would be harmful to business, began to urge the town council to help in bringing about a settlement. This led to the councillors' voting to send a letter to the Honorable Chas. Daley, to Penmans Ltd., and to the UTWA, urging them to make every possible effort to effect a compromise. During the meeting, W. E. Stewart, one of the union organizers, accompanied by four members of the strike-committee, entered the council chamber and at the end of a short speech (in the words of The Paris Star) "commended the councillors for trying to avert a strike and for stating that they wished to maintain a neutral position...."

During the two weeks' "truce," both sides strove to strengthen their respective positions. The UTWA, evidently fearing that a desertion of a few wavering members would deprive the union of majority support, began a campaign to maintain and increase enthusiasm:

> Lloyd Adrian: "More strike meetings were held and to these everyone was invited. Speakers from all over the province were brought in. Strike enthusiasm grew. It was a sort of hysteria. 'Make Penmans pay the union way!' was the slogan."

On January 4, 1949, the Brantford Expositor reported that to gain public support, the UTWA organized a Citizens' Forum and that 500 Parisians assembled in the Capitol Theatre. During the meeting, a number of out-of-town speakers gave reasons for the general public's being asked to support the UTWA; and a number of outstanding union-members explained why they were willing, if necessary

to go on strike. One woman, a member of the strike-committee, said recently that although she had never before spoken to a large audience, she stood upon the platform and asserted that "the main reason I favored a strike was I want things better for my children than what I had. You'll never believe what I was paid when I began to work in Penmans as a teenager about 1925! I got about 6¢ an hour. I joined the union because I wanted more money. Everybody does. And everybody wants things better than when they were children."

According to The Brantford Expositor, "...at the close of the meeting the local strike-committee presented a resolution that the meeting should pledge its support to the union in whatever action it took. A show of hands was called for and the resolution was approved."

The significance of this Citizens' Forum, and the show of hands at its conclusion, was grossly distorted by opponents of the UTWA and by unionists who were becoming faint-hearted and were looking for an excuse to desert. Most of the distorting (in my opinion) wasn't maliciously deliberate -- rather it was produced by misunderstandings, wishful thinking and rationalizatio The following are examples of distortion:

> "Ronald Williams in The Financial Post: "The decision to strike was made by only 27 people! At a meeting attended by only 51 of the company's 650 employees the vote was 27 for; 24 against.
> "What few people know is that the night before the conference (with Penmans Ltd.) the union quietly held a meetings of its own. That's when the 27-24 strike vote was taken.
> "The strike was scheduled for January 3rd. The night before, the union called a meeting in the local theatre to ratify the vote. Under no circumstances would a legitimate union let the general public into a meeting of this kind...
> "According to Police Chief Bean, the back five or six rows of the theatre were filled with public and high school students. When Bjarnason called for a show of hands to ratify the strike vote, every kid in the place stuck his hand up..."

This meeting of January 3rd, according to both The Paris Star and The Brantford Expositor, was called not to ratify the vote, but to solicit public support. The Paris Star reported that "The citizens were asked to pledge their support to the union in whatever action it took." The Brantford Expositor corroborates this statement.

> A non-striker: "When the UTWA was formed, I signed up because all the other fixers signed up. We all agreed to join. Yet 65% of us went in on the first day of the strike because we disagreed with the methods of the union leaders.
> "Only 27 people voted for the strike. A lot of unionists didn't attend the meeting because they objected to the calling of a public meeting. We felt that the public had no business being there. It should have been wholly a union meeting. We didn't want the discussion open to everyone, including the press. We thought it was altogether our problem.

"Calling a public meeting was a very bad error on the part of the organizers. As it turned out, a number who voted for the strike weren't even union members....
"A large number of workers quit the union when the strike began. They either had second thoughts or they objected to the way the strike was decided upon. Some of us went further. I, for one, just walked through the picket line while tearing [illegible]

Obviously Ronald William, Thomas Bean, the above [illegible] many others confused the closed union-meeting of December -- during which the 27 members present voted in favor of striking -- with the Citizens' Forum meeting of January 3rd, at which no strike vote was taken.

While the UTWA was striving to maintain enthusiasm and prevent defections, Penmans Ltd. and the CTWU were conducting a campaign of intimidation, their purpose being to persuade wavering union-members to desert. Believing the UTWA was no longer supported by a majority, the company and its union tried hard to weaken it further:

A striker: "Penmans and the CTWU spread rumors that if there was a strike, part of the Paris operation would be transferred to Quebec and a lot of us would lose our jobs. This scared some people into going to work when the strike began."

A striker: "Even before the two-week postponment, Penmans put on a big drive to get some of us into its union. This was illegal because the CTWU was a company union, and according to the law shouldn't have existed at all."

A striker: "The second or third time three members of the Conservative Party called on me to get me not to strike, they tried to scare me by saying that if there was a strike and it failed at least 100 workers -- unionists of course -- would lose their jobs."

A striker: "It was rumored that the company would never meet our demands because it knew that less than half the workers were in favor of a strike, and it felt sure we would lose. That's why it refused to make any real concessions or even negotiate seriously. Some of us lost heart and returned to work when the strike began. I went back, and then changed my mind and joined the picket line."

During the two-weeks' postponment, the CTWU also tried (probably with considerable success) to weaken the morale of the luke-warm members of the UTWA. For example, on January 3rd (according to The Paris Star) -- on the same evening that the UTWA held its Citizens' Forum the CTWA organized a rival meeting. The main speaker was James Young, president of the Business Machine Workers' Union. In the course of his dissertation to an audience of 150, he argued that "whether a strike was won or lost the workers always lost more than they gained."

After the speeches, an official of the CTWU reiterated the promise that if a secret vote of all the employees approved a strike, the members of the CTWU would join the picket lines.

Next, during a broadcast over CKPC (as reported on January 13th by the Paris Star) a spokesman for the CTWU urged potential strikers to ask whether they were willing to risk their jobs for a union which --

> "Is known to be Communist Dominated,
> "Whose actions are Dictated by outside Pressure Groups,
> "Whose record is Strike and Strife with resultant Unemployment. Remember Lachute and Valleyfield,
> "The UTWA have called a strike for the sole purpose of obtaining the Compulsory Check Off, which the Conciliation Board refused to recommend. This strike is being authorized by only 27 Employees."

At the conclusion of the broadcast, the speaker promised "That if a secret ballot were taken in the plant and the majority of workers supported the strike, the Canadian Textile Workers Union would go on record as supporting it as a unit."

This statement was repeated officially at least on four other occasions. Evidently Penmans Ltd. and the CTWU were certain that only a minority of workers were willing to strike. And evidently, too, a number of UTWA members shared this certainty, and so began to lose their enthusiasm and determination.

On January 18th, two days before the "walk-out", the UTWA held its final pep-rally. The general public was again invited to hear speakers explain why the union, with much reluctance, felt obliged to strike. And again, at the end of the meeting, all those present were asked to signify their support by a show of hands.

A strike was now inevitable.

CHAPTER 8

THE STRIKE

"Aggression...involves compulsion of one person or group by another person or group."

Anthony Storr (1920 -
British psychiatrist

"Aggression occurs when an individual or group see their interest, their honor, or their job bound up with coercing...the human environment to achieve their own ends...."

Anthony Storr

"Conflicts of interest between man and man are resolved... by recourse to violence. It is the same in the animal kingdom from which man cannot claim exclusion...."

Signmund Freud

"The sombre fact is that we are the cruellest and most ruthless species that ever walked the earth."

Anthony Storr

The strike began on the morning of January 18, 1949. The available evidence indicates that the majority of employees continued to work -- that only about two fifths were pickets.

As far as possible, I'll trace the course of the conflict by quoting from the newspapers and the recollections and opinions of the people I interviewed:

The Paris Star: "The strike at Penmans began on Tuesday morning. The union asked for a 15 cent wage increase, closed shop and compulsory checkoff. Penmans Ltd. officials would not agree with the demand and the problem was put before a Conciliation Board, which recommended a 5-cent wage increase and voluntary checkoff....

"D.L.D. Jones of Hamilton, spokesman for the management, said Tuesday that between 60 and 70 percent of the employees went in to work, and that all departments were in production, although some were under-staffed....

"The union leader [Val Bjarnson] took issue with Jones' statement. The real truth [he said] is that less than 25 percent of the employees actually entered the mill....The Penmans mills are completely crippled... and the number of strikers turning out on the picket line is increasing and several signed up for duty at the meeting on Tuesday night....

"Mr. Bjarnson said that he was absolutely confident that the strike would be won."

A non-striker: "It was a tragic thing. When they did decide to go out, they picked the worst time. Who in his right mind would go out in January, February and March. It was the coldest most miserable time."

A striker: "The people who stayed in the mill or crossed the picket lines were afraid of losing their jobs. A lot of them had signed up for the strike, but when the time came, they didn't join us."

A striker who didn't join the picket line: "Being a Conservative and having worked for the party, I hate to admit that the Conservatives in our area favored the company. When I refused to go back to Penmans, three leading members of the local party came to my home and tried to persuade me to go back to set a good example. I refused,"

The Paris Star: "The Union offered to give passes to engineers, firemen, maintenance men and office workers. The offer was turned down by the company.
"Val Bjarnson called upon the pickets to be orderly and obedient to the law.
"There were come picket-line disturbances on the second day of the strike...some pushing and pulling, but mostly an exchange of words."

The Paris Star: "At a council meeting [closed to the public] all of those present voted to approve the calling in of the police."

A councillor: "I was the only one who voted against calling in the police. One councillor didn't vote, but I know he was against calling in the cops."

A striker: "None of us know for sure, but I have heard a number of times that Penmans sent a letter to the Council asking it to ask the government to send in a detachment of police. We do know for certain that the members present discussed the letter at a secret meeting. The mayor didn't call the meeting. He didn't even know before he got there why it was called. Perhaps this was because some thought he favored the strikers. After all, his daughter and son-in-law were on the picket-line. The meeting was called by the Penmans employee who presented the letter. The mayor was really forced to call in the police. There was a lot of dirty work going on."

A pro-union councillor: "All of the councillors except two, maybe three, were supporters of Penmans for financial reasons. The councillor who called the meeting worked in the company office. He was the main spokesman. He presented the letter and knew what was in it. Tom Bean, Chief of Police, was called in and gave a speech (not his own, I'll bet) about how pickpockets and criminals followed a strike and he was afraid the local police couldn't handle the lawlessness, and the O.P.P. were the only ones who could. I think Penmans told him what to say.
"The letter from Penmans asked the council to call in the O.P.P., but 50 blankets were shipped from the St. Hyacinth Plant and were upstairs in the Fire Hall when we got the letter. Fifty O.P.P. came to Paris.

Figures add up!
"Even the media was against the strikers. One night after a meeting in the Capitol Theatre the strike committee had a petition to present to the Mayor asking that the O.P.P. not be brought in...About half a dozen walked...to England's house to give him the petition. Headlines in the Expositor next day read, 'Angry mob marches on Paris Mayor's home."

An anti-union councillor: "On the first day of the strike there was pushing and shoving on the picket lines and on the William Street bridge. The Mayor was driven crazy by phone calls demanding protection and demanding that he call in the O.P.P. The four Paris policemen couldn't possibly be everywhere at once and work both day and night. Something had to be done.
"The Mayor wasn't asked to call the meeting because he was so upset by criticism. He was in no condition to make a decision.
"I can't recall a letter from Penmans. Maybe there was one. Anyway, the company had the same right as anybody else to ask the council to call in the O.P.P.
"The Mayor was really in a tight spot. If he didn't call in the O.P.P. and there was a serious riot, he would be held responsible and could be fined and sent to jail. I think that even the pro-union councillors could see the fix he was in. They voted to call in the police."

Author's note: It is very difficult to learn what in fact went on a the council meeting. Either no minutes (contrary to custom) were made of the proceedings, or they were later destroyed. There is no trace of them in the record-book or on microfilm.

The Brantford Expositor, January 20: "On Wednesday morning, Mayor Wm. England made an official request to the Commissioner of Provincial Police for help in controlling the present strike at Penmans Ltd.
"In an interview for the Paris Star, Mayor England stated that he had made this move on the advice of Chief of Police, Thomas Bean, who told him that in his opinion his limited police-force (three men besides himself) could not keep order on the picket lines and look after the protection of the town as well. He pointed out that the whole police force had been on duty for 48 hours straight and that something would have to be neglected....
"In answer to the question as to whether Penman Ltd. had asked for the Provincial Police, Mayor England said, 'I received no request from Penmans Ltd.'"

The Paris Star, January 20: "Members of the AFL - U.T.W.A....registered a very strong protest against the bringing of the Provincial Police into Paris...,
"Mr. Stewart stated that the picket lines had been most orderly and any jostling or trouble would have quieted down in a short time. However, he charged, Penmans Ltd. has seen fit to bring in 26 Provincial Police, in spite of the fact that there has been no violence....Mr. Stewart stated that in two hours 500 names had been secured for a petition to have the Provincial Police sent out of town.

"Mr. Val Bjarnason said that he had contacted Mayor England on the telephone and asked him why he had called in the Provincial Police. He said that the Mayor told him that he had no complaint on the orderly way that the picket lines had been conducted and had given other excuses for calling in extra police. What the Mayor had done, said Mr. Bjarnason, was to bring in a force which would ensure violence....

"Following last Thursday night's meeting when a protest was registered against the bringing in of the provincial police, a parade was held, stopping at the Mayor's residence to present a petition of 800 names asking for the removal of the provincial police....

"Mr. Stewart protested the treatment afforded some of the first picketers arrested, describing the cells in which they were kept overnight as resembling the Black Hole of Calcutta.

"Val Bjarnason, union organizer, issued the following statement on Friday morning: 'Contrary to the morning papers and radio reports in connection with the union parade in Paris last night, no riot or near riot -- in fact, no disturbance -- took place. It was simply a march of singing supporters of the strikers. During the parade the citizens marched past Mayor England's home for the purpose of presenting him with a petition bearing more than 800 signatures of Paris citizens asking the council to withdraw the outside police....The parade was not a personal attack upon the Mayor, as he has been inferred, but simple the presentation of a petition asking the council to withdraw the outside police.

"Mr. Stewart added that although Penmans paid scandously low wages, they refused to bargain, and claimed the leaders got their orders from Moscow."

Toronto Daily Star, Thursday, January 20, 1949 (excerpts):

"Inspector Creasy made the first arrest when he grabbed...who he claimed gave the shoulder to an officer'. Many of the non-strikers were women. Some of them had a rough time as police tried to drill a path for them through the picketers....

"Chief of Police Tom Bean said he was relieved that the provincial police had taken over the job of maintaining order on the picket lines. 'I have brothers and sisters involved -- some of whom are on strike, some who are not', he said....

"Police believe the temper of the strikers is mounting. As they look for increased agitation on the picket lines, they blame the picketers who are not mill employees....

"The strike has been a blow to this community. Not only are friends and neighbors now temporary enemies, but even families are split.

"Mrs. ..., a 20-year-old striker claims her family is a good example.

"'My brother and I are on the picket-line,' she said. 'My mother and my sister did not come out on strike. My husband works in Brantford. Well, at every meal -- and we all eat together -- the arguments are hot and heavy'.

"Another striker said: 'A lot of us used to be good friends, get together after work and so on. But you can't call a fellow a scab at 6:00 in the morning and have lunch with him at noon'.

"Arrival of the provincials yesterday started the people and by about 3 p.m. shivering picketers bucking icy blasts were waving and

and shouting to the provincials patrolling in their black-and-white cars. At 10 p.m. their ranks augmented by sympathizers, they were parading up and down the main street chanting 'roll out the police'.

"The police were summoned by Mayor England to prevent disorders on the picket lines. Before long many townspeople were calling them 'outsiders', since there had been no disturbances of any account on the picket lines. Arrival of the provincials gave the impression of a small invasion from some other part of the country.

"All yesterday afternoon on the streets patrolled by the police cars, housewives and their children, grandmothers and fathers, sat patiently at front-room windows waiting for something to happen. The cars drove back and forth -- but nothing happened.

"Nothing happened until about 4:45 p.m. when the provincials got out of their cars and stationed themselves by the gates of the three mills. They smiled at the pickets and joked with some of the girls. The pickets found themselves responding in kind. The cops were pleasant, but off the picket lines the feeling was different. Opposition and bitterness were quickly developed among ordinary citizens as well as strikers and their families.

"On Tuesday the strikers had picketed all day in rain and heavy sleet....

"During the afternoon, Staff Inspector F. V. Creasy had refused to divulge the number of men brought in. 'We are strictly neutral', he said. 'We have no interest in the strike until there are disorders on the picket line....

"When non-strikers came out of the plants yesterday, there were shouts and screams of 'scabs'. At a couple of gates there were claims and counter-claims of skirmishes. No violence could be detailed. At No. 1 gate, where trouble, if any, was expected to occur, there was not a single incident....

"Val Bjarnason, Ontario director of the UTW, as last night's meeting of the UTWA appealed for a demonstration of Paris citizens outside the gate of No. 9 mill.

"'I predict', he declared, 'that the provincial police will create violence on the picket line Thursday or the next day. That is what they are here for, and that is what they will do....'

"He claimed Mayor England had told him the provincial police were called because people on the picket lines had said they would like to see the provincials in. A man in the meeting who said he was a personal friend of the mayor also claimed Mayor England had told him the same thing.

"The only excuse for bringing in the provincial police is to present or subdue violence on the picket lines,' the Ontario director stated. 'Where has there been violence on the picket lines. Only violence caused was by a scab and you all know who I mean.'

"Mayor England had told him, Mr. Bjarnason said, that prior to the arrival of the provincial police there had been no disorders on the picket lines and that 'we have no complaints to make.' Mr. Bjarnason said an officer had been rejected by the mayor that, instead of the provincial police being brought in, he might deputize some well-known Paris men to keep order, if necessary.

"'Actually', he asserted, 'introducing the provincial police is a sensational sign of the weakness of the company. Provincial police are not usually brought in until a strike has been in progress for some time -- until the company is desperate. I am surprised Penmans had the provincials brought in before the end of the second day...'"

Toronto Daily Star, January 20, 1949 (excerpts):

"Four men were taken into custody by police early today as a result of scuffling on the picket line...

"During the night, police arrested three men whom Chief Thomas Bean alleges were caught painting the word 'scab' on the home of Lloyd Adrian...

"In the cold darkness of six a.m. today a picket line was revolving in a circle outside the number nine mill....A dozen provincial police stamped around in the cold.

"Presently non-strikers began to arrive at the plant. As they headed for the gate, strikers closed in around them and provincial police officers moved to free the non-strikers. Pushing took place between the non-strikers and the police..."

Hamilton Spectator, January 20, 1940 (excerpts):

"A small model car was placed across the thoroughfare which led to the plant. Police officers picked it up and carried it to the side of the street.

"The pickets...massed today before the one entry to No. 9 mill on Elm Street. They left token pickets at the company's other two mills.

"As workers began to arrive they were jeered and shoved by pickets. Police officers were pushed into the sides of the workers' cars as they entered the plant.

"After the window of Settler's car was broken, police arrested.... Four policement struggled with him to get him into a police car. Inspector Creasy then turned to...and arrested him for obstructing.

...was arrested after he was told by police: 'You can't call an officer that.'"

Toronto Evening Telegram, January 20, 1949 (excerpts)

"Seven men were arrested here early today by Provincial and town police....

"This morning W. E. Stewart, international organizer and Val Bjarnason, Ontario director of the UTWA - AFL, charged that all seven men were placed in a cell six by eight feet without sanitary facilities. They called the town jail 'Worse than the black hole of Calcutta' and claimed that the men arrested were crowded in there unnecessarily...have been in that cell since 20 minutes after 12 o'clock last night', Stewart charged.

"'It has been cold in there, there is only one steel bunk and the men have not been let out for any need.'

"At 9 o'clock Stewart charged 'they had not yet been given their breakfast....'

"Only two of the seven arrested are employees of the mills.... Union officials declared that this indicated that it was 'the whole town of Paris, not just the mill employees, who are on strike....'

"There was violence on the picket lines this morning. Two men who wanted to go to work were reported injured....One man said he was kicked in the back.

"'They came at me from behind'...

"About 250 citizens paraded the streets of the town here last night, not all of them strikers, chanting: 'Throw them out, throw them out.' The booed the 25 Provincial Police....

"Stewart joined Bjarnason in denouncing the appeal for provincials.

"'We don't want them here', they said. 'They are here for no other reason than to break this strike. They are not going to intimidate us and we've got to let them know it'..."

Toronto Daily Star, January 21, 1949

"The crowd marched up and down the street shouting, 'Oust the cops,' and 'We want the mayor,' Failing to locate the mayor downtown, the parade marched about a mile to his residence and halted to form an audience in the street awaiting his appearance.

"A group of relatives told the paraders the mayor was not at home and the crowd formed fours and marched off downtown again.

"At the same time, several carloads of provincial police drove up and rushed towards the mayor's residence. All they found was a union organizer, Val Bjarnason, two photographers and a group of relatives. One group of police surrounded the organizer and told him the demonstration amounted to intimidation. After some shoving, the organizer said the crowd had a perfect right to march on the streets and charged the police had intimidated everybody all day.

"After one constable had rushed a photographer and forbidden him to take pictures, the police suddenly dispersed and watched the relatives and the press from a distance.

"Finally, getting into their cars, the police drove downtown and found the streets crowded with residents. Getting out of their cars, the police mingled with the crowd on both sides of the street and told the people to disperse, which they did, after considerable pushing.

"At one point, Staff Inspector C. F. Creasy was seen in a vigorous dispute with Mr. Stewart. Police later said a charge of creating a disturbance was being laid against Stewart. At No. 1 mill this morning the police arrested Stewart at the beginning of the disturbance on a charge of assault....

"Organizer Bjarnason told the meeting the local authorities merely were acting at the dictation of the Penman company, which, he said, had dominated the town for years..."

Toronto Daily Star, January 21, 1949 (excerpts)

"On Tuesday the strikers had picketed all day in rain and heavy sleet. Yesterday they walked up and down against the heavy gusts of a cold winter wind...,

"By 5 p.m. a petition was going the rounds of strikers, beverage rooms, restaurants and homes adjacent to the mills. More than 500 names were claimed by union officials -- names protesting the calling in of provincial police....

"'Tomorrow', said Mr. Stewart, 'we will issue an appeal to every trade unionist in the area to take off a half-day and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you on your picket lines....

"'The people of Paris are not going to stand by and see these cops come in here to oppose the strikes who are trying to defeat the methods which this company has been infamous for years, 'Mr. Stewart declared. 'The attitude of the town police has been loaded in favor of the company.'

Hamilton Spectator, January 21, 1949

"Thursday morning the main picket-force was outside No. 9 mill on Elm Street....Nine arrests were made yesterday morning. The seven men and two women were all released on bail at 4 p.m. and most of them were back on picket duty before 5 o'clock....

"Employees coming out heard jeers and epithets shouted at them and there was considerable milling around as the police kept themselves between the pickets and the workers. There were no serious developments and no arrests were made...,

"Early this morning the pickets turned out again in full force, directing their attention once more to No. 9 mill -- at the one gateway where employees can drive cars directly into the company premises.

"There had been a heavy fall of snow during the night, but it was soon trampled down by the assembled pickets..."

Toronto Daily Star, January 21 (excerpts)

"Provincial police arrested a married woman, a teenager and a union organizer during a wild melee in front of the entrance to No. 1 mill at dawn today....

"The disturbance flared...when small groups of employees entered the plant under strong police guard. Some employees were jostled, the police rushed in, pushed back strikers, strikers pushed the police, and at times there was a general free-for-all.

"Fists were seen to fly before Stewart was seized by police after a short chase. Two or three blows were struck by..., an employee entering the plant....

"The friendly feeling of give-and-take between police and strikers vanished this morning....

"As the workers began to arrive at the plant, they were jeered and shoved by picketers. Police officers were pushed into the sides of workers' cars..."

The Paris Star, January 27: In an editorial, quoted here only in part, the editor wrote: "The town of Paris is going through a nerve-wracking experience as the Penmans strike starts its second week....The experience is unique and distressing..."

In speaking of the Mayor's predicament, the Star said: "...Also provided in the Code is that where a Mayor or other municipal officer, having notice that there is a riot within his jurisdiction, without reasonable excuse omits to do his duty in suppressing such a riot, is guilty of an indictible offence and liable to two years imprisonment..."

Lloyd Adrian, as recorded by him during the strike:

"Their picket lines were not large at first but they were rough, tough and nasty.

"Provincial Police had to be called in to restore order. Although they hate the police they attempted a coup that leaves no doubt as to the true identity of the AFL textile union leaders.

"Petitions against the police were circulated. Armed with these, the union leaders led an infuriated mob against the house of the local mayor demanding that he take action in their favour or resign. Blacklegs, as the police were called in Paris, dispersed the mob. It took only about 5 minutes.

"The next day, the town seethed. Every available person with an AFL leaning was out to picket. Violence continued. The police although roughly treated handled the mobs admirably. A few arrests tamed the strikers.

"After that, each day more people showed up for work. Violence flared again and again but still the workers came to work."

Toronto Daily Star, February 3, 1949:

"A fighting, pushing brawl between 30 provincial police and more than 150 pickets resulted in the arrest of nine pickets and a charge by one girl that she was knocked down to the ground and struck by police....

"One of the girls arrested told spectators after the battle she was struck in the face by a provincial policeman after an employee's car ran over her foot.

"'I screamed and someone dragged me away. Then an officer turned me around and struck me on the face.'

"... the second girl arrested, said: 'I fell to the ground and four or five policemen came after me.' She said she was on the ground for at least two minutes. When she escaped from the milling crowd, she was arrested by Inspector Creasy when he found her lying down in the rear of a taxi....

"The 150 pickets were swelled by sympathizers and spectators. For more than half an hour the surging, shoving mob of pickets attempted to halt workers from entering the plant while provincial police tried to clear a path.

"Police eventually formed a cordon of 10 men on each side to allow cars to go through.

"The left hand window of a car driven by Edward Setter was smashed. Setter received face cuts but continued on into the plant.

"A small model-car was placed crossways across the thoroughfare which leads to the plant. Police officers picked it up and carried it to the side of the street...."

The Paris Star, February 3: "D. L. G. Jones, Company solicitor, made a statement to the newspaper men from the Expositor as follows: 'The company will not negotiate with this union while it is trying to enforce its demands by strike action, nor while the union continues its program of vilification and defamation against the company.'

"Stating that the real issue was not one of wages but the matter of the closed shop and the compulsory check-off of dues. Mr. Jones added, 'The union is one of the few unions well known to be Communist dominated. Its actions are following the pattern adopted by the Communist unions. Following the certification vote, the company proceeded to negotiate with the union in good faith, but through the course of these negotiations, the union carried on a malicious program of vilification and defamation over radio CKPC. When it became evident that the parties could not agree to the terms of a fair contract, the Ontario Minister of Labour, Hon. Charles Daley, appointed a board of conciliation to investigate the differences and recommend an equitable solution. The Board sat in Paris and heard both parties....It recommended a complete contract which it described as fair and equitable.

"'The company requested a meeting with the union and they met on November 23, at which time the company agreed to sign in its entirety the contract recommended by the board of conciliation. The offer was refused by the union, who advised us that they were breaking off negotiations. The night before the strike-vote was taken at a union meeting. After we had made our offer, there were three strike meetings. These were public meetings attended by people of all ages including youngsters of 14 and 15. They were attended by people of other communities At these meetings, Penman employees were far in the minority and those were the meetings that decided upon strike action, meetings at which the general public -- everybody -- voted. Fewer than 50% of Penman employees are on the picket line.'"

Brantford Expositor, February 4 (excerpts)

"As the textile workers' strike entered its second week, two new arrests on the picket-lines...brought the number arrested to 14 to date...

"'I guess they had it in for me,' he said. 'All I did was call a guy a scab.'

"...said he had been charged with obstructing. 'I was at No. 3 gate -- the peaceful gate', she said...,

"'I didn't do a darn thing...I didn't bop anybody. I was just walking around in a circle in the picket line. Suddenly I was arrested. I guess I was just the next on the list,'

"The courtroom in Paris, Monday afternoon, was crowded with spectators, and 15 accused persons...."

Harold Greer: Quoted from an article he wrote for the Toronto Star in 1979: "It is almost 30 years since I last saw William Stewart under rather different circumstances. His main goal in life in that occasion seemed to be to get me put in jail.

"He was not Ontario Communist Party leader then. He was not even an admitted Communist, although everyone knew he was. He was just the business agent of a small union of textile workers, mostly women, on strike in the small textile town of Paris, through one of the coldest winters on record.

"I remember the cold because on that morning -- it was around five a.m. -- I drove to the run-down farmhouse which Stewart had rented for the duration of the strike.

"The place was unheated except for the kitchen cookstove and Stewart was trying to rekindle the stove in order to melt some ice and warm up his baby's milk before leaving for the picket line.

"Stewart had been in the Canadian tank corps during the war and had lost an eye, and much of the skin on the left side of his face, when a German armor-piercing shell set his tank afire. Plastic surgery had helped somewhat, but the skin was still thin and sensitive and twitched monstrously when cold. He was obviously in great pain that morning.

"The picket line at the Paris textile plant had been the scene of almost daily near-riots. Despite abomiable wages and working conditions, only about half of the workers had joined the strike; most of the rest lived in houses rented from the company and could not take a chance.

"To guarantee passage of the workers through the picket line, the Conservative government of the day had kindly supplied about 100 Ontario Provincial Police officers under an inspector -- one Cresy, as I recall -- especially skilled in such matters.

"His skill consisted in holding most of his men in reserve, a distance from the picket line, and then charging with fist and baton at the slightest provocation. Provocation there had indeed been. It was part of the union unspoken strategy to get picketers thrown in jail, and thereby draw public attention to the strike. A few days before, Val Bjarnson, co-leader of the strike and also a Communist, had got himself arrested and somehow a Toronto Star reporter had managed, in the scuffling, to get himself jailed as well. The publicity had been extensive.

"That was why I had gone to Stewart's farmhouse that morning -- to see what plans he might have for me later that day. He told me little but from the way he fed his baby and called good-bye to his wife, it was clear he himself did not expect to be home for a few days.

"The picket-line that morning was unusually heavy. Bjarnson was out on bail and rumored to be carrying a gun. Stewart was said to have a blackjack on him. I noticed that he did not join the picket-line and never seemed to stray too far from where I was standing.

"The first shift of workers arrived and there was an altercation. The police charged. Inspector Cresy, if that was his name, ran up to Stewart and asked if he was carrying a blackjack. Stewart said he was and produced it, whereupon all hell broke loose.

"Someone pushed me from behind into the melee. I ran through what seemed to be restraining arms in the opposite direction. The police threw Stewart and everyone they could catch into jail.

"He is a little heavier now and his face no longer twitches. The scars are still there of course, but the hate seems to be gone. He is mild and courteous and apparently content when he says the Communist Party of Ontario is a serious political party, a working man's party which is slowly being accepted as such as the old prejudices fall away."

The Paris Star: "A non-striker hit W. E. Stewart and knocked his hat off. Stewart hit back. A woman was arrested for pushing and shoving in the picket line."

A non-striker: "I felt sorry for Stewart, one of the organizers. When a tank commander during the war his face had been terribly disfigured. He took an awful beating verbally which I think was uncalled for. Let's face it. Tempers got pretty high on both sides. We were called everything under the sun."

A citizen: "One day when I came home from my job in Brantford and was passing a picket line, I saw a friend there I wanted to talk to. So I went over and began to chat. We were just standing there.

"Suddenly a big red-haired cop comes over and crowds against me. Then he starts to jab me with his fingers which were inside of his pants-pocket. All the while he was smiling. I looked up and smiled at him. He crowded me again and gave me three or four sharp jabs, but I just smiled at him and then laughed and moved away. I could see he only wanted to start something."

The Paris Star: "Wm. E. Stewart at a union meeting said the company had offered pay as high as $30.00 a day for men from Hamilton who will work as scabs and try to break the strike.

"Mr. Stewart introduced a young man who he said had been in need of a job to support his wife and family, and had been brought from Hamilton to take a job. He refused it as soon as he found out it meant scabbing."

Lloyd Adrian: "Yes, there were some strike-breakers brought in. They brought 75 from Verity's one morning and took them over to No. 1. They were instructed by our union and the company that if they got into any trouble they were on their own. Of course they couldn't do anything on the machines. They were brought here just for moral support. Penmans hired a lot of men from out of town. Seven or eight came from Nova Scotia. There were only two men who didn't go on strike in the dye-house, but with the strike-breakers, they had a whole new work force there."

The Paris Star, February 3: "The strike at Penmans Limited continued on a fairly even keel as the third week got underway.

"A somewhat sensational development took place on Friday morning when Penmans Limited instituted a libel suit of $75,000 against CKCP and the U.T.W.A. organizers Wm. E. Stewart and Val Bjarnason. Penmans Limited claimed damages for statements, remarks, newscasts, speeches and talks which were impregnated with malice, vilification, misrepresentation and untruths. Penmans also claimed an injunction restraining the defendants from repeating any of the above statements.

"Two threatening letters to non-striking Penmans workers were turned over to the provincial police."

The Paris Star, February 10: "CKPC broke its contract with the union. The union said that the station had bowed to the big corporation and that freedom of speech had been denied."

A striker: "The company said we were all Communists working to help set up a totalitarian government in Canada like in Russia, and it said that it was supporting democracy. If it was for democracy, why did it keep us from having the same freedom of speech as they had? They and their stooges told all kinds of lies about us on CKPC. The mean part of it was that we didn't have enough money to risk being sued."

A striker: "Sure I had my idea about the part the police played. I thought it was pretty shoddy. They pushed us around."

A non-striker: "The police that I saw didn't give a damn which side you were on. I never saw them do anything unusual. Two or three times when the pickets began to elbow those entering, the police would step in and stop them. If any of the pickets became too rough, the police would grab them, and then they would throw themselves on the ground to make out they had been knocked down. Of course, the photographers and the press were always there to take pictures and report."

A striker: "I think the police favored the company. I don't think they were needed at all. They shouldn't have been brought in.

"When I was arrested I was just walking along with all the rest when there was a little pushing. I was shoved against a woman who was going into the mill. The police arrested me. I really hadn't done anything.

"My girlfriends and I really had a lot of fun. It brought us a lot closer together. We became close friends."

A non-striker: "I don't think the police favored either the strikers or the company. I remember that a bunch of fellows that were working said they were getting fed up with all the abuse and being pushed and banged around, and that they were going to gang up on some of the strikers. They were going to knock the hell out of some of those who abused and insulted them.

"When the police got wind of this, they said, 'No, just watch yourselves. You can't do that. We're here to protect everybody. It's the law we're upholding. We don't care what tactics the strikers use or you use as long as you all obey the law.'"

A non-striker: "One girl was very mouthy. She yelled all kinds of things at workers who were entering the mill. She even yelled them at a relative of hers. Finally the sergeant in charge of the police at that gate said to one of the relatives, 'The next time she yells at you, I'll turn my back and you slap her face.'

"Some of the women used hatpins, even jabbed the police in the rump. They carried them in their purses. They'd stick them into the cops when the cops were in line. One day when the cops were in line, somebody stuck a hatpin into a big fellow. He turned around and let drive. The guy that was close to him ducked and he hit the next guy. He plowed the snow. One cop had to go to the hospital for an infection in his rump. He was there for a few days. The stabbing was worse at night when the light was poor.

"The non-strikers who drove to work used to meet over-town and then go in a cavalcade. When they neared the mill-gate, the police would all line up like one man and would push all the strikers off the road. The cars would go through the gate, the gate was shut, and that was all there was to it.

"One morning the picketers littered part of Elm Street with roofing nails and they parked five or six cars crossways on the road. The police got some town workers to come over with some big brushes, and the inspector said to Bjarnason, 'All right! each one of you guys get a brush and start sweeping the road.' Bjarnason said, 'To hell with you'! The inspector yelled, 'Throw him in that cruiser, my orders around here are going to be obeyed and this street is going to be swept. Anybody that refuses is going to be arrested'. All those he pointed at got a brush and went to work."

A striker: "I didn't see any signs of the police trying to egg the strikers on to being violent."

A striker: "At one time they had 60 Provincial Police here. They would come to you and try to talk you into giving up. They'd say, 'You're not going to win this strike, better go back'. They worked for the company. Definitely they worked for the company. That's what made the strikers more determined to stay out.

"I was in jail. They would come along, put you into the police cruiser, and take you to jail. They did this just to break the morale of the others. I hadn't done anything. They wouldn't tell you what you were charged with. They'd sit over at the Arlington at night drinking beer and think up some crazy charge against you."

A striker: "When I was on the picket-line my hands and feet often darn near froze, especially at night. Sometimes my teeth would chatter.

"No, while out there I didn't hate the managers or the cops. They were only doing what they had to do. What I hated was the cowards who were afraid to come out with us. But, I'll tell you this, I did hate the big bugs who owned the mill and gave the orders. Most of them were away off in Montreal. Was cozy in the warm offices and big houses. They wasn't shivering out in the cold win. It wasn't fair."

Brantford Expositor, February 10: "A delegation of strikers and sympathize went to Toronto to interview the minister of labour and other legislators to ask for mediation. Penmans refused to send any representatives.... The union accepted the invitation of the request from Labor Minister Charles Daley for a conference in his Toronto office, but the following reply was sent by D.L.G. Jones, solicitor of Penmans: 'Copy of your wire to Penmans Limited has been forwarded to me. Only a small percentage of Penmans employees are on strike and the company is operating all departments satisfactorily. Have previously outlined unequivocally company's position with regard to meeting union representatives. Unwarranted behaviour of union since strike began is no inducement to modify position'.

"Close to 70 pickets moved in a circle stamping their feet and swinging their arms to ward off the chill of the frosty air."

The Paris Star: "The Penmans strike which had been going along quietly until Wednesday evening of last week, suddenly flared into activity Thursday morning, when nine arrests were made. The following day four more arrests were made and then an uneasy peace returned to the picket-line....The biggest melee was when they attempted to arrest...and picketers resented the fact....

"About the same time as the arrests, word was received of the death of Mrs....who had been off work since suffering a fall while going through a picket-line at No. 1 mill on the second day of the strike.

"R. Kent Rowley...who is directing activities said the following regarding Wednesday's skirmish, 'We hope the company and the police are not trying to provoke trouble. We want to keep things peaceful, but we certainly don't intend to let anyone interfere with our legal right to strike and picket'.

"On Tuesday morning, Val Bjarnason was arrested on a charge of intimidation. A non-striker was arrested on a charge of carrying a concealed weapon, a weighted length of rubber hose.

"On Friday morning...four more arrests were made. During a scuffle two picketers received injuries, one being stepped on and another being knocked down by a car."

Toronto Daily Star, February 16, 1949

"...21 year old picket has been arrested four times since the start of the ...strike. His fourth arrest came after a street fight. He spent a night in the police cells, then paid a $10.00 fine for disorderly conduct. He said three men jumped out of a car when they saw him walking alone on a downtown Paris street. He said one of the men beat him up, inflicting the marks on his face, and he fought only in self-defence. The other man was not arrested, he said, but he was considering laying a charge against him. He believed the attack -- entirely unprovoked -- must have been the result of feeling inspired by his activities on the picket line."

The Paris Star, February 17: "There were seven convictions and two dismissals of cases tried in Magistrate's Court on Tuesday of this week....

"A non-striker charged with carrying an offensive weapon pleaded guilty and was fined $30.00 including costs. The offender said that he had been threatened and his father had been threatened in his hearing. His father suffered from a heart condition and he (the accused) carried the weapon primarily for the protection of his father who was with him at the time.

"In imposing sentence, Magistrate Gillen reminded the court that if (the accused) were allowed to carry a blackjack, all parties concerned might take advantage and serious trouble could be the result.

"Magistrate Gillen said in his summing up to the court [in relation to the non-striking woman who had died of a stroke after a fracas]... that there was no evidence that the accident had caused the death of Mrs. ...[who had fallen when she was pushed and pulled]."

A citizen: "Kay Marshall, correspondent for the Brantford Expositor, told a lot of people around town that Jones had a revolver on the seat of his car. She saw it twice when he offered her a ride to one of the millgates in his car. The cops must have seen it, but they didn't arrest him."

Author's note: The Brantford Expositor, for the most part, remained neutral. However, it did publish two editorials -- one in which it deplored the presence of children on the picket line and said that the strike should be ended by arbitration," the other, which deplored the strike, calling it "tragic and needless."

Non-striker: "I'd say that the attitude of the employer was bad, also that of the union was bad because in organizing the strike it failed to win the confidence of all the workers."

The Paris Star: "Non-striking employees of Penmans Limited on Wednesday notified the Company that they would not be bound by any contract which the company might make with the UTWA-AFL

"The letter which the non-striking employees forwarded today to B. K. Gunn, general manager of Penmans Limited, was as follows:

"'We the undersigned representing the employees who are presently working wish to advise you that we have disassociated ourselves from the UTWA for the following reasons:

1. "'We have been blasphemed, sworn at, intimidated, and threatened violence by the union members.
2. "'We have been betrayed by the union, who promised they would not call a strike.
3. "'We strongly resent being dictated to by the emissaries of Moscow.
4. "'We wish to see any change of government accomplished by peaceful and democratic means, not by violence and anarchy."

"To the Labour Minister:

"'We the undersigned represent 75 percent of the employees of Penmans Limited in Paris. Before the strike was ordered, a meeting was called, at which 27 out of 51 attending the meeting voted in favor of a strike...,

"'The union called a number of public meetings attended by very few Penman employees. At these meetings, strike votes were made and strike arrangements were made and it is significant that at the meetings people who had never been employed by Penmans participated in the strike voting..

"'A few persons have not turned up for work because of intimidation on the picket lines, and because of other intimidation, such as disgustingly filthy letters, continuous phone calls, and threats of indecent assault and violence.

"'To the average citizen, it is inconceivable that such conditions could exist in our country. In view of the undemocratic, dictatorial and lawless attitude of this Communist dominated union, we want you to know that we have written to Penmans management that we are disassociating ourselves from the U.T.W.A.'"

A non-striker: "When I was going past the picket line, I told the picketers how I felt. Later at night a fellow came to my house and said they were laying for me.

"'Don't worry', I said. 'I can look after myself'.

"When I went to work the next morning, there was one fellow there I think would have jumped me, or maybe there were others I didn't see. Two of us went down, and apart from a little noise, nothing happened.

"Usually there was a lot of pushing and shoving. About 50% went to work at the beginning. By the time the strike ended in April, at least 85% were working."

The Paris Star, March 10: "Val Bjarnason and Wm. E. Stewart were charged with being members of an unlawful assembly...The charge of unlawful assembly was laid after a demonstration on Willow Street shortly after 5 p.m. on February 17.

"Sgt. Carl W. Farrow, the first to give evidence, told the court that from 125 to 150 picketers had assembled outside the Willow Street entrance to Penman mills. They were booing, singing and calling the workers names. All in all, the din was terrific.

"On their return to the mill entrance, the picketers, led by Stewart, surrounded the group of five or six police officers, shouting, singing strike songs, and calling the police scab-herders. Sgt. Farrow said he shouted to Stewart, 'Break it up!', but was not sure that he heard because of the noise.

"After this, the picketers broke into a snake dance, still singing and shouting. They wove in and out around the police cruisers. The street was blocked and considerable traffic was held up. At this point, Sgt. Farrow ordered the street cleared and the police pushed the strikers to each side. Stewart tried to break through the police line to get back to the road, calling Constable Ptolemy a dirty name and trying to strike him. Constable Ptolemy then arrested him."

The Paris Star: "On Tuesday morning Frank N. Inksater, J. P., remanded until Tuesday morning next 14 union officers, strikers and sympathizers who faced 17 charges..."

"Another arrest was made Tuesday morning on the picket line at No. 1... The Provincial Police arrested...after a picket line scuffle. She was taken to the police office here and onto Brantford to be charged with intimidation. She was released on $500. bail.

"D.L.G. Jones...said that two-thirds of the normal number of Penmans employees were now at work. He said the company was prepared to carry on indefinitely under present conditions....

"Mr. Jones also said that regardless of any new requests for negotiations the company would not negotiate as long as the strike committee continues its campaign of vilification...'

"So many children have been around the picket line and public meetings that the 9 p.m. curfew regulations may be enforced."

A non-striker: "In our mill, a lot of the men who didn't strike sympathized with those who did. In fact, inside we had two or three fights between those who favored the strike and those who didn't.

"If the non-strikers had been free to choose or thought they could get a job somewhere else, 95% would have been in favor of the strike.

"Those who didn't go on strike really felt guilty and were unhappy. A few when they couldn't stand it any longer said, 'To hell with this', and they went out at noon and didn't come back. They didn't go on the strike-line. They stayed at home till everything was over. They couldn't bear their feelings of guilt. After all, you have to live with yourself. They felt sick at heart because they thought that the others were out with their jobs on the line and if any benefit came from striking they were going to get the benefits.

"During the strike, there were always a few on the outside picketing during the night. Those who stayed in the mill overnight always saw to it that those fellows out in the cold got some coffee and sandwiches. Most of those inside sympathized with the strikers. They were in, but their hearts were on the outside."

The Paris Star, March 17: "Pleading guilty to creating a disturbance, seven young men were fined $5.00 and costs of $7.50....

"The charges were laid following a disturbance on the evening of February 20th near the residence of...whose window was broken and a door forced open. Damages have already been repaired....

"Mrs...was convicted of using insulting language...and fined $10.00 and costs of $3.50. The charge was laid after and incident on the picket line. Mrs..., [a worker] was leaving the mill when the remark, calling her by name and directed towards her was made. Turning, she asked who said that, and Mrs...said she had. Mrs... then replied she had taken enough abuse from her and followed up by striking her."

The Paris Star, March 24: "[Two strikers] were convicted of besetting and fined $30.00 including costs. [The plaintiff] said that as he came out of work on the afternoon of January 19, he met [the two strikers], who said to him, 'We'll get you. We'll paint your house'. When the plaintiff left his house to go to work the next morning, he saw that someone had painted SCAB on the side of his house.

"The accused men spent the night in jail, and were later ordered to pay costs of $22.00 or 15 days in jail."

A striker: "Early in April we could see that we were beaten. Not many were on the picket-lines. Some had got jobs in Brantford and a lot had gone back -- 'crawled back', I might say -- to Penmans. The rest of us who stayed to the end were out of money and couldn't get more credit. We sure felt sick when we knew we were done for. We were damn scared we wouldn't be able to get a job anywhere."

The Paris Star, April 14: "The Penmans strike which began on January 18 and progressed through some stormy scenes on the picket lines ended on Saturday, April 11 on a quiet note.

"The strike-committee of Local 153 in Paris held a meeting in Brantford and then went to Paris, where the strikers assembled in the Community Hall for a meeting.

"After two hours of debate,the strikers voted to sign the terms of a settlement and end the strike....

"Under the terms of the settlement...the company agrees to show no discrimination against any of the strikers and agreed to rehire them....

"Mr. Jones added that in view of the effects of the strike he could not say how soon employees would be taken back...

"The strike ended without any contract being signed....

"Mr. Bjarnason stated that the union regarded the settlement as a partial victory, inasmuch as it safeguarded the many gains won by the U.T.W.A. and it also guaranteed the job security of the strikers. He said, 'The strikers are returning to the mills with their heads high, and filled with determination to build and strengthen their union... The fact that the settlement was not more favorable is attributable in large measure to the anti-union policy of the Tory government of Queen's Park, which did almost nothing to settle the legal dispute, but on the other hand maintained even up to today a large number of Provincials. We feel that Penmans Limited have learned a lesson... and that the strikers have broken the stranglehold of Penmans on the town of Paris'."

By defiantly asserting that the strikers had won a partial victory, Val Bjarnason tried to make the best of a disastrous defeat. By one term of the settlement, the company, through Mr. Jones, promised "to show no discrimination against any of the strikers, and agreed to rehire them," -- but (here come the weasel words) "in view of the effects of the strike he could not say now soon the workers would be taken back..."

A non-striker: "The mill-managers instructed the foremen to ask loyal workers to vote as to whether certain people should be re-hired. I blackballed only one in our department. I felt sorry for some of those who were blackballed. They were, for the most part, good men. They deserved better treatment. But things turned out well for most of them. They got as good or better jobs with higher pay and shorter hours. A lot went to Brantford."

A non-striker: "Jones, who negotiated for the company, as a talking point to protect some other clauses of the agreement, threw in the clause that the company agreed to re-hire all the strikers when and if required. It was put in as a face-saving gesture to protect other clauses and would be removed after the negotiations. However, the union leaders signed the whole document as it existed and then quickly got out of town. Because of the fiasco, Val Bjarnason and Kent Rowley were thrown out of the AFL and joined the C.I.O., because the top authorities said that by signing that clause 'they are no good to us'. So they booted them out and they went to the C.I.O."

A striker, when asked whether he was rehired, said: "I could have had it back, but I got another job while I was out. I went back to get my employment insurance book. When I went into the office, my employer started to laugh. He thought I'd come back to ask for my job back. He said, 'Is there anything I can do for you'?

"Not much, just one thing," I said.

"What's that?"

"I want my unemployment insurance book."

"He said, 'You're crazy, you're crazy! Your job is here'.

"Yes", I said, "but my machine isn't there. Will I have my new machine?"

"'Oh, no', he said, 'we gave it to somebody else. You'll have to take one of the old ones'.

"No I won't," I said, "I'm not coming back."

"Quite a few of us didn't get back. Most of those who did got the dirtiest jobs. They did everything to make them quit."

Perhaps Val Bjarnason was right when he asserted that the strikers had won a partial victory -- in the sense that the conflict in Paris may have convinced Penmans Ltd. that it would eventually have to accept a bona fide union in its mills. During the months that the strike was going on, company officials were negotiating through the C.I.O. with their workers in London, Strathroy and Brantford. The Paris Star, on April 28, 1949, reported that "Negotiations have been under way since the first of the year and the friendliest of relations have existed between the company and the union.

"Negotiations by the T.W.U.A. with respect to other Penmans plants are in progress, and it is anticipated that contracts will be signed within the next few weeks.

"The London and Strathroy contracts provide, among other things, for paid holidays and vacations, grievance procedures, arbitration, seniority, and union security for the maintenance of membership, and the check-off.

"In addition to five cents per hour general wage increase, a number of adjustments were made in rates, increases in some cases amounting to as much as an additional 12 cents an hour."

By this settlement, which in 1950 was extended to Paris Penmans, the workers won almost everything that the AFL union had fought for. It seems ironic that Penmans Ltd. should have amicably signed a contract with a union that before 1948 it and the company union had accused of being a Communist organization "dedicated to the destruction of our way of life" -- and unfortunate that many of the AFL strikers, despite their sacrifices, should have gained so little for themselves.

"In large groups the 'identifiability' of any individual is diminished. When people become anonymous., they loosen some of their social restraints, and they feel more free to engage in anti-social behaviour -- become nastic ...There is a breakdown in the individual's sense of control...People find themselves doing things they would never do alone."

Dr. David Wiesenthal, Professor of Psychology at York University, as reported in the Toronto Star of June 8, 1980

"'Twixt failure and success the point's so fine
Men know not when they touch the line."

"There are some defeats more triumpant than victories."

Montaigne

CHAPTER 9

WHY THE STRIKE FAILED

"The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just."

Abraham Lincoln

From the beginning, for those who manned the picket lines, the strike against Penmans Ltd. was a hopeless conflict. The immediate cause of the defeat was that fewer than half of the employees left their work. When, for reasons already indicated in chapter 6, a considerable number who had voted for the certification of the AFL union deserted, the strikers formed a minority, and so had almost no chance of winning a victory.

A striker: "The strike failed, I think, because a lot of people didn't stick behind the union. When the strike began, they walked into the plant."

A non-striker: "With thirty years of hindsight, I feel that those members who went into work when their union called for a work-stoppage were responsible for prolonging the strike."

In the opinion of a number of people, some of the secondary reasons for the majority's remaining on the job are as follows:

According to four strong supporters of Penmans Ltd., the company intimidated many undecided employees by spreading rumors to the effect that if the strikers were victorious, most of them wouldn't be re-hired; and that probably the Paris mills would be closed and their operations transferred elsewhere. These threats frightened a lot of workers whose relatively high family-incomes depended upon the combined wages of husband and wife. "Where else," they asked themselves, "could they get steady employment in a similar industry and town? And if the mills were closed and they had to sell their homes before they moved, would they not suffer a heavy loss on a glutted market?"

A non-striker: "Most of the older workers had only one skill and couldn't learn another. They were afraid to strike. They didn't want to have to sell houses that they had scraped and saved for and spent a lot of time improving."

A non-striker: "I don't think that Bjarnason and the other outside organizers thought that the strike would be a failure. I think, at least at first, they thought it could succeed because they had just come from a very violent strike at Valleyfield which the union -- I won't say 'won' -- but didn't lose. There they had the support of all the workers. The French Canadians are more volatile and aggressive than the Paris Anglo-Saxons (if I may call them such)..When the French Canadians became involved in a strike they became completely involved and often violent. In Paris, unlike Valleyfield, when the strike began there was little bitterness among the workers against the company. The Paris workers thought that by joining a union and striking they could better themselves, but they

weren't driven to desperation. I think the outside organizers, since they had just led French Canadians in a bitter strike, thought the Paris workers had the same attitudes. They fooled themselves as to what the Anglo-Saxons would do.

"I must add that there were in Penmans some violent English people in the local union. In England they had belonged to the TUC, which in those days was vastly different from Canadian unions. Its members were much more aggressive and ready to use violence on the picket line."

Another underlying reason for the defeat (again in the opinion of a number of observers) is that at least a third of the Penmans employees in Paris felt that they were an integral part of the lower middle class. They identified not with the proletariat but with their employers; and they looked askance at labor organizers and strikes. To them, as respectable citizens, it would have been unseemly, vulgar, and traitorous to associate with a "mob" led by "Communist trouble-makers". And, like most of the other members of the middle class, they dreaded unemployment with the consequent loss of income, security, status and respectability. Thus they remained on the job, and probably influenced others to stay with them.

During my 38 years in the local high school, I had a good opportunity for observing at close hand the attitudes of the pupils whose parent worked in Penmans Ltd. As a result, I gradually came to the conclusion that almost half of them nourished lower middle-class attitudes and ideals; and that although their fathers were wage-earners, they didn't think of themselves as belonging to the working-class.

About 1950, I inadvertently overheard the mother of two of our more able students, whose father worked at Penmans Ltd., complaining indignantly to a friend about a real or imagined social-slight she had recently received from the sharp tongue of the wife of an affluent Paris merchant: "I terrifically resent the way she snubbed me. Our family has always been respectable. That snob may have more money than us, but we're every bit as good. At least we have smarter and better-looking kids. They're better behaved too."

To this woman, and to those like her, "respectable" was almost synonomous with "middle class". It meant, for example, that usually the wife wasn't a wage earner, that husband and wife promptly paid their bills, that they were active in church organizations, wore middle-class clothes, spoke "good grammar", urged their children to excel at school and to go for a higher education so that they would eventually become bona fide members of the middle-class. Since most of these people wanted stability, they shrank from the danger of risking everything by going on strike.

Another underlying reason for the defeat is that in Paris before 1949 it had no history of industrial conflict arising from animosity and frustration -- that in general the relationship between employers and employees had been amicable. For years (with one or two possible exceptions) the owner-managers of the local mills and factories had been benevolent men who took a kindly interest in the welfare of their workers. Thus when the conflict began between Penmans Ltd. and the AFL union, the strikers received almost no active support from the workers in other plants, with the exception that some union-

members from Consolidated Sand and Gravel sporadically joined the picket lines.

Incidentally, the long-standing tradition of good will is perhaps one explanation for a large part of the general public's showing little interest in the strike. A downtown shopkeeper said, "The strike was seldom discussed on the street. The guys I talked to said they didn't want to take sides because they liked people on both sides of the strike and they didn't want to lose customers. They tried to stay neutral.

"I think most of the merchants sympathized with the strikers. They thought wages were too low and that the bosses in Montreal were not interested in the welfare of these workers -- were interested only in profits, which were high.

"A lot of people I knew were so undecided about the whole thing they just put it out of their minds most of the time."

"Finally, a contributing cause of the defeat probably was that the Ontario labor laws favored the company. In a democracy, the minority, even if defeated by only one vote, is expected to obey the will of the majority. Therefore the labor laws (in the opinion of many labor leaders) should state that if the majority of workers in a plant vote for certification and a strike, the minority should not continue to work. Furthermore, the police, if needed, should be required to act impartially by preventing non-strikers and strike-breakers (excepting the maintenance staff) from entering the plant. If such laws were enforced, there would be no violence and there would be a greater degree of equality in the bargaining between capital and labor.

After the Paris strike, the organizers and a large number of strikers were of the opinion that the Ontario government and the Ontario provincial police, by favoring the company, brought about their defeat. One striker said: "The government did its best to defeat us. It sent in a lot of cops and didn't do a thing to make Penmans negotiate once the strike started. It wanted us to be beaten. Worse still, it let Penmans break the law. The law clearly said that it was illegal for a company to set up a company union which it controlled and tried to get workers to join. It was also illegal to threaten us with losing our jobs. The cops put a lot of us in jail for what they called "breaches of the law". But none of the guys who ran Penmans and broke the laws were charged and put in jail. The government was behind them. It wanted the company to win."

Although union was in fact badly defeated, many of its members felt nevertheless that they had won a victory. Their feeling is well expressed by a woman: "The strike didn't fail, not really. Penmans knew they had to smarten up because a lot of people got other jobs and so the company lost a lot of experienced help."

And as already indicated, within a year Penmans Ltd. had granted to a CIO union almost all of the demands made by the AFL-UTWA.

"Failure is often that early morning hour of darkness which precedes the dawning of a day of success."

Leigh Mitchell Hodges.