

# **Early Unionization in the Canadian Post Office\***

By

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## **I – Unionization and the 1918 Strike in the Post Office**

In Canada the first efforts of federal employees to form an association were undertaken by the letter carriers, who united to create the Federated Association of Letter Carriers (F.A.L.C.) in September, 1891. Formed for the purpose of advancing the interests of its members in matters of salaries and working conditions, the F.A.L.C. affiliated with the Trades and Labour Congress (T.L.C.), the Canadian labour central, in 1896 following a salary dispute with the Postmaster General.<sup>3</sup> Given the early formation of the letter carriers' union, by 1911 organizations were well established in post office branches across Canada. Between that date and 1917 the number of locals increased from 37 to 45, a figure which dropped to 35 in 1919 following the formation of an alternative organization.

Letter carriers were salaried federal employees but their work was hardly non-manual. The work actually performed by letter carriers had little similarity to most blue-collar occupations. The delivery of mail took place outside in all weather

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and involved lengthy walks and the climbing of stairs with a heavy load, which the union attempted to standardize at thirty-five pounds.<sup>4</sup> The result was often poor health, ulcers, hernias, and heart trouble attributed to the heavy work, which was performed by old and young alike. Leg and feet problems were particularly common. The fact that the mail was usually brought into a town overnight meant that the work was unevenly distributed, with eighty percent of the mail often delivered in the morning between 7:30 and 12:30, with no break in between these hours.<sup>5</sup>

Besides the perennial questions of salary rates and the cost of living, other demands of the letter carriers included uniforms, boots, the standardization of the size of mail, maximum weight for mail sacks, sick pay, superannuation, as well as the establishment of Christmas Day and New Year's Day as holidays. This last demand proved difficult because the public expected the delivery of gifts, news, and well-wishes on those days. These objectives were sought through the representations of the T.L.C., and their apparent preoccupation with these matters at the Conventions may have prompted H.A. Logan's remark that the F.A.L.C. was a "snug craft-conscious body [which] has kept its demand prominently before the T. & L.C."<sup>6</sup>

A second organization of postal workers was formed in 1913 at a convention of postal clerks from a number of scattered lodges. Originating as a western Canadian movement, the Dominion Postal Clerks' Association (D.P.C.A.) was at first confined primarily to that region. At its 1916 convention Lawrence Pickup, a clerk in Winnipeg, was appointed organizing secretary, a post he filled successfully. His organizing efforts were directed towards eastern Canada and, in the next year's convention, Pickup was able to report that branches of the Postal Clerks'

Association had been formed in Fredericton, Halifax, St. John, Montreal, St. Catherines, Brockville, Hamilton, and Toronto.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that these workers were designated as 'clerks' seems to imply that the nature of their 'inside' work was more clearly 'white-collar' than was the case for the primarily 'outside' letter carriers. This designation would be more true for those who worked at the wickets and dealt directly with the public than for those who sorted mail in the back. Nevertheless, there was much manual work done by the postal 'clerks,' and in some places – notably Winnipeg – one of the chief grievances of the men was the basement work, which was done in a poorly lit and badly ventilated cellar in which the sewer line had a propensity to back up. Postal clerks were also required to work shifts, which included night work. In some of the larger post offices, particularly Montreal and Toronto, large numbers of postal workers were employed. For example, in 1914 the Montreal post office had one thousand workers and was already a 'mail factory' of sorts.<sup>8</sup>

A third organization formed in the Post Office was the Dominion Railway Mail Clerks' Federation, which was founded in 1916.<sup>9</sup> Working on holidays and weekends, in poorly heated and equipped cars, the railway mail clerk was the best paid of the three groups. Some danger was involved in this work since the mail car was constructed of wood and was generally linked in a very hazardous position next to the locomotive.<sup>10</sup>

The postal service, then, was organized along group lines, with three separate organizations. Frequent attempts were made to form a single organization, or a federation, of the three associations to present common grievances to the government, but these tended to be temporary and easily broken apart. The development of a single organization encompassing all three branches arose out of

the common practice of a successful strike, and split the postal workers organizationally on an east/west basis. The argument, favouring either a single union or closer co-operation between the craft organizations, was chiefly that some conditions of employment, such as salaries or pensions, were common to all groups and that unanimity of programme was crucial to obtaining redress. During the First World War, and to some extent afterwards, the question of salary and bonus was one such common grievance.

The First World War was accompanied in Canada, as well as elsewhere, by an enormous rate of inflation causing prices virtually to double in a few years. In periods of inflation the differential between wages and salaries tends to decrease in favour of the former, and the feeling was widespread among the salaried civil servants that "the position of those having to depend on fixed salaries was far different from those who, owing to the special demands for their services, were able to command an increased wage commensurate with the increase in prices."<sup>11</sup>

Between 1901 and 1921 average earnings grew significantly in Canada, although they tended to level off over the next two decades. For clerical workers overall, Graham Lowe shows that, in 1901, total clerical earning (and male clerical earnings) were 20 percent higher than the average earnings in manufacturing; by 1921 male earnings were only 6 percent higher, while total clerical earnings were 3 percent higher. Part of the decline in the differential was a consequence of feminization. Over this period of prosperity, then, there may have been a narrowing of at least this one economic differential between manual and mental workers. Nevertheless, between 1901 and 1921, clerical workers averaged 50 weeks of employment per year, compared with an average total of 46 weeks, which indicated the non-manual workers likely had more security of employment during this

period.<sup>12</sup>

Since the rapid inflation was clearly linked to the war, it was believed that once the war was over prices would return to the 'normal' level pre-dating the conflict. Consequently, the view persisted that, at the termination of hostilities, prices would again decline and that therefore there was little sense in granting raises which would have to be rolled back subsequently. In the place of salary increases, governments introduced bonuses as an alternative. The bonus system had the effect of placing the responsibility on the employee organizations for bringing conditions in the civil service to the attention of the government. It became a major focus of agitation, not only to secure a bonus but also to ensure its distribution, and each provided an impetus for organization. Prior to the war in both Britain and Canada, only in the post office had organizing drives made much headway. When the war ended and the cost of living failed to decline to pre-war levels, the demand for salary increases persisted, and civil service associations expanded rapidly.

Bonuses had been granted in Britain at the request of the lower paid postal employees. Amounting to five percent and seven and one half percent, such bonuses were granted in 1915 and 1916. A third appeal in 1917 culminated in the setting up of a board of conciliation, which reported that the rise in the cost of living warranted a further temporary bonus of from eight to fifteen percent.<sup>13</sup>

As the war persisted, the civil servants in Canada had not had a raise in pay for nearly a decade, the last raise coming in 1908.<sup>14</sup> The D.P.C.A. had petitioned the government for salary increases in 1916 and 1917, and in the Spring of 1918, the Civil Service Federation, a central body representing an organization of independent civil service associations, arranged to collect data and promised to press the salary matter with all their powers. This amounted to making

representations to government Ministers and Members of Parliament, and the presentation of 'facts and figures' with which to argue the 'justice of their plea.'<sup>15</sup> One precedent cited was the proposal of the House of Representatives in the United States to grant salary increases of from 10 to 20 percent to postal workers.<sup>16</sup>

Once granted a bonus, federal employees had to exert further efforts to have the money distributed. It was a delay in the payment of a negotiated bonus in 1918 that was the direct precipitating cause of the first major strike in the Canadian Post Office Department. This tends to substantiate Jamieson's argument that "the tendency for rates of pay in the public sector to lag behind those for comparable jobs in the private sector during periods of inflationary expansion" imbued public employees with "a new and growing incentive to unionize and occasionally strike for their demands, even if illegally."<sup>17</sup>

Unlike Canada, between 1911 and 1939 the United States did not experience postal unrest. According to David Ziskind, prior to the Second World War there was only one strike in the U.S. post office, occurring in Butte, Montana, in 1908. The post office was relatively exempt from strike activity in this period, according to Ziskind, because of

the nature of its service and the character of its personnel. There has always been associated with the mails the idea of speed and regularity at any cost. From the days of the pony rider who braved the attacks of Indians and the stage coach mailman who fought with wild west bandits, the delivery of mail has been a special trust of the government for which all necessary sacrifices must be made. The public has developed this tradition, and officials have imposed regulations upon

the service to perpetuate the idea.<sup>18</sup>

Stripped of its romantic connotations, this is the 'service ethic' which, it may be postulated, had a profoundly conservative effect on government employees. In general, the response of the U.S. government to public employee unionism has been far more hostile than that in Canada, particularly in essential services such as the post office. This may help account for the difference in the response of U.S. and Canadian postal workers prior to 1925.

Labour unrest in the post office sufficient to lead to the possible consideration of an illegal withdrawal of services may have pre-dated the 1918 strike. In 1911 a press report originating from Regina declared that the clerks and letter carriers were on strike, despite being unorganized, as a result of oppressive conditions that included over-work, low pay, and the virtual elimination of opportunities for advancement. In November the Department of Labour wrote to its correspondent for details and was informed by W.B. McNeill that a strike had not taken place "although recently a request was made by the staff for more help, [and] this request was complied with."<sup>19</sup> Unrest, then, involved local grievances and not only Dominion-wide issues such as salaries.

The 1918 postal strike was not caused solely by the salary and bonus question; it occurred against a background of other grievances which the government was accused of not considering seriously. The strike was begun by letter carriers and was joined by postal clerks. *The Civilian*, official organ of the Civil Service Federation (C.S.F.), argued that the action of the clerks who went on strike was not due simply to sympathy with the letter carriers. On the contrary it involved "underlying causes and emotions which [had] their origin in the administration of

the Post Office Department." Superannuation and the merit principle [for hiring and promotion] were fit topics to discuss with the Postmaster General, but grievances over working conditions were viewed by the Department as secondary in nature and referred to the Deputy, receiving little or no attention as a result. That these carefully enumerated and documented grievances were carelessly handled by the government caused an "incipient state of unrest" which "needed but the touch of a chronologic and sympathetic passion to induce a spirit of actual resistance to a system of long continued inertia, indifference and oppression." The payment of the war bonus was only the apparent cause of the strike. According *The Civilian* the chronic cause was the persistent neglect of and indifference to civil service grievances and representations.<sup>20</sup>

The 1918 strike is particularly notable for the support given by the public as well as by business organizations and labour. Although it is represented a victory for the strikers, it set the contours for future government tactics, which were more successful in curtailing future strike activity.

### **The 1918 Postal Strike**

Postal workers had been attempting to secure higher salaries since at least 1917, but were informed that because of the war money was not available.<sup>21</sup> In the Spring 1918 session of Parliament, however, the government set aside a sum of money to be distributed to the civil service as a bonus. By July nothing had been done to administer the allotting of the money.<sup>22</sup>

In the first two weeks of July meetings of postal workers were held in Winnipeg and Ottawa and resolutions were passed demanding redress and

threatening “direct action.”<sup>23</sup> On the 13th the Toronto letter carriers met and resolved to go on strike on Monday, July 22, unless their demand for either a salary increase or a conciliation board composed of equal staff and government representatives was satisfied.<sup>24</sup> This decision was reaffirmed almost unanimously on the 19th by five hundred postal workers. Only a clear agreement on behalf of the government to comply with their demands would have averted a strike.<sup>25</sup>

On the 21st of July, Deputy Postmaster Coulter announced that the government had decided to distribute bonuses of between \$100 and \$150 to the postal workers.<sup>26</sup> On the following day Acting Prime Minister C.J. Doherty stated that this bonus would be paid to married men, widows and widowers, and the Civil Service Commission was charged with the responsibility of inquiring into the outside services.<sup>27</sup> Postmaster General Blondin promised the F.A.L.C. that within two weeks the question of salaries would be settled.<sup>28</sup>

The government not only attempted to appease the letter carriers, but also resorted to threats and coercive pressure. At the same time that the bonus offer was made, the Civil Service Commission informed the Post Office Department that in securing workers to replace strikers the Postmasters could dispense with the provisions of the Civil Service Act. The department was empowered to hire all who would be necessary to fill vacancies and maintain the service.<sup>29</sup>

The government declared itself unable to legally grant its employees a Board of Conciliation since the Canadian Industrial Disputes Investigation Act of 1907 (the Lemieux Act) did not apply to federal civil servants. The Ottawa and Hamilton branches consequently accepted the compromise offer, which disposed of their most pressing grievance, and decided against strike action. In Winnipeg, the President of the Letter Carriers Association, W.C. Osborne, declared the bonus to

be “indefinite and impractical.” Since the bonus only applied to permanent employees, and only to a maximum of \$1300 per annum, Osborne concluded that only twenty percent of the Winnipeg postal workers would benefit to the full amount. Since most of the temporaries, he declared, were returned soldiers, “the least we can do is to stand out for a little less injustice than is being perpetrated on them by the proposed scheme.”<sup>30</sup>

A remark by a Member of Parliament implying that the thought of postal workers walking out on strike was a “mere joke,” inflamed feelings.<sup>31</sup> On Monday, July 22, letter carriers walked out in Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Vancouver and New Westminster.<sup>32</sup> In Toronto the postal clerks decided to remain at work but refused to perform the work assigned normally to letter carriers, and passed a resolution of favour of the strikers.<sup>33</sup> The executive of the D.P.C.A. strongly advised its members to continue working, although L. Pickup, a prominent member of the executive from Winnipeg, stated on July 19 that it was highly probable that the clerks would walk out in support.<sup>34</sup> On the 22nd the Winnipeg clerks announced that they would join the strike unless the government granted a conciliation board to consider wages, working conditions, and the question of reorganization.<sup>35</sup> Osborne wanted the Board to be composed of representatives of the Department, representatives of the employees, and to have a chairman to represent the public.<sup>36</sup>

On the second day of the strike, which *The Civilian* called “the second most important event in the history of the civil service,”<sup>37</sup> action had spread to at least fourteen centres, although it did not spread east of Ontario. In Halifax the postal workers, seeing little prospect for salary increases, resigned their positions and took employment elsewhere in the city.<sup>38</sup> In the west the strike spread not only to other centres but to other branches, as postal clerks joined letter carriers in shutting the

post office down altogether.

The government reiterated its position on the hiring of replacements. In Peterborough, the Postmaster and the local Member of Parliament assisted in postal distribution, and invited "girls" wishing to do their patriotic duty to leave their names at the post office.<sup>39</sup> The government also made another compromise offer: in the place of a Board, they proposed that a sub-committee of the Cabinet be formed to investigate the grievances. This promise averted a strike in Montreal, but in Toronto, the leading centre in the eastern strike, the workers resolved initially to remain on strike until their demand for a Board was met. Alex McMordie, long time secretary of the F.A.L.C., wired all branches and predicted that by Wednesday (July 24) forty-six branches across Canada would be on strike.

On the 24th a deputation consisting of representatives of the striking workers, the Toronto Trades and Labor Council, the City of Toronto, the Board of Trade, and the Retail Merchants' Association, travelled to Ottawa to negotiate with the government. In the conference, the government agreed to allow temporary employees to participate in the bonus, but maintained the impossibility of setting up a Board. McMordie telegraphed to Toronto and advised that, since this was the best that could be attained, the men should accept it.<sup>40</sup> According to the press accounts, murmurings "of discontent were audible while the telegram was being read.... It was evident that many of the men were not satisfied with the terms of the settlement." The mood changed, however, when the men learned that McMordie had recommended acceptance.<sup>41</sup> The workers resolved to return to work although they reserved the right to strike if the findings of the Cabinet sub-committee were unsatisfactory. In Ontario, where ten centres had experienced a strike, all but one branch returned to work on the 25th, the exception being Port Arthur. On average

the postal workers were on strike for two days.<sup>42</sup>

The Western postal workers took a decidedly different view of the proposed settlement, and felt that the east had capitulated leaving them in the lurch.<sup>43</sup> On the 24th they escalated their demands, passing a resolution calling for a Board of Arbitration before returning to work and demanding, in addition, to be paid for the duration of the strike “as the work would have to be done by us in our return to duty.” They also demanded the distribution of the \$150 by the end of July.<sup>44</sup> While some of the western leaders counselled the postal workers that the settlement was the best obtainable and a prominent F.A.L.C. official advised the men to return,<sup>45</sup> most of the workers continued to strike. In some places the initial decision to return to work was over-ruled shortly afterwards, when it became clear that the sentiment in the west was overwhelmingly in favour of staying out.

The government responded by resorting to both of its earlier tactics. On the one hand they threatened that those who persisted would be dismissed immediately from the service and, on the other hand, they sent Thomas Crothers, the Minister of Labour, and Arthur Meighen, the Minister of the Interior, to Winnipeg to negotiate directly with the strikers. Winnipeg emerged as the focal point of the western strike and delegates from Western points converged on the city.<sup>46</sup> The split between east and west, which had emerged in practice, was aggravated when the Toronto local telegraphed to Winnipeg on Friday the 27th urging the employees to return to work.<sup>47</sup>

As the strike continued to paralyze businesses in many Western cities and disrupt national mail service, which went through Winnipeg, the postal workers received assistance from two quarters. According to some press commentary, while the government would not lower its official dignity by dealing with its employees,

it had to respond to the protests emanating from the business world. The Winnipeg Board of Trade decided to exert its influence and requested that a Board of Arbitration be granted. Along with civic authorities, they attempted to convince the strikers to return to work for at least ten days while they negotiated on their behalf.<sup>48</sup>

Pressure on the government to accept the workers' demands was exerted from a second source: organized labour and not just in the post office. The railway mail clerks in the west threatened to join the strike on the 28th,<sup>49</sup> thereby extending the walkout to all major classifications in the post office. The government's threat to proceed with the dismissal of the strikers – a decision communicated to, and presumably cleared by, Prime Minister Borden who was visiting in Britain<sup>50</sup> – precipitated motions of solidarity in some Dominion labour bodies. Harry Veitch, the Vice President of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, announced to Crothers that the employment by the government of permanent strike breakers would result in a general strike in Canada.<sup>51</sup>

The Vancouver Trades and Labor Council took a similar position, pledging a general strike vote should the government not grant a Board. In Regina and Saskatoon the same position was taken,<sup>52</sup> the movement in Saskatoon being led by the railway brotherhoods and metal trades workers. The International Steam and Operating Engineers condemned the government on the grounds that many of the strikers were returned soldiers, a fact which led the Great War Veterans' Association to also extend support.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, the President of the T.L.C., J. C. Waters, speaking in Victoria, refused to support the strikers, however, on the grounds that unions sought to settle disputes by exhausting direct negotiations, and only after this avenue was proven to be completely barren was the case referred to an independent

Board. The postal workers, he claimed, had demanded an Arbitration Board without entering fully into direct negotiations.<sup>54</sup>

Despite official Congress disapproval, the striking postal workers were able to expand their support. *The Civilian* reported that assistance was material as well as moral:

“Strike committees throughout the west were liberally supplied with funds. In Winnipeg, in addition to private contributions, tickets were sold for a football match (two leading teams gave their services) and within a week over four thousand were disposed of at twenty-five cents each. In other centres parades were held and, as the strike continued, messages from strike committees received at the central headquarters became more enthusiastic.”<sup>55</sup>

Crothers travelled to negotiate directly with the workers and arrived in Winnipeg on the 29<sup>th</sup>. He was reported to be in almost constant contact with the strikers.<sup>60</sup> Speaking to the postal workers, Crothers reiterated the government’s refusal to grant an Arbitration Board but offered a new compromise, recommending that the Civil Service Commission proceed immediately with its inquiry into reorganization and that it commence in Winnipeg by hearing the grievances of the strikers.<sup>61</sup>

Representatives of the Board of Trade and the Manufacturers’ Association met with Mayor Davidson, and they agreed to negotiate with the strikers. They promised to “do everything in their power to make sure that the undertakings given by Mr. Crothers on behalf of the government are carried out in every particular.” Doherty gave assurances from Ottawa that the government would ratify the promises and that the Commission would begin with no delay with Dr. Roche, of

the C.S.C. leaving for Winnipeg, immediately upon agreement.<sup>62</sup>

With the intervention of the business community of behalf of the government's offer, the western postal workers were persuaded to return to work. In their back-to-work resolution, the employees explained that by staying out in defiance of the eastern workers and of the F.A.L.C. executive, the western workers had achieved their aim by bringing forcefully to the attention of the Government "the shocking treatment meted out to them by the ... unbusinesslike methods of the department." The settlement included promises on the part of the government to pay the wages and salaries for the duration of the strike, and that no discrimination or intimidation would be practised against any of the employees.<sup>63</sup> In addition to these promises, in Calgary the postmaster agreed that each employee would be restored to the position vacated, that no striker would be held responsible for losses resulting from the strike, and finally that all those hired during the course of the strike would be dismissed.<sup>64</sup>

The employees in Winnipeg accepted the offer by a vote of 314 to 47. The employees returned to work on the 31st at 7:30 p.m. and worked until midnight. The workers reportedly returned to work with enthusiasm, having successfully conducted a strike for ten days in the midst of general community sympathy and encouragement. In Saskatoon, where a sympathetic strike had been led by railway workers, a procession of local unions proceeded through the streets and ended in a victory rally.<sup>65</sup> As Bercuson pointed out, the community support was crucial to the success of the strike; in 1918 militancy had paid off.<sup>66</sup>

The postal workers also had the support of officials and the public in the east. Mayor Church in Toronto declared that the government and not the strikers was to blame for the strike and that it would teach the Government not to trifle with its

employees.<sup>67</sup> This view was reflected as well in several press accounts of the cause of the strike: failure to agree to the conciliation Board was “evidence that [the government felt] their side of the case too weak to stand investigation”;<sup>68</sup> the bonus was pronounced to be ridiculously small in comparison to what was requested;<sup>69</sup> living rates had increased 150 percent, yet letter carriers were paid less than labourers for more responsible work;<sup>70</sup> and the *Port Arthur Chronicle* concluded that while it was true that “the public will be inconvenienced during the time the government compels the employees to stay out,” it was better to suffer this inconvenience “than to have the men we employ in our postal branch to carry the brand of the slave.”<sup>71</sup> The public response to the postal strike, according to the *Peterboro Review*, was similar to the response to strikes of street railwaymen, when patrons refused to ride in cars that were operated by strike breakers, and walked without complaining.<sup>72</sup>

While individuals were adversely affected by the strike, in particular those who awaited government cheques (efforts were made by the strikers to distribute these), and those awaiting news from the front, the primary effect of the work stoppage was to paralyse businesses. Without a more sophisticated network of communication in Canada, the postal system was the crucial link between businesses. On the whole, business representatives took the view that the government was at fault, and their efforts at persuasion were directed primarily at the Post Office Department.

The theory of the ‘neutral state’, propagated by Mackenzie King and others, asserted that the government represented the public and intervened between the factions of capital and labour in the interests of the public and the nation as a whole. In the 1918 postal strike, however, the protagonists were the government and its

employees. In this situation the role of the defender of the public interest was, in part, played by capital. Business and municipal officials generally used the 'interests of the public' to dampen militancy and prevent strikes. In 1918 their primary concern was to end the strike and restore the service, and the only question was how to accomplish this goal. In this respect, both the government and business stood to learn much about dealing with public employee strikes in their own interests.

Not all press and business response was favourable to the workers. Those who supported the strike did so in the name of the justice of the cause, while at the same time deploring the inconvenience suffered by the public and the tie-up of business. Since the post office was an essential public service, the argument against the strike was that the innocent public, which stood neutrally between the two parties, was the one suffering most. The government utilized this 'service ethic' in its efforts to break the strike. Blondin, for example declared that "it was the duty of the strikers, in consideration of the inconvenience of the public, to return to work."<sup>73</sup>

The *Montreal Gazette* also took the view that the public must be prepared to suffer the inconvenience of the strike but not for the purpose of assisting the workers; rather, because the strikers must be compelled to capitulate. In their view the strike was of the gravest import since it was essentially an attempt on the part of one group to coerce the government into paying higher wages than authorized by Parliament: "If letter carriers can declare a strike, and absent themselves from duty until their demands are complied with" editorialized the *Gazette*, "so may any other class of officials, with the consequence that government by compulsion supersedes government by Parliament."<sup>74</sup> The *Hamilton Herald* agreed and deprecated the failure of 'appropriate machinery.' A disinterested authority must

adjudicate disputes in the public service, but the decision should be binding, and those who persisted in striking should be dismissed.<sup>75</sup>

The second major ideological attack on the postal workers rested on the special circumstances of the exceptional times. The workers were labelled as being 'unpatriotic' and as having interfered "with businessmen who are engaged, directly or indirectly, in carrying on the business of the war."<sup>76</sup> These charges were levelled at the workers in an effort to intimidate them and undermine their desire to carry on with the strike.<sup>77</sup> Labour Minister T. W. Crothers stated that he had received advice to declare unions illegal, and told the Winnipeg strikers that every "lockout and strike in Canada is a blow in favour of the Germans and against the allies.... Labour and capital are interdependent of one another and the sooner they come together the better."<sup>78</sup>

The workers responded to these attacks by declaring the strike to be one aspect of a larger worldwide fight for justice. In response to a direct charge by Cabinet Minister Frank Carvell that the strikers were unpatriotic, the postal workers denied the allegation and claimed that many of those on strike were returned soldiers. They added that when the "government allows some men to pile up millions in profits out of the war and permits a condition to arise in which the workingmen have to fight for a living wage, the same workingmen may reserve the right to strike."<sup>79</sup>

At the conclusion of the strike, the *Montreal Gazette* drew the appropriate conclusions from the lenient settlement, conclusions which the government was to heed very carefully in the future:

This is an altogether new and extraordinary method of discouraging

strikes. The government not only meets the demands of the striker considerably more than halfway, but actually finances the strike with public money. On this attractive basis the men return triumphantly to the service which they have so signally demonstrated their power to control. Will the next strike please step forward?<sup>80</sup>

The editorial concluded that the lesson will surely not be lost on the Toronto workers, nor on the rest of the employees in the public service.

While the government maintained that public employees were distinct from those in the private sector and consequently did not have the constitutional right to strike, civil servants themselves reserved the ultimate right to strike for legitimate demands. According to *The Civilian*, the strike was the final weapon to force concessions, the means to redress somewhat the balance of power which tilted overwhelmingly in the direction of the employers. It was a justifiable means not only to better social and economic conditions, but to safeguard employees from oppression. On the other hand, if a strike was "simply another word for insurrection, bloody revolution, the overthrow of democratic government, or even the opening wedge for such, it should certainly be nipped in the bud."<sup>81</sup> Yet, even while the government was arguing that the public interest demanded that service strikes be illegal, the argument was raised in *The Nation*, published in Washington, that if one were to take a wider, rather than a narrower, view of the 'public interest', then strikes by public employees would be made legal since they serve as a "safety valve in the economic system."<sup>82</sup> In fact this has become government policy; but in 1918 it was quite an advanced idea and not until illegal strikes again threatened to radicalize large sectors of civil servants did the government adopt the policy of more

or less full bargaining rights for its employees.

The issue of the sovereignty of Parliament and the rights of civil servants to strike had a long history of debate in Canada. What is important in the present context, however, is the extent to which these ideas penetrated the consciousness of workers and, by becoming part of their world view, acted either to stimulate resistance or to discourage militant action and identification with other workers, and encourage 'normal' dispute resolution mechanisms. The call for a conciliation board not only expressed the belief of the postal workers that such an instrument was both legitimate and neutral, but that it was perhaps the appropriate way to bargain. The success attained by British civil servants in their salary claims gave the idea of a Board a great deal of currency. In 1918 the Canadian government was refusing its employees the right to have a Board, so it was reasonable for many of them to demand one.

The question of whether repression or leniency yields the most satisfactory social control has not been definitively answered, and cannot be answered in the abstract. The unrest in the civil service at the end of the First World War arose out of the absence for any reasonable way for employees to influence official decisions. The policy of allowing some employee representation, which the government eventually adopted, was coupled with repression of more militant means to attain this influence. The government was willing to give concessions on the demands for greater co-operation while attempting to retain as many of the prerogatives of power as possible. They reiterated that militant actions were illegitimate and, therefore, necessary to repress. From the point of view of the government, the mistake in 1918 was to treat the strikers leniently and thereby to give legitimacy to the strike weapon, a tendency it would have to correct in the future. On the other

hand, the government recognized that some form of legitimate dispute resolution was necessary to justify its actions among members of the business elite and the public.

It must be remembered that the concessions that were given and the hard lines that were drawn equally reflected the development of the workers' movement. The government found that, in order to compromise with the postal workers, it was necessary to offer more concessions to the western than the eastern workers. The government had the legislative weapons with which to dismiss the strikers and enforce the rule of law, but the support from all sectors of the community helped to stay its hand. It became clear that what was possible in the way of dealing with the strike depended on the ideology and consciousness of those directly or indirectly involved. The potential for radicalization inherent in situations of social confrontation could be undermined not only by force, but by the promotion of ideology which would isolate groups of workers from each other and from the mass of workers comprising the 'public.' It became a crucial issue, therefore, what the class identification of civil servants would ultimately prove to be. The solution to the ideological confrontation was sought within the ambiguous class position of civil servants. On the strike issue, the sovereignty of the government was made synonymous with democracy, while in terms of social class, the ideology of public service reinforced the differential between civil servants and private manual workers.

The government began its offensive almost immediately upon the settlement of the strike. The C.S.C. enquiry proceeded in Winnipeg, but it did not have power to determine salary rates; at best, it could make recommendations. The sub-committee of Cabinet, on the other hand, did make a decision on wages and,

once announced, it was disapproved by all branches of the postal service. Not only were the increases smaller than expected, but the western workers were discriminated against by receiving a smaller increase, which narrowed their previously higher salary rates relative to the East. This was justified by the government by arguing that the western workers had received a higher salary because of the 'isolation' factor and the higher cost of living, but that the latter had diminished and it was therefore logical to diminish somewhat the differential.<sup>83</sup>

Calling the salary increases "miserable" and "mean and insignificant," the postal workers again threatened to strike. In Toronto numerous motions were introduced demanding action, although in the end, "wiser councils prevailed."<sup>84</sup> Alex McMordie advised the workers not to take any action until it was determined whether all other branches would agree and were unified. The upshot was that the discontent was quelled temporarily, and decisions were postponed until the annual convention of the F.A.L.C. which was to be held September 4, in Hamilton.<sup>85</sup> The *de facto* split in membership which took place during the strike became institutionalized at this convention, and while the eastern organizations became concerned with rebuilding their strength, the western workers became occupied in founding a new organization. For the next few years the strike idea was real and living, and with the new classification system and reorganization of the post office, postal workers not only had more grievances, but shared these grievances with increasing numbers of other civil servants.

### **The Amalgamated Postal Workers**

The western postal workers had raised the question of a single organization

for all postal workers at past conventions and, when the debate was raised at the Hamilton convention, as usual, the vote was split on an east-west basis, the eastern workers voting for a federation of separate organizations rather than amalgamation. According to a 'Westerner' in a letter to *The Postal Journal*,

the result left the western men with the choice of either deserting the clerks who supported the strike, and remaining F.A.L.C., or deserting the F.A.L.C., and staying with their supporters and forming an amalgamation of postal workers, aiming at a Dominion-wide organization. The western men chose the latter course; in fact the feeling was so strong that some branches of the amalgamation were formed while the Hamilton convention was in progress, and others before the delegates got home to report.<sup>86</sup>

The amalgamated organization, formed by the western letter carriers, postal clerks and railway mail clerks, was first named the Western Postal Association and was subsequently re-named the Amalgamated Postal Workers. All post office employees under the rating of first class clerk were initially defined as within the jurisdiction of the A.P.W.,<sup>87</sup> thereby attesting to the original class position of the movement, although it later broadened its scope somewhat to allow these more senior members in. Arising as a western protest movement, the A.P.W. at its formation comprised sixteen branches from Sault Ste. Marie to Victoria, and intended from the outset to operate along trade union lines. Some 'dual' branches were organized: in Moosejaw and Edmonton, which remained F.A.L.C. locals, and in Winnipeg and Vancouver which remained branches of the D.P.C.A.<sup>88</sup>

Consistent with its decision to operate as a trade union, the branches of the A.P.W. made application to local Trades and Labor Councils, being accepted first in Winnipeg and Vancouver, and also made enquiries to the T.L.C.<sup>104</sup> The Eastern organizations maintained that separate organizations should continue to exist on a craft basis, with some form of federation for common action. The F.A.L.C. re-organized its western membership and refused to take part in any conferences with the A.P.W.<sup>89</sup>

In its response, the T.L.C. proposed that the A.P.W. might be considered for affiliation if it relinquished its claim to organize workers for whom the jurisdiction within the Congress had already been granted to the F.A.L.C.<sup>90</sup> This seemed to open up the possibility that the A.P.W. could be granted jurisdiction for a union composed solely of postal clerks and railway mail clerks, a prospect which the D.P.C.A. viewed as a distinct threat. In 1919 the question of affiliation with the T.L.C. was taken up by the Postal Clerks, and enquiries addressed to the congress.<sup>91</sup> At its 1919 convention a referendum on affiliation was passed by a vote of 38 to 13, and the Secretary announced that letters had been received from twenty-two branches of postal clerks, all but three of which supported affiliation.<sup>92</sup>

On May 11, 1920, the T.L.C. issued a charter to the Dominion Postal Clerks' Association, the merger being consummated symbolically when postal clerks for the first time walked in the annual labour day parade.<sup>93</sup> Since the jurisdiction over postal clerks was granted to the D.P.C.A., the T.L.C. broke off its negotiations with the Amalgamated.<sup>94</sup> At its annual convention of 1921 the A.P.W. adopted a new constitution, claimed jurisdiction over all federal government employees, and changed its name to the Amalgamated Civil Servants of Canada. The new union thereby became a rival of the Civil Service Federation, although its membership

remained composed in most cases of postal workers.<sup>95</sup>

Through the pages of its organ, *The Postal Journal*, the D.P.C.A. was quick to assure its readers that affiliation with labour was by no means a radical move and did not mean that civil servants were progressing toward anarchy and rebellion. On the contrary, the Trades and Labor congress itself was “clearly anti-bolshevist.” Unions were formed for “a fair day’s wage for an honest day’s work, the best obtainable working conditions, and the betterment in health and success of both employer and employee.”<sup>96</sup> The adoption of the theme of employee-employer co-operation was predictable in the civil service where enterprises were not openly operated for private profit but supposedly for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

The acceptance of a conservative ‘business’ unionism by civil service organizations was related, in part, to both their non-manual status and the ‘service ethic.’ They tended to perceive the relationship between capital and labour in similar ‘national terms’ – that the only way for both to live in comfort and safety was to travel the path of the “brotherhood of Capital and Labor, united for the Commonwealth.”<sup>97</sup> It would have been highly unrealistic for civil servants as a whole to identify themselves with capital, but while one segment of the clerical workers began to argue in favour of affiliation with labour, the conservative response to this view was to maintain that in a certain respect civil servants were ‘classless,’ or rather, were a class unto themselves. Ultimately this latter view was to win out, but not before a pro-union faction had arisen within the inside service at Ottawa to challenge the Civil Service Federation.

### **Affiliation with Labour**

The question of affiliation had originated outside of Canada, and some civil servants in Britain, the United States and Australia had already joined the central trade unions bodies. In Britain the major debate surrounded the desirability of affiliation with the Labour Party, and the formation of the Independent Labour Party in Canada made this debate pertinent to Canadian civil servants.<sup>103</sup>

Pro-union sentiment was a minority view in the wider civil service. The principal organization in Canada was the Civil Service Federation, which was undergoing rapid growth in membership. Between 1917 and 1919 it tripled in size.<sup>107</sup> The pro-union sentiment of *The Civilian*, the official journal, of which Frank Grierson was the business manager, evolved from a more or less objective presentation of the pro-union arguments without taking a definite stand, to advocating that the C.S.F. affiliate with labour, and eventually to a concerted effort to bring this about first within, and later outside, the Federation.

Early in 1918 *The Civilian* expressed the view that civil servants should refrain from affiliation with labour until the new Civil Service Act had been given a fair trial. Nevertheless, civil servants should become familiar with the labour movement so that they would be able to understand “the cause of the impending social upheaval in many countries which will be a preliminary skirmish to the Battle of all battles, in which the tyranny of the Monarch of all monarchs – King Capital – will be banished forever.”<sup>108</sup>

While one segment advocated affiliation with labour and claimed that civil servants were ‘workers’, the ideology of ‘public service’ promoted by the government helped shape the consciousness of many civil servants that they were in a position quite distinct from other working people. In a letter written to Lawrence Pickup of the Postal Clerk’s Association, a “trade unionist” argued that

the greatest problem remains the “incessant and inevitable antagonism between Capital and Labour as at present conditioned.” This was defined broadly to include civil servants by making the essential connection between private and public workers not the question of ownership but rather the subjugation of employment to a “capitalistic regime.” The two kinds of employment were becoming increasingly similar not only with the adoption by the government departments of management practices pioneered in the private sector, but in the separation of ownership and control in the capitalist system. And if the private company was faced with the difficulty of making a profit, the government department was charged with the necessity of working within a more or less confined budget – a budget that declined in periods of economic difficulty in the pre-Keynesian period.

While the “trade unionist” argued that “the fact of government employment will present some problems not arising out of private employ,”<sup>112</sup> he was speaking more of the objective difficulties such as legal questions rather than the subjective question of identification. The two are closely linked, however, since the justification used by the government to make government employees a separate category was the indispensable services they rendered to the public and this exceptionalism was reinforced by the ideology of the public employee that ‘service’ was of utmost importance and duty was to the ‘people’ as a whole, a duty that could best fulfilled by fully obeying the government.

While the pro-labour segment within the civil service did not attempt to attack the institutions of the government, they de-legitimized the policies and members of the government and argued for a traditional conception of the ‘square deal’. Only those with social connections “or who may have a friend in the capitalistic class may get a hearing from officialdom. But the under-dog, the

under-paid, the man without pull, has no court of appeal, and must suffer the penalty of his penury or lack of Norman blood.”<sup>113</sup> Such assertions, of course, contained two distinct elements: they expressed the actual view of some employees, and they expressed the rhetoric at attempting to get more out of the present system. *The Civilian* notes that the British civil servants were “driven to desperation to find some means to combat the tyranny of capital and power in parliamentary hands” and consequently became more closely identified with the Labour Party. While not counselling this action at the time, the affiliation of the C.S.F. with labour was presented as the best alternative.<sup>114</sup> Over time, however, *The Civilian* came closer to advocating support for the Labour Party in Canada, and the D.P.C.A. was particularly interested in the party which was seen as a workers’ party seeking social justice. The concept “workers’ was interpreted widely to include professionals – all who were dependent on their own exertions for a livelihood.<sup>115</sup>

The Postal Clerks’ Association adopted the view that the Great War was fought for greater democracy and to spur on the evolution of human ideals, and promoted the wider interpretation of the meaning of ‘worker’:

Is it not logical to assume ... that the power to reconstruct society, economically, socially, and politically will be invested in democracy itself -- the majority of the people. The majority of the people are workers: artisans, professional men, and the ‘knights’ of the pen. Only by the unification of their efforts and the election of men of their own class to the halls of legislation will the interests of the people be protected and advanced. We are not aware that there is a fundamental difference between the average wage earner and the civil servant.

The article concluded by charging that only an act of moral cowardice would prevent civil servants from joining their fellow workers in the march to freedom.<sup>116</sup>

*The Civilian* adopted an identical view, arguing that the “man who sits at a desk is as much a labour man as the man in overalls,” and intimating that the unity of all workers would result in the election of a labour prime minister.<sup>117</sup> Individual civil servants took positions which argued this view – a self-styled “progressive” argued that civil servants, like cigar makers, engine drivers and carpenters, were equally wage-earners, “daily toilers for bread.”<sup>118</sup>

Civil Service Associations were condemned for lacking the strength to even enforce closed shop rules, and the success of the 1918 strike was attributed to the affiliation of the letter carriers to the T.L.C. One commentary suggested that the militancy had its origin in the connection between the letter carriers and the A.F.L., led by “old Sam Gompers, cigar maker, whose part in the smashing of Prussianism in both Europe and America is second to that of no other man.” While civil servants might not have lived up to his “great leadership, ... to be in even remote touch with Gompers is worth while.”<sup>119</sup>

The reforms of the government services were designed to establish it on a ‘business basis’ which was opposed to patronage, making public employment objectively more similar to private employment. According to the popular image, the connection with labour would improve the “hand” that the civil servants held when they “‘sit in’ the game with the Government and play at modern business.” The expectation was that affiliation would usher in an era of peaceful and just settlements. In an idealized conception of the future of personnel relations in the government service, it was predicted that it would one day be written in the school

histories that when “organized labour said ‘brothers’ to the civil servants, little Canadian czars abdicated and reasonable men stepped in and settled the trouble.”<sup>120</sup>

In an effort to legitimate the campaign to affiliate the C.S.F. with labour, *The Civilian* informed its readers that, in Britain, the labour movement was broadening its membership by taking in doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers, and authors. Even the clergy was reported to be interested in the Labour Party. In fact, the labour movement “even includes the capitalist as long as he is a producer and human.”<sup>121</sup>

As *The Civilian* became increasingly identified both with affiliation with the T.L.C. as well as with the idea of a Labour Party in opposition to the current government, it came under some abuse in the daily press. The *Montreal Star*, for example, made reference to an edition of the journal claiming that it “consists of an arraignment of Canada’s system of government which might have come from the pen of Lenine or Trotsky,” and yet was sent freely through the mail. In its rejoinder, *The Civilian* explained that, on the contrary, the journal paid postage; no reference was made to the other criticisms.<sup>122</sup>

In the May, 1919 edition of *The Civilian*, an article entitled “Labour in the New Day” was partially reprinted from the *London Observer* at the behest of Alex McMordie. Taking the position that “the traditional ethics of property, profit and employment, are no longer tolerable to the moral sense, and ... a new conception altogether is required of their place and function in the community,” the article attacked the employing class for failing to develop any social philosophy of its own. Businessmen may have been free of restraint before the war, but these conditions had vanished, and the condemnation of these practices “has spread rapidly from the wage-earners to the ranks of the professions, and the general middle class attitude to these questions has been most remarkably transformed.”<sup>123</sup>

According to the presentation of the case in *The Civilian*, the new economic system would involve in practice the “mutual forbearance on the part of Capital and Labour,” a mutual “good-will” which must, however, be based on increasing production. The decline in production was blamed on the “hopeless and embittering” condition in which workers find themselves. The solution, then, was to curtail capital in the interest of reviving the moral spirit and developing social justice, in a process which would ultimately lead to assurance of a high living standard and the end of class warfare. Labour must in future share as an equal partner, for in “proportion as it is admitted to knowledge it will acquire responsibility, and as fast as its rewards become assured and substantial it will advance in zeal.” The result would be unity of “national heart and effort.”<sup>124</sup> In one edition of *The Civilian* a cartoon composed of two panels showed in one an office worker who proclaims: “I found out that they [the factory workers] were fine fellows.” In the second panel a factory worker comments: “The only trouble was we did not understand each other.”<sup>125</sup>

*The Civilian* called for “a society with equal opportunity for all and special privilege to none.” although it never concretized how this was to be brought about since the two were to some degree logically contradictory: equal opportunity meant equal chance to strive for scarce rewards and positions of privilege rather than abolishing privilege. The essential point, however, was the adoption of the liberal and reformist demand for equal opportunity, which became increasingly vocal as monopoly spread.

Notes, Part I

<sup>3</sup> H. A. Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1948), p. 294.

<sup>4</sup> The following passage, taken from a special edition of *The Civilian*, eulogises the work of the post man “who carries the world on his back”:

“In their daily work ... the letter carriers are messengers ... who convey to the homes of our peace-loving people those tidings of joy and sorrow which in all ages have been the inheritance of man. No more welcome face comes to the door than ‘Posty’s’ .... His is a life of devotion to duty, which in rain or shine he conscientiously endeavours to perform. Few people take thought of the tireless continuity of the service he renders”:

He trudges along through the snow and the sleet,

With a pack that is heavy to bear,

The slush of the roadway has hampered his feet,

And the whiteness has powdered his hair;

But he stands by the gate with a smile on his face,

And his whistle is cheery and gay;

Oh, people who live in a far-away place,

Thank God for the postman to-day!

The Civil Service of Canada, A Special Edition of ‘*The Civilian*’ (Ottawa: 1914), pp. 134-135.

<sup>5</sup> *Civil Service Review*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (June 1939), pp. 73- 74.

<sup>6</sup> Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada*, p. 294.

<sup>7</sup> *The Postal Journal*, 18 January 1918, in *The Civilian*, X, 20.

<sup>8</sup> *The Civilian* (Special Edition, 1914), p. 134.

<sup>9</sup> *Labor Organization in Canada* (1920).

- <sup>10</sup> *The Civilian* (Special Edition, 1914), p. 131.
- <sup>11</sup> *Labor Gazette*, Vol. 18 (1918), p. 783.
- <sup>12</sup> Graham Lowe, "Changes in the Clerical Sector of the Canadian Labour Force," (Unpublished Paper, n.d.).
- <sup>13</sup> *Labor Gazette*, Vol. 18 (1918), pp. 783-784.
- <sup>14</sup> *Labor Gazette*, Vol. 7 (1907-1908), p. 1379; Two Tears of War as Viewed from Ottawa, A Special Edition of '*The Civilian*' (Ottawa: 1916), p. 133.
- <sup>15</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. X, No. 24 (15 March 1818), p. 506.
- <sup>16</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol, X, No. 26 (12 April 1918), p. 549.
- <sup>17</sup> S. Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 130-131.
- <sup>18</sup> David Ziskind, *One Thousand Strikes of Government Employees* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 124.
- <sup>19</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Department of Labor, File of Strikes and Lockouts in Canada, Vol. 299.
- <sup>20</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol XI, No. 8 (2 August 1918), p. 188.
- <sup>21</sup> David Jay Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike* (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 1974), p. 68.
- <sup>22</sup> *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 July 1918.
- <sup>23</sup> *Mail and Empire* (Toronto), 1 August 1918.
- <sup>24</sup> *Calgary Herald*, 19 July 1918.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Globe* (Toronto), 20 July 1918.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ottawa Journal Press*, 22 July 1918; *The Globe* (Toronto), 22 July 1918.
- <sup>27</sup> *The Globe* (Toronto), 23 July 1918.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Globe* (Toronto), 22 July 1918.

- <sup>29</sup> *Ottawa Journal Press*, 24 July 1918.
- <sup>30</sup> *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 July 1918.
- <sup>31</sup> *Mail and Empire* (Toronto), 1 August 1918.
- <sup>32</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Post Office Department, Registry Files, Vol. 60.
- <sup>33</sup> *Toronto World*, 23 July 1918.
- <sup>34</sup> *Winnipeg Free Press*, 22 July 1918; July 20 1918.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 July 1918.
- <sup>86</sup> The Postal Journal, October 1920, in *The Civilian*, Vol. XIII, No.11. p. 429.
- <sup>87</sup> *Labor Organization in Canada*, Vol. 10, (1920), p. 130.
- <sup>88</sup> *Labor Organization in Canada*, Vol. 10, (1920), p. 130.
- <sup>89</sup> *Labor Organization in Canada*, 1918, pp. 87-88; T.L.C., *Proceedings*, 1920, p. 89.
- <sup>90</sup> T.L.C., *Proceedings*, 1920, p. 89.
- <sup>91</sup> T.L.C., *Proceedings*, 1919, p. 38.
- <sup>92</sup> *Canadian Labor Press*, 3 April, 1920; *The Postal Journal*, May 1919 in *The Civilian*, Vol. XII, No. 6, p. 229.
- <sup>93</sup> *The Postal Journal*, Oct, 1920 in *The Civilian*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, p. 428.
- <sup>94</sup> T.L.C., *Proceedings*, 1920, p. 89.
- <sup>95</sup> *Labour Organization in Canada*, (1920), p. 132.
- <sup>96</sup> *The Postal Journal*, October 1920, in *The Civilian*, Vol. XIII, No. 11, p. 428.
- <sup>97</sup> *The Postal Journal*, October 1920, in *The Civilian*, Vol. XIII, No. 11, p. 428..
- <sup>103</sup> See, for example *The Civilian*, Vol. X, No. 22 (15 February 1918); Vol. XI, No. 10 (September 1918).
- <sup>107</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII, No. 2, (January 1919), p. 58.
- <sup>108</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. X, No. 20, (18 January, 1918), p. 422.

<sup>112</sup> *The Civilian*.

<sup>113</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol X, No. 22 (15 February, 1918), p. 459.

<sup>114</sup> *The Civilian*.

<sup>115</sup> *The Postal Journal*, September 1918, in *The Civilian*, Vol, XI, No. 10, p. 264.

<sup>116</sup> *The Postal Journal*, 15 February 1918, in *The Civilian*, Vol. X, No. 22, p. 439.

<sup>117</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XI, No. 11 (October 1918), pp. 184- 185.

<sup>118</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII No. 1 (December 1918), p. 31.

<sup>119</sup> *The Civilian*.

<sup>120</sup> *The Civilian*.

<sup>121</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (January, 1919), p. 57.

<sup>122</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (February 1919), p. 104.

<sup>123</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII No. 5 (May 1919), p. 218.

<sup>124</sup> *The Civilian*.

<sup>125</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII, No. 8, (July 1919), pp. 312-313.

## II – Postal Workers Respond to Reorganization

The application of the principles of scientific organization to the Canadian civil service has been well documented.<sup>1</sup> In order to play a substantial regulatory role in the economy, the government claimed that it required an efficient, business-like organization. The application of scientific management techniques in the government departments reflected this concern.

The civil service associations generally welcomed the Order in Council, PC 358 of February 1918, which placed the 'outside' service under the jurisdiction of the Civil Service Commission, although *The Civilian* was concerned with the "loopholes and pitfalls" it contained.<sup>10</sup> The initial response to the Civil Service Act of 1918 was also one of enthusiasm. Despite earlier reservations, *The Civilian* congratulated the government, expressed feelings of "satisfaction and warm appreciation," and referred to the Act as the single most important event in the history of the service.<sup>11</sup> Employees looked forward to more regularized practices of hiring, promotion, and dispute settlement. In this spirit, they also expected benefits to come from scientific classification.

In the United States, the National Federation of Federal Employees welcomed classification, and stated that it would bring equal pay for equal work, the basing of salaries on work performed, progressive employment practices, and fair play in working conditions and in relation to the cost of living. The result would be improved morale and an enhanced service in the eyes of the public.<sup>12</sup> The 1918 act was greatly influenced by the "administrative culture" of the United States, and the definition of the merit principle adopted by the C.S.C. paralleled that of E. O. Griffenhagen, who was "the acknowledged North American expert on scientific

management.”<sup>13</sup> Griffenhagen was employed at the time by the Arthur Young Company, and the initial task of classifying the Canadian service was given by the C.S.C. to this company of American experts.

Few objections seem to have been raised about the classification procedures, which involved printed cards which every civil servant filled out to describe his or her function. Many civil servants took the opportunity to write at length about their value to the service and the country.<sup>14</sup>

The acceptance of the merit principle by the employees was based on their desire to eliminate patronage and to establish more typical employer-employee relations in the civil service. The Dominion Postal Clerks’ Association desired a Postmaster General who would “take an intelligent business interest in the department’s affairs.” For the Association this statement meant the normalization of employer-employee relations in the public service. In the area of personnel relations, such a Minister would “insure improved conditions of employment for all postal employees, [provide] adequate salaries,” and offer recognition of the employees’ organization. “These things are essential if the business spirit and action of the department is to be in keeping with the times.”<sup>17</sup>

By a ‘business basis’ the postal clerks’ association also meant the adoption of the more ‘modern’ conception of employer-employee co-operation rather than the old system of mutual antagonism. It was a rational conception of bargaining, which included the needs of the institution as well as the needs of the individual workers. the D.P.C.A. was equally clear on what a ‘business basis’ did not mean, and criticized the then Postmaster General for giving the impression that he regarded

the Post Office Department in the light of an ordinary, profit making,

mercantile enterprise, from whose unorganized employees must be wrung the last drop of sweat and whose charges and balance sheets must be screwed up to the last penny of profit. This is the only Cabinet officer who takes such a view of his department. It is a principle that is untrue and unsound. The fact is that it is a misconception of our great government function. It is not established for profit and earning power, but in order to serve the need of the country.<sup>18</sup>

The acceptance by the civil service organizations of the necessity to adopt the merit principle and run departments on an efficient, business-like basis, predisposed them initially to welcome and cooperate with the scientific managers. To accept the principle that the business model ought to be adopted by the government service meant that the Associations accepted as well the principle of laying off those defined as inefficient or unnecessary. From the business point of view, the adoption of efficient business practices would lead to the elimination of superfluous workers, and the adoption of the merit principle of appointment would open up senior positions to ambitious subordinates.

Within nine months the 'experts' had devised a classification system for the nearly 50,000 employees of the Canadian government – the largest scale on which such an exercise had ever been attempted. When it appeared in June, 1919, the Report listed 1,700 different classes, each with a title, definition, sample duties, minimum requirements, salary schedule and lines of promotion.<sup>22</sup> The immediate result was considerable uproar from civil servants of all classes. The principal criticisms centred around the complexity of the report, its handling of the salary and promotion issues, and the failure to provide for employee input.

The Arthur Young company had assumed that the war-induced inflation was a temporary phenomenon and had based salary amounts according to the pre-war cost of living figures. These were to be supplemented during the extraordinary war years by *ad hoc* bonuses.<sup>23</sup> Criticisms of the Report included not only disagreement over the actual amounts but the relation of classified branches of employment to each other. On both grounds the recommendations proved to be the source of important grievances in the immediate post-war years when prices did not drop to the 'normal' level as defined by Arthur Young and Company.

In addition, the classification was designed to provide for a smooth process of promotion, but with the rigid specification of skills and pre-requisites for each level, the promotion concept tended to break down in practice. As McGregor Dawson somewhat ironically explained, an employee would enter the service with a grade school education and find that in order to attain promotions "he must acquire in odd moments, a university education with perhaps graduate work in certain subjects."<sup>24</sup>

The essential point to be made about the criticism of the classification, however, is that the procedure violated one of the main conditions advanced originally but civil servants: there was no civil service input or control over the process. The real experts in Canada, the civil servants themselves, had no voice in the classification proposals. They had accepted the American classifiers at face value, but the results almost of necessity led to an enormous number of complaints and appeals. It is interesting to note that the classifiers subsequently adopted, as part of their procedure, some input from those affected by the process. The American civil service thereby benefited from the Canadian experience.<sup>25</sup>

In 1920 the C.S.C. pressed forward with its campaign to reform the civil

service, and hired Griffenhagen and Associates to implement re-organization of the service. The response to these procedures was universally negative and all civil service organizations spoke with one voice in their demands to have Griffenhagen's contract terminated.

Civil servants responded by claiming that Canadians had sufficient "brains and experience to put their own house in order."<sup>27</sup> The issue was not one of simple anti-Americanism; on the contrary, it was opposition to classification and re-organization themselves, and opposition to being 'watched' as well. The civil servants were in the position of reacting to decisions and changes which came from the top down.

The application of the principles of classification to the Post Office Department occasioned numerous appeals to the Board of Hearing. According to the Postal Clerks' Association, the plan put forward by the 'experts' envisaged minute specialization in post office work, but the nature of the work involved frequent temporary changes from one area to another. With this in mind they recommended that the lines of demarcation be less rigid in distinguishing classes and be adapted so as to encourage more flexibility so that employees would have a general knowledge of all phases of the work.<sup>64</sup>

The Association also registered complaints about the limited actual opportunities for promotion. Claiming that even the Arthur Young Company had admitted that ninety percent of postal clerks would never reach a higher grade than city sorter, the D.P.C.A. requested a significantly higher maximum salary for this class.<sup>65</sup> The postal clerks were particularly incensed that the salary maximum was set at \$1,380, which was less than some were in fact making, and protest letters from numerous branches poured into the Post Office Department. Much of the agitation

was caused by the disruption of the traditional differentials between 'classes' of postal employees: postal clerks demanded to be paid a salary equivalent to the railway mail clerks; postal porters declared their work to be more arduous than that of the letter carriers; representations were made to wipe out the east/west discrimination in salaries. The experts were declared, as well, to have laid down "illogical, unworkable and undesirable lines of promotion," and their competency to re-organize the post-office was seriously questioned.<sup>66</sup>

The protest of civil servants did not only proceed through their representatives; in Brantford two postal clerks resigned in view of the classification. This prompted the Chamber of Commerce to write to the Postmaster General, claiming that the classification was unjust and detrimental to postal efficiency, as proved by the resignation of "two of the most efficient members of the staff."<sup>67</sup>

The agitation in the Post Office Department, while serious, never developed into an actual strike, although early in 1920 both the letter carriers and the postal clerks were on the brink of such an action. In late summer, 1919, the postal employees in Windsor, Ontario, protested against the reduction in pay suffered by the postal clerks and the pay boost received by "postmasters, assistant postmasters, inspectors and superintendents." At that time the postal workers decided against a strike "until their union headquarters announced something definite in respect to the protest being made by civil service employees all over the dominion against the reclassification bill."<sup>68</sup> The same postal workers met again in November to voice their grievances. President Cantwell of the D.P.C.A. addressed them in the hope that drastic action could be avoided,<sup>69</sup> although J. W. Green, the Secretary of the Postal Clerks' Association, threatened the possibility of a strike in November.<sup>70</sup> In the Maritimes the Rural Mail Carriers threatened to strike in November or

December, an action which was postponed when the acting Prime Minister promised to consider their grievances carefully.<sup>71</sup>

Late in 1919 the letter carriers in Toronto took a strike vote which passed unanimously. At that meeting, however, it was decided to postpone taking any action until the new year. The Toronto branch of the F.A.L.C. sent letters to thirty-one other branches requesting support. Quebec City, London and Hamilton were reported to have replied first, and were in favour of a strike. It was reported that a strike vote of the entire membership would be forthcoming.<sup>72</sup> The Toronto branch, however, decided to wait upon the government rather than strike as previously voted. The strike threat was being used essentially as a bargaining chip. In the spring it was announced that letter carriers would in fact receive increases in pay.<sup>73</sup>

Postal workers manifested a great deal of local militancy and, unlike other civil servants, contemplated strike action and passed resolutions in favour of withdrawing their services in protest. It would appear that the executives of the associations played an accommodating role, while standing on the necessity to have a co-ordinated strike. The east/west split in organizations hampered action and made a Dominion-wide strike very unlikely. In addition, as the *Canadian Labour Press* pointed out, it would have been difficult "to carry a strike vote in ... towns or cities where the staff would be probably ten or twenty men and working conditions of an entirely different character."<sup>74</sup> At any rate, in the east the Toronto post office was the recognized leader, and its decision to accept the 'normal' channels of dispute resolution carried great weight. The associations and individual workers were also being heard by the Board of Hearing and some readjustments were made in the relative salaries of the various 'classes', which further undercut some of the

militancy.

This small reform did not end disgruntlement in the post office. Exercising his duty to bring to the attention of the Government “any anticipated calamity of national import,” commissioner Jameson wrote to Prime Minister Borden in June, 1920, informing him of his “profound conviction that a very general suspension of work in the Postal Service will take place within the next few weeks.” Describing such a strike as a disastrous “disturbance of the public and commercial affairs” of the nation, Jameson concluded that: “The immediate cause of the strike will be the employment to re-classify the Post Office Department, of Messrs. Griffenhagen and Associates in the personnel and methods of whom the Service has lost confidence.”<sup>75</sup> While the letter was motivated to some extent by the desire to disassociate the C.S.C. from the re-organization, the declaration was an indication that opposition and militancy in the civil service were strongest in the Post Office Department. The strength of this reaction was linked to its recent history, which in turn was related to the history of organization and the working class features of postal work.

In certain ways the response of civil servants to the rationalization of the service paralleled the ‘new unionism’ which had occurred among skilled workers. While the concepts of ‘industrial democracy’ and ‘employer-employee co-operation’ may have arisen during the progressive era in business circles in the United States, their implementation was not brought about simply by employer benevolence. In both the U.S. and Britain rank and file rebellion against the introduction of scientific management was leading to radical calls for ‘workers’ control’ of industry. It was to co-opt this movement that employers responded with schemes of employee representation and worker-management councils. Employers were thereby able to divert a workers’ movement that had progressive potential into

conservative channels.

## Part II – Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*. See especially Chapter 4, “Classification, Reorganization, and Reaction, 1918-1921.”

<sup>10</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. X, No. 23 (1 May 1918), pp. 482-483.

<sup>11</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (10 May 1918), p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> *Canadian Labour Press*, 13 November 1920.

<sup>13</sup> J. E. Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> Dawson, *The Civil Service of Canada*, p. 95.

<sup>15</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XI, No. 9 (16 August 1918).

<sup>16</sup> *The Civilian*.

<sup>17</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. X, No. 20 (18 January 1918), p. 422.

<sup>18</sup> *The Postal Journal*, 21 June 1918, in *The Civilian*, Vol. XI, No. 5, p. 109.

<sup>19</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (21 August 1920).

<sup>20</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (26 April 1918), p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> J. L. Payne, “The Civil Servant” quoted in J. E. Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>23</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 70.

<sup>24</sup> Dawson, *The Civil Service of Canada*, quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>25</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 68; Patterson to Meighen, 15 December 1920, Meighen Papers, Vol. 18.

<sup>27</sup> J. E. Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, 71.

<sup>64</sup> D.P.C.A. to Coulter, Post Office Department (26 June, 1919), Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 103.

<sup>65</sup> D.P.C.A. Memorandum, 4 July 1919, Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 103.

<sup>66</sup> D.P.C.A. Memorandum, 4 July 1919, Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 103.

<sup>67</sup> Brantford Chamber of Commerce to Blondin, 27 February 1920, D.P.C.A. Memorandum, 4 July 1919, Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 103.

<sup>68</sup> *Canadian Labour Press*, 5 July 1919.

<sup>69</sup> *Canadian Labour Press*, 22 November 1919.

<sup>70</sup> *Canadian Labour Press*, 15 November 1919.

<sup>71</sup> *Canadian Labour Press*, 22 November 1919.

<sup>72</sup> *Canadian Labour Press*, 24 January 1920.

<sup>73</sup> *Canadian Labour Press*, 24 April 1920.

<sup>74</sup> *Canadian Labour Press*, 27 December 1919.

<sup>75</sup> Jameson to Borden, 30 June 1920, Borden Papers, Vol. 14.

### **Part III – From Resistance to the Ascendancy of the Service Ethic**

The militancy aroused during the 1918 postal strike and by the resistance to classification and reorganization did not simply fade away to be replaced by forty years of relative quiet.<sup>1</sup> The dynamics of social action were not related to only one side of a conflict. Just as employers in the United States were able to adjust to the 'new unionism', in Canada the reaction of the government to civil service unrest had a determining effect on the course of events. If in 1918 the western postal workers learned that militancy would be rewarded, the government was equally ready to learn the appropriate lessons. A sympathetic strike of postal workers occurred in Winnipeg and other Western cities in 1919 during the general strike. To some extent the government's response was based on the concrete experience of the previous year, although it is possible that an isolated postal strike may not have been handled in the same manner. The success of the government's efforts influenced its handling of subsequent civil service labour trouble, as unrest continued to pervade the post office in the early 1900s.

#### **Winnipeg, 1919**

The Winnipeg general Strike was perceived by the government to be a potentially revolutionary situation, and its response was determined by these larger dimensions rather than simply by lessons that had been learned in the 1918 postal strike. To some extent, however, the government treated the postal strike as a separate incident in the overall strike situation. Nevertheless, the postal workers' decision to join the general strike did not have its roots solely in sympathy, but

occurred against the background of local grievances and national unrest over the classification procedures and implementation. The government, for example, had promised that reclassification bill would be brought down in the House on May 1, 1919. Postal workers, most likely believing that the revised salary adjustments would be in accordance with the rising cost of living, were angry when the bill was delayed, a fact which "most decidedly contributed to the men's willingness to be caught in the trouble."<sup>2</sup> When the postal workers in Winnipeg did strike, they drew up a list of grievances which they claimed were the causes of their action.<sup>3</sup>

The postal employees in the west were reported as having resolved to strike on April 1. The executive of the Toronto branch of the D.P.C.A. wrote an open letter to every Cabinet member which indicated that Toronto letter carriers were in sympathy with the agitation for a strike. The letter predicted that, once started, a strike movement would sweep Ontario and the west and in Toronto would involve postal clerks as well. During the 1918 strike, the Toronto executive explained, difficulty had been encountered "in restraining the members of this Association from joining." Because of the extreme dissatisfaction which had been "aggravated by the apparent indifference of the government ... this committee fears it will not be able to restrain the members from joining in any action which may be taken at the present time."<sup>4</sup>

In Winnipeg, the postal locals were in affiliation with the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council and, when the general strike began, they had declared themselves ready to strike if called upon.<sup>5</sup> If the 1919 post office strike was caused by both specific grievances and genuine sympathy for and solidarity with the T.L.C., the government took the position that the list of grievances was merely a justification for joining the general strike.<sup>6</sup> In their reaction to the walkout, however,

the Cabinet members handled the postal workers as though it was a separate incident.

As Bercuson shows, the action government took in 1919 in response to the strike in the post office was very much in contrast to their response of the previous year. The Deputy Postmaster General, R. M. Coulter, believed that the strike of the Winnipeg Postal Workers was directly related to the failure of the government to adopt a hard bargaining line in 1918.<sup>7</sup> In that year, Crothers had spoken directly to the representatives of the strikers and addressed them. In 1919 Senator Robertson and Arthur Meighen consulted only with the local authorities and postal officials after their arrival in Winnipeg on May 21.

On Friday, May 23, an ultimatum was issued to the striking postal workers. Unless the men returned to their work by Monday, May 26, and severed relations with the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, they would be dismissed from the service, "lose their pension rights and be barred from future employment in the public service."<sup>8</sup> The government did not wait until Monday but began immediately hiring strike breakers. On Monday only about forty strikers returned to work and the rest were dismissed from the civil service.<sup>9</sup> The government had carried through with the action which it had only threatened in 1918.

In response to the dismissals the railway mail clerks voted on May 27 to strike in sympathy. Thirty of their number refused to walk out, and they were joined in the cars by new temporary employees and supervisory personnel. Under a similar ultimatum from Robertson the clerks capitulated. They received "permission" from Minister of Labour Robertson to return to work and agreed that temporary help hired during the brief strike would be permitted to remain.<sup>10</sup>

The Central Strike Committee condemned the dismissals and protested by

sending a telegram to Borden. The Prime Minister responded by giving his support to the position taken by Robertson, and added that "postal employees in other western cities before any strike took place had been notified that 'abandonment of their public duty, obedience to the direction of another authority and participation in a sympathetic strike' would mean their permanent retirement from the public service." The government, he concluded, "cannot reinstate men who had deserted their posts in such circumstances."<sup>11</sup>

Reorganization of the Winnipeg Post Office proceeded rapidly during the first week of the strike as returned strikers were joined by new employees. Volunteers were gradually relieved of duty and the wicket service resumed.<sup>12</sup> Reorganization was practically complete by June 1, although letter carrier service could not be resumed because of the "hostile attitudes of citizens sympathetic to the strike." Many strikers, realizing that the ultimatum was in earnest, applied for reinstatement, in some cases offering to renounce their union connection. Robertson, however, refused to rehire the penitents.<sup>13</sup>

As the sympathetic strike spread westward, postal workers in Calgary and Saskatoon joined despite the government's position taken at Winnipeg, and Borden's threat that the policy of dismissal would apply throughout the region. The postmen in Calgary voted on May 23 to strike and walked off three days later.<sup>14</sup> The workers were immediately dismissed and the post office run by volunteer labour. Following this reaction, the attitude of the workers took on a more conciliatory tone. At a Federated Trades meeting, a postal employee expressed the opinion that he would be "only too glad to return to his job if he only could."<sup>15</sup>

Altogether in the three western cities about six hundred postal workers lost their positions. The Amalgamated Postal Workers began immediately to work

towards having their members reinstated. A delegation, which included L. Pickup from Winnipeg, interviewed the Prime Minister on the 27th of June. On the following day the Amalgamated wrote an open letter to all Members of Parliament, requesting that the Government “adopt a policy of magnanimity and conciliation” and thereby eliminate the “bitterness of mind which otherwise must prevail in the future.”<sup>16</sup> In his reply Borden stated that the government had clearly indicated the course of action which would follow postal employee strikes in the west. The men had deliberately chosen their course and completely disregarded their public duty. The government could not, in the public interest, change its set policy.<sup>17</sup>

At its 1919 convention, the T.L.C. requested that the government immediately reinstate the strikers, since such an action would illustrate the desire of the government to promote industrial peace.<sup>18</sup> The postal employees had two separate grievances: those strikers who were re-hired at a lower classification than they had originally obtained, pressed the government to pay back the money lost by the temporary down-grading; and those who were temporarily or permanently ‘black-listed’ made efforts to be re-employed by the post office.

Much correspondence was carried on between the ex-employees and the new Prime Minister, Arthur Meighen. The official attitude adopted by the ex-strikers in their letters was that they had made “one slip” which they regretted sincerely. R. McWhirter, for example, complained of being “one of those who innocently suffered, and is still suffering, by efforts used at that time, threats and antagonism, when I made efforts to go on duty.”<sup>19</sup>

H.L. Rogers, who was reported officially to be a “chronic grouch and a dangerous agitator” with an unsuitable past record<sup>20</sup>, wrote to Meighen in 1921 claiming that “our chief regret is that the government ever allowed us to be affiliated

with the Trades and Labor council which placed us in the position we found ourselves in 1919.”<sup>21</sup> W. Brend, one of the dismissed strikers, sent a series of letters to Meighen in 1919 and 1920. A wounded returned soldier, he argued that the dismissed strikers had merely followed the will of the majority in going on strike. As arguments in his favour, he indicated that he had refused to do picket work and attempted to return to work when a ban was placed on the distribution of milk and bread. Brend listed his family church and the service organizations of which he was a member and asked forgiveness for the “mistake” that he had made. The government, he pleaded, should not condemn forever, and those who deserved it should be re-employed. His request was a modest one: to be again employed, not to be reinstated at his lost rank.<sup>22</sup>

W.J. Boyd similarly wrote a series of letters to the Prime Minister in which he requested that the “older ill-advised servants” be given an opportunity to re-establish themselves and become faithful servants and good citizens.<sup>23</sup> In 1920 Boyd was officially described as being “a very safe man now” who would “never cause any more trouble over labour difficulties.”<sup>24</sup>

In early January, 1920, the government decided to selectively re-hire the ex-strikers. Since many of the men had expressed sincere regret over the action they had taken and recognized the “gravity of their offences against the state,” the Cabinet decided to “exercise clemency as far as reasonably consistent with discipline.” Provision was made that ex-strikers could be rehired under the condition that the Cabinet gave its approval, and satisfactory assurances were obtained that “a repetition of the offence will not occur.”<sup>25</sup> The reinstated workers were taken on as ‘new employees’ and were required to pass the necessary civil service examinations before their positions were made permanent. They were

denied seniority rights and were started at the bottom scale of each class. Promotion was declared to be dependent upon satisfactory diligence.<sup>26</sup> Those that were refused a position were told only that their past record did not warrant their re-employment. These denials prompted demands that the Post Office Department be specific about the content of the charges and by whom they were laid.<sup>27</sup>

As the postal strikers were either re-hired or found employment elsewhere, the issue of the 'black-list' slowly disappeared. The most pressing grievance remaining was the loss of pay brought about by the demotions. Throughout the 1920s efforts were made by the postal organizations and the T.L.C. to have this lost money paid back to the workers. The oppression of the recalcitrant postal employees also took other forms, which also prompted protests.

On behalf of the A.C.S.C., J. W. Wilton, a Winnipeg Barrister, filed an application in June 1927 with the Postmaster General requesting a Royal Commission to investigate the question of the salary readjustment and other grievances of the employees. Besides having to pass departmental examinations of major and minor sortation tests and grade exams conducted by the district examiner, one of the major grievances of the Winnipeg Clerks was that they were "required to pass a speed test conducted by the Local Supervisor in which a far higher standard of speed is set than is imposed by the Department," as well as various examinations during the year known as 'monthly tests.' The tests had to be passed to the satisfaction of the Postmaster before an increase in salary could be granted. This testing, the clerks claimed, resulted in local discrimination. To recommend a postal worker for a promotion the postmaster had to assert not only that the employee had rendered satisfactory service but that he had actually increased his usefulness. With the last word resting on the subjective judgement of

the postmaster, this procedure was also the source of local discrimination.<sup>28</sup> The government dismissed these charges with the usual argument that only inefficient employees and those not fully conversant with the regulations and duties would fear such examinations.<sup>29</sup>

The settlement of the last grievance related directly to the 1919 strike took a full decade to be achieved. On 14 June 1929 a Bill was introduced providing for a readjustment of the salaries of the men who were demoted after the strike, "paying them for service actually performed as from the date of their employment at the rates of remuneration paid to other employees for similar services."<sup>30</sup> Even this settlement was the occasion of further difficulty: the government included only permanent employees when the Bill was implemented, and it took another year to extend the provisions to temporary employees.<sup>31</sup>

The success of the government's response to the postal strike in 1919 was to form the model for subsequent action. While the attitudes expressed by the strikers in their supplications to Meighen may not be generalized to other postal workers, and were in part of product of coercion, the indication seems to be that the government response in fact was instrumental in promoting more conservative attitudes in the western civil service.

One of the lessons which the postal organizations learned from the 1919 strike was the necessity for joint action and unity. Even before the 1918 strike the disunity of the service was thought to be disadvantageous to the workers, and a single postal organization had been proposed. The organizational split that took place following the 1918 strike increased the disunity of the service and provided further impetus efforts to achieve amalgamation or federation.

## The Question of Postal Union Amalgamation

The notion of postal amalgamation – one organization for the entire postal service – had been current prior to the formation of the Amalgamated Postal Workers (A.P.W.). *The Civilian*, in discussing the question, outlined three steps to eventual amalgamation, the first being local joint committees and the second being the federation principle.<sup>32</sup> Following the earlier east/west split in membership, Frank Grierson of the C.S.F. made a plea for reconciliation and a new unity. The most injury, he declared would be done if the breach were unhealed, for postal workers had more in common across Canada than they had differences. The differential response in 1918 he attributed to temperamental and environmental causes. The west attributed a “cautious, politic, tactful temperament” to the East as being due to its close propinquity to the seat of government.” On the other hand, the east viewed the western workers as having a “wild and woolly spirit” which had led them into impetuous action.<sup>33</sup> This interpretation was to be somewhat shaken in the events of 1924.

The formation of the Amalgamated Postal Workers, as we have seen, gave a practical necessity to the federation question in the east. Westerners took the view that Amalgamation had in fact taken place and that the interests of all postal workers would be to join in the movement: “King Capital is never happier than when he perceives a skirmish among his slaves. He knows that their minds are not then wholly cantered upon their common enemy.”<sup>34</sup>

In opposition to this idea, on November 15, 1920, the D.P.C.A. and F.A.L.C. formed the Canadian Federation of Postal Employees, membership of which was open to all Dominion-wide postal organizations. The Federation was formed to

co-ordinate the activities of the affiliated bodies in their efforts to bring improvements to the service.<sup>35</sup> In October of that year the Dominion Railway Clerks' Federation joined the new organization.<sup>36</sup>

Discussions between the east and west with the object of again unifying the postal organizations were held between the various associations, the first in Ottawa in 1922 and the second in the spring of 1923, in Winnipeg. The 'eastern' associations proposed that one postal brotherhood be formed to combine the three separate organizations, which would continue to maintain separate existences and memberships, and that the A.P.W. – which later became the Associated Civil Servants of Canada (A.C.S.C.) although it remained a largely postal workers' organization – should disband its postal sections with these workers joining the appropriate postal organizations. The A.C.S.C. proposed in turn that the three separate organizations be disbanded and form into one enlarged postal branch of the Amalgamated. They were prepared to go so far as to discard the new constitution and abandon the principle of civil service unity if the three associations co-operated in forming one genuine postal organization.<sup>37</sup>

Neither organization was willing to accept the proposal of the other, and since no workable compromise could be devised, the talks were broken off. The Postal Federation itself was an uneasy alliance, and the branches perceived major differences in the conditions of work between the various classifications, as had been indicated by their response to the classification. As Logan suggested, "the letter carrier, with this interest on the physical requirements of his 'beat' and good co-operation and facilities for sorting his load, has usually little consciousness of common ground with the 'inside' postal clerk with this problems of night work and Sunday work."<sup>38</sup> The Postal Federation did not last very long; its break-up was

brought about in no small part by difficulties surrounding the 1924 postal strike. If the 1918 postal strike achieved postal amalgamation in the west, the 1924 postal strike temporarily halted efforts in the east to form a viable postal brotherhood.

### **The 1924 Postal Strike**

Throughout the first half of 1924 salary negotiations had been conducted between the government and the Postal Federation, with salary proposals being put forward by both the Department and the Federation.<sup>39</sup> By Order in Council, the C.S.C. was instructed to prepare a revised salary schedule for the post office. Pressure for an upward revision came from the staff associations, and the postal organizations backed up their demands with the threat of a strike.<sup>40</sup> The C.S.C. took its task seriously and independently, and its new salary schedule was based on a conception that its major responsibility was to the public as a whole. Claiming that the government had instructed an 'eye to economy,' the C.S.C. argued that it had not been difficult to obtain sufficiently qualified employees at the presently existing minimum.<sup>41</sup> The recommendations were actually lower than both the employees' demands and the Department's offer, and reduced the amount of pay which the postal workers were then receiving:<sup>42</sup> Postal helpers lost a yearly average of \$75, while letter carriers lost \$17, postal clerks \$60 and railway mail clerks \$50.<sup>43</sup>

The government appears to have made several attempts to amend the salary schedule, but the C.S.C. refused to reconsider. The Department of Justice ruled that the Cabinet could only accept or reject recommendations from the C.S.C. but could not amend them. On June 9 the government decided to accept the new revision.<sup>44</sup> This incensed the postal workers, and amid attempts by the Federation to

renegotiate with the Cabinet, the agitation for strike action intensified and strike votes were conducted across the country.

The Dominion Postal Federation established its strike headquarters in Toronto, and vote results from the nearly 10,000 postal employees began to arrive. All branches were unanimous in rejecting the C.S.C.'s revision, although there was a mixed reaction to the strike issue. In places such as Toronto both the letter carriers and the postal clerks voted to strike. In other areas there was less enthusiasm, although most agreed to strike if necessary. The probability of a coast-to-coast walk-out was increased when the A.C.S.C. endorsed the action of the Federation and appeared ready to strike.<sup>45</sup>

On Tuesday, June 17, the Federation declared that the results of the strike votes were "beyond expectations" and a strike dead-line was announced for five o'clock in the afternoon on the next day. The government maintained its position that the C.S.C.'s award would be its last offer. In an attempt to break the impasse and revive negotiations, R. A. Stapells, President of the Toronto Board of Trade, telegraphed to Prime Minister King requesting resumption of talks.<sup>46</sup>

Stapells received a reply Tuesday evening inviting the Federation executive to Ottawa for conferences the next day. After lengthy deliberation, the executive boarded the mid-night train for Ottawa. Meetings were held on the 18th with Charles Stewart, the Acting Postmaster General, and James Murdock, the Minister of Labor.<sup>47</sup> At these eleventh hour negotiations the government agreed to supplement the C.S.C. awards, although even the new proposals meant that the employees would still draw less than they had the previous year.<sup>48</sup> At fifteen minutes to five the executive emerged from the meeting having decided to postpone the strike action for twenty-four hours. The government's offer and the

countermanding order were telegraphed to all branches from Ottawa. Neither acceptance nor rejection of the government's offer was recommended.<sup>49</sup>

Coming at the time it did, the new order caused considerable confusion. Before word had been received from Ottawa, strikes had begun at five o'clock in Toronto, Montreal, Moncton, Hamilton, Windsor, and elsewhere. The receipt of the countermanding order caused some strikers in Toronto to return to work. The strike committee took a firm stand against any "further delay" and refused to recognize the order of the Federation, "except on lines laid down by the rank and file." The trip to Ottawa, they stated, had never been sanctioned by the workers. In the face of this pressure from the postal workers, the executive, upon its return from the Capital, decided to rescind the second order and reinstated the original strike deadline. Disagreement within the executive over this decision caused the secretary, J. Archer, to resign. He counselled workers in several Ontario cities to accept the government's offer and return to work.<sup>50</sup>

At the beginning of the strike, instructions were issued from Ottawa that postmasters were to give their employees until ten o'clock the next morning (Thursday, June 19) to return to work; otherwise they would be dismissed and replaced. Protection was promised for those postal employees who remained on the job. Advertisements for 'postal helper' appeared almost immediately in the press. In Toronto postmaster Lemon began reorganizing the post office planning to utilize the new employees in a simplified sorting and distribution system. "A dozen white-collared Post Office official volunteers buzzed around the mail trucks, loading bags ... and sorting them."<sup>51</sup>

Contrary to the indications before the 18th, the strike movement failed to pick up momentum. Little disturbance was reported from the Maritimes or the West,

and in several places where the postal workers had initially left work, they quickly returned. The strike was confined to Ontario and Montreal, with postal workers remaining out in Toronto, Montreal, and Windsor.<sup>52</sup> The railway mail clerks had been slow in taking a strike vote, and the Chairman of the Postal Federation, himself a railway mail clerk, believed that they would not take part. In Toronto, they voted to participate in the strike.<sup>53</sup>

It was in Toronto that the strike had its centre and where the walkout was most complete, with 1400 men on strike. The employees decided to ignore the government's ultimatum and delegations were sent to Ottawa and Hamilton in an attempt to revive the spirit in these cities. Four hundred strikers motored to Hamilton in an effort to persuade the postal workers there to join them. In Toronto, committees were formed to visit those who were not on strike to persuade them to leave work.<sup>54</sup>

Very early in the strike, Postmaster Lemon had hired 576 new helpers, who were joined by twelve ex-strikers who were also hired on as 'helpers.' Other inexperienced applicants were turned away because the difficulty of attempting to train so many new workers proved chaotic. Some mail was sent to Ottawa where clerks working overtime sorting the material. In Montreal, where the strike was less successful, 500 men had attempted to force their way into the post office to attain employment.<sup>55</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Lemon was authorized to recruit his staff up to full strength, although few additional helpers were hired on.<sup>56</sup>

With capitulation being the norm outside of the three cities, the railway mail clerks voted to return to work and by the 20th rail service had been restored.<sup>57</sup> Since its ultimatum, the government had taken the position that the strike was officially over. Those who were still absent from their posts had simply read themselves out

of the civil service, and were considered ex-employees. Upon this basis no further concessions were offered by the government. Despite these difficulties, the Toronto workers maintained their spirit and even increased their demands, declaring that the government would have to pay them for the time they were on strike – shades of the 1918 settlement. By the 26th only sixty-nine strikers had returned to work, according to Lemon's announcement.<sup>58</sup>

In Windsor the postmaster had initially adopted a very hard line, declaring that anyone who could read and write would be given a position which, depending on their individual merits, could become permanent.<sup>59</sup> On June 20 it was reported that "fair service" had been maintained in Windsor, although no letter carriers were employed. While none of the strikers had reported for duty, the postmaster said he had been supplied with all the help that he needed.<sup>60</sup> The strike situation was such that police protection had been provided for the strike breakers.<sup>61</sup> By the 23rd very few of the new employees remained at work: the remainder had been "intimidated by the strikers." Public sentiment, it was admitted, was "strong against bringing in outside help."<sup>62</sup> The *Toronto Globe* reported that out of one hundred men who had been interviewed in Windsor by the employment bureau, only one would accept work in the post office, "and he was afraid to pass the pickets stationed by the strikers in front of the post office."<sup>63</sup>

In Toronto several marches were held ending in demonstrations in Queen's Park where the protesters were addressed by their strike leaders and other sympathizers. One such march was led by the wives of the striking postal workers. As many as 6,000 people attended the outdoor rallies.<sup>64</sup>

As the strike entered its ninth day with the government giving no sign that it was fully prepared to compromise, the workers decided to lower their demands.

They would accept the proposed adjustment to the C.S.C.'s offer and await the full revision for the entire service, and they would also accept the sub-committee of Cabinet which it was proposed would investigate their grievances. They wanted assurances, however, that they would be reinstated with full seniority and pension rights.<sup>65</sup> Negotiations were conducted between the King government in Ottawa and the Federation, with J. H. Cascaden, President of the Toronto Liberal Association, as mediator.

At a meeting of the postal workers, Cascaden informed them that he had assurances from the government that if they returned to the post office unconditionally and signed on as 'postal helpers,' they would then be reinstated and more than fairly treated.<sup>66</sup> Jackson, Chairman of the Federation, explained the terms to the strikers and said that they would be paid for the time they were on strike. The unconditional return was only a temporary obstacle to allow the government to 'save face,' and everything would be ironed out, Jackson explained, as soon as the men returned to the employ of the post office and were no longer strikers.<sup>67</sup> While the settlement was not in writing, the postal employees' representatives urged the men to accept the conditions and declared their faith that the government would live up to its verbal commitments. The strikers deliberated for three hours and then voted to return to work. At 6:30 in the evening on the 29<sup>th</sup>, 1400 postal workers marched in ranks to Station "A" in Toronto, headed by two men bearing union jacks, two pipes and a drummer.<sup>68</sup>

The return to work was more difficult in Montreal. Postmaster Gaudet claimed that he had received no official word as to the termination of the strike, and having no orders to let the strikers in, threatened to charge them with trespassing. Jackson informed Ottawa of the difficulty, and by July 2 all former employees had

been taken on as postal helpers.<sup>69</sup> The Windsor workers followed the lead of the strikers in Toronto and returned to work at the same time.

Despite the existence of a great deal of sentiment, coast- to-coast, in favour of a strike before June 18, when the strike began it failed to gain momentum and was confined to three eastern cities. While unanimously opposing the C.S.C. salary cut, many postal workers were not prepared to go on strike. Some long-time employees rejected the idea of a strike because there was no fund to support them and they would be unable to pick up other work.<sup>70</sup> Many feared that by striking they would jeopardize not only their position but their provisions for old age as well.<sup>71</sup>

Much confusion had been created by the vacillation of the strike leadership. Having been summoned to Ottawa at the last minute, the federation executive attempted to rescind its strike order when it was too late in some regions. The government's compromise offer was announced at the time the strike was scheduled to begin and it had the effect of confusing the workers who were on strike and dampening militancy in the workers who had yet to take decisive action. While many post offices were struck on the 18th, the news of the government's offer and the contradictory orders from the Federation caused the majority of postal workers to return to work. In Toronto the strike had strong rank and file leadership which was the principal reason for the continuation of the strike. The decision of the Federation executive to restore the original strike date further deepened the 'muddle' and exposed the dearth of competent leadership. The split in the executive further confused the issue. The strike continued only in centres where there was well developed rank and file militancy.

In the west, branches of the A.C.S.C. had endorsed the action of the eastern postal workers and several strike votes were conducted prior to the 18th. As the

strike erupted in the east, however, no corresponding action was taken in the west. This was partly caused by the difference in time zones, since the five o'clock deadline had not been passed before the news arrived that the government had made a new offer. The President of the A.C.S.C. took the position that a strike should not have been called while negotiations were still underway.

In addition, the negative experiences of the western postal workers in the 1919 strike had developed feelings of repentance on the part of some of the postal employees. Winnipeg workers decided not to strike because, as J. Thompson, the Provincial Vice President of the D.P.C.A. explained, the conditions in that city "placed the local men at a grave disadvantage as compared with the workers in the eastern points. The postal workers in Winnipeg had accepted the uncertainties of a strike in 1919, and with so many factions as a hang-over from that period, an attitude of greater caution was generally favoured."<sup>72</sup> In addition the A.C.S.C. was not represented in the Postal Federation which was a rival organization. The movement towards co-operation in the period before June 18 was brought about by the extremity of the situation which demanded unified action. The government compromise defused the situation, and afterwards the A.C.S.C. was able to send a delegation to Ottawa to present arguments for salary readjustment.

The legitimate grievance of the strikers had initially created much public and business support. The conflict between the C.S.C. and the Cabinet placed the postal workers, for a time, in the position of the innocent victim. The government had yet to fully learn the necessity of good public relations, of giving the appearance of fair play and 'appropriate procedures' which would solidify their position and appear to place the employees in the wrong. The strike issue developed prior to the 18th in an atmosphere of general press and public support for the employees, support

which they attributed to the justice of their cause and the patience they had exhibited in refraining for so long from drastic action.<sup>73</sup> While placing the blame for the up-coming strike on both parties, *The Globe* criticized the government for evading its responsibility. Parliament, not the C.S.C. was the supreme body, *The Globe* editorialized; by accepting the C.S.C.'s revision the government gave an objective indication that it was exactly what the government had wished.<sup>74</sup> After the strike began the paper did not take sides, and the two 'servants of the people' were castigated for warring with each other. Since the strike had been marked by confusion and misunderstanding, both parties were counselled to accommodate to the other.<sup>75</sup>

The business interests of Toronto would be directly affected by a work stoppage in the post office. Prior to the 18th the Toronto Board of Trade had met with other business interests to discuss efforts to prevent the strike from taking place. R. A. Stapells, the president of the Board, consulted with the strikers and concluded that the offer of the C.S.C. was inadequate to the needs of the men. It was through Stapells that the eleventh hour negotiations were arranged, and he travelled with the Federation executive to Ottawa "to at least lend the moral support of the business and financial interests and of the public generally of Toronto in bringing about a settlement."<sup>76</sup>

Notwithstanding the resumption of negotiations, the strike began on the 18th in several cities as scheduled. After that point the Board of Trade became less identified with the cause of the strikers because feelings prevailed that both parties were equally responsible. As the strike continued in Toronto the postmaster was unable to provide adequate mail service and some businesses were forced to close down temporarily. As communications broke down the business community

complained more vocally of its losses.<sup>77</sup>

The local Liberal Association gave some support for the postal workers. On several occasions they sent telegrams to the government, one of which advised that the civil service commissioners should be dismissed.<sup>78</sup> It was through the mediation of Cascaden of the Liberal Association that the final negotiations were concluded which ended the strike. Support came from other sources as well; for example, a rate payers' association in Toronto passed a resolution asking the government to reinstate the strikers.<sup>79</sup>

The Church also played a mediating role in the strike. While the postal workers were off the job in Toronto, the Social Service Workers of the Anglican Communion in Canada and the United States were in conference in the city. They appointed a committee to investigate the 'crisis' which met first with Mackenzie King and James Murdock, the Minister of Labour, then with postmaster Lemon, and finally with the Federation executive. Several of the clergy addressed the workers in a "most conciliatory manner which paved the way for a receptive attitude towards the Government's proposals."<sup>80</sup>

The business interests, liberal politicians, and the social activist section of the church all played the role of mediator in the dispute. Interested at first in preventing the strike and then in restoring the disrupted service, these institutions adopted the view that both sides were wrong. Postal workers had the moral right to strike if conditions were intolerable, but the government did not have the right to impose such conditions on the people's servants.

If the postal workers obtained some moral support from these interests and had some broad popular sympathy, the most consistent source of support came from other workers. Speaking at Queen's Park, John Young, the President of the

Toronto Trades and Labor Council, declared that the strike involved the interests of all organized labour. He argued that the government should not act as a strike-breaking agency but should rather act in the interests of the people, the majority of whom were workers.<sup>81</sup>

The Toronto street railway employees sent their greeting and sympathy to the striking postal workers. Stating that they were “proud of the city because it is a public ownership city,” the employees declared that this meant “better wages and conditions for the men.” These should equally apply to the postal service which was described as also being a public utility.<sup>82</sup> Other tradesmen, such as carpenters, machinists, railway shopmen and typographers also voiced support. Just prior to the settlement of the strike the possibility of a general sympathetic walk-out was raised in the Toronto Trades and Labor Council.<sup>83</sup> The Unemployed Association pledged its support and denied that any members of the association had taken work in the post office. The unemployed workers were the most vociferous advocates of a general strike in the public rallies.<sup>84</sup>

Workers also assisted the strikers more directly. According to G. Jackson, the railway mail clerks had been at first disinclined to participate in the strike. After the strike began, however, their position became “intolerable on the road. Railroaders would spit at them and bless them with satanic terms.” This pressure was behind the positive strike vote. When they decided to return to work “they felt their position keenly and returned to work reluctantly.”<sup>85</sup>

In Montreal a letter carrier service had been begun during the strike although it did not extend very widely. Letter carriers were first sent out on the 21st but had to be recalled early in the day. The carriers had been accustomed to using the public transit, but “owing to the intimidation and insults from the street railway

employees" the service had to be discontinued and police protection provided.<sup>86</sup> Two letter carriers were later assaulted in Montreal, an action which brought members of the R.C.M.P. into the city to protect the strike breakers.<sup>87</sup> Letter carrier service was restored in some areas of Toronto just prior to the end of the strike and reports in the press indicated that they were subject to much ignominy. In some cases, the carriers were chased by women carrying brooms.<sup>88</sup> Material support was provided by postal workers in the United States who voted to send money to help the situation in Montreal. Five thousand dollars was collected and distributed in Montreal as strike pay.<sup>89</sup>

One of the most significant aspects of the strike was the response of the government which more closely paralleled the 1919 experience. There was no longer any doubt as to whether postal workers would strike, and the government was prepared in advance for its occurrence. A C.S.C. memorandum had predicted that the strike would be confined to Ontario and possibly Montreal. The postmasters were requested to advertise the positions of postal helper, at \$85 a week, give the candidates oral exams, and prepare lists of such candidates for duty when this became necessary.<sup>90</sup> In Ottawa on the 17th some applications were received from unemployed workers who anticipated a strike.<sup>91</sup>

The government was fully prepared to make a fight out of the strike and not give in to the militancy. One Cabinet Minister remarked that if the postal workers persisted in their attitude, "they may place themselves in a position where Parliament can do only one thing – and that might be the one thing the postal workers do not desire." Charles Stewart, the acting Postmaster General, spoke less bluntly: the employees who go on strike, he warned, should be prepared to "shoulder the consequences."<sup>92</sup>

As the strike commenced, a Minister spelled out the meaning of these threats by declaring that no striker would be permitted to return to his position. The government was fully prepared to meet “the challenge of the men” and improvise measures to restore the postal service. Charles Stewart notified all postmasters to give the ten o’clock deadline and to dismiss those who did not respond. In areas where the strike continued the postmaster was to attempt to devise alternative postal arrangements with the help of new employees hired on at the minimum salary.<sup>93</sup>

The government’s plan was to dismiss the strikers and remove them completely from the civil service. Beginning then with an official position that there was no strike, but only a large number of ex-employees, a new staff would be hired. The intransigence of the government, coupled with the dismissal and replacement of the employees, were designed to compel many of the strikers to return to the service. The strike could then be broken and the postal service resumed with weakened trade unions to represent the men.

A key role in the government’s posture of intransigence was played by the Minister of Labor, James Murdock, describing the events of the strike several months after the fact, Murdock related that “he knew how the men on strike did not usually think, and knew how to deal with them.” He had telephoned the strikers in Toronto to ask how long they intended to remain off the job and received the reply that they would stay out until the government gave in to their demands. Murdock replied in turn that if that was their position, “you’ll stay out until hell freezes over.”<sup>94</sup> This remark incensed the workers and Murdock came in for a great deal of verbal abuse at the public rallies.<sup>94b</sup> James Murdock was originally a union man. He worked as a trainman for the C.P.R., and served as the Canadian Vice-President of

the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen between 1905-1921 and 1926-1933. In the interim he served as the Minister of Labour (1921-1925) in the King Government. In 1930 he was appointed to the Senate.

With the exception of a brief reference to the proroguing of Parliament on July 19, 1924, there were no entries in the King Diaries between May 14 and July 26, 1924. King complained of fatigue and pressure from work (July 27, 1924).

As the strike continued there was no indication that either side was willing to soften its attitude. The post office, however, was in an increasingly chaotic condition and businessmen were suffering a loss of trade. Contrary to expectations, there was not a flood of men attempting to return to work – relatively few men in Toronto capitulated and returned to work before the general decision was made. But both sides gave indications that a compromise would likely be acceptable. The Federation accepted the governments offers but wanted to be guaranteed reinstatement and full pension and seniority rights. The government maintained their basic position that all strikers would have to return unconditionally and sign on as postal helpers, but intimated through their representatives that this was merely a formality in order not to ‘lose face.’ The government’s position implied that they had in fact won the strike and humbled the employees – the strikers returned on the government’s terms.<sup>95</sup> They had gained practically nothing from the strike that had not been previously offered, and the verbal promises of reinstatement simply restored the *status quo ante*.

Nevertheless, the workers had extracted a verbal pledge from the government which was in contradiction to the hard bargaining position which the Cabinet had taken in the beginning. Deeds were to prove more important than words, however. As the government was slow to restore the workers to their

previous positions, Jackson complained of the delay and stated that the men were showing remarkable patience and relying on the word of the Federation that they would be treated justly. He alluded to the precedent established in 1918 and requested that the government pay the strikers for the time they were on strike – an act he thought would go a long way toward reconciliation.<sup>96</sup> Reverend Spence, shocked at the way the postal workers were being treated, wrote an open letter in which he held Cascaden responsible for misleading the workers, especially on the issue of receiving pay for lost time. Cascaden denied the allegation that they had ignored the misinformation given to the men by Jackson at the time of the settlement, and declared that if it had been said there was certainly no authorization for it.<sup>97</sup>

The government not only refused to consider the ‘precedent’ of 1918 but intended to punish the workers in other ways. All temporary personnel served a six-month probationary period at the end of which their sorting was evaluated and the decision made to retain or release them. Forty temporary employees in Toronto who had not served their first six months had gone on strike. The Deputy Postmaster General proposed to release these men on the grounds that they had proven themselves unfit to be postal workers.<sup>98</sup>

On July 14 the government laid down its conditions for reinstatement. Those new employees hired during the strike were permitted to remain if, as individuals, they proved satisfactory.<sup>99</sup> Those who went on strike and subsequently returned would be kept on the staff as postal helpers, at a salary of \$85 per week, until September 1, 1924. If they performed satisfactory service during that period, they would be reinstated at the position they had vacated. If they did not give satisfactory service, they would be granted one month’s salary in lieu of notice and released

from the service. Those who formerly occupied the most senior posts would be “eligible to compete” for them.<sup>100</sup> some of the strikers were ‘black-listed’ and their applications to become candidates for the postal helpers’ examination were refused.<sup>101</sup>

The *Ottawa Journal Press* gave an indication that not all press opinion was favourably disposed to the workers. Condemning the Toronto press for siding with the strikers, the editorial expressed the belief of the paper that Toronto should suffer a little longer:

A great many people in Canada will be disposed to let Toronto stew in its own juice.... Has anybody outside of Toronto suffered very much because the mail service in Toronto has been upset through a stupid strike? Let those who directly or indirectly encourage public servants to adopt an intolerable course stew for a while in the mess that has resulted.<sup>102</sup>

The postal employees expressed great indignation over the breaking of the ‘gentleman’s agreement,’ and in Windsor the local postal workers were ready to strike again in protest. The reaction, however, was not sufficiently intense to lead to another walk-out. The government had defeated the strike and won the peace as postal workers were not inclined as a body to resume the strike. In Toronto the returned strikers wore “PO85” buttons to distinguish them from the strike breakers who were still employed – the “85” referred to their weekly salary as postal helpers.<sup>103</sup> James Murdock declared sarcastically that he had it “very much to heart to see such fine, loyal, intelligent, educated men going back in a big bunch willing

to accept the pittance of \$85 per week," which the men agreed to accept.<sup>104</sup> It is worth pointing out that the tactics adopted by the Liberal King government to suppress public service strikes were similar to those adopted by the previous Conservative administration of Meighen.

The railway mail clerks responded to the strike by withdrawing from the Federation and from affiliation with other postal unions. The D.R.M.C.F. had opposed the attitude of President Jackson, which had not been in accordance with the desires of the mail clerks. At its May, 1925, meeting, the railway mail clerks passed a resolution requiring an eighty percent majority of both the members and the executive before strike action could be undertaken.<sup>105</sup>

At the 1924 T.L.C. convention, animosity between branches erupted. A Kitchener representative criticized the role of the T.L.C. in the strike, and a Toronto postal worker retorted that the opportunity for assisting the strike had been to join it while it was still on. The T.L.C. defended its role by claiming that the Federation had not requested its assistance until the strike had begun, and a spokesman for the Congress detailed the steps the T.L.C. had taken to negotiate with the government.<sup>106</sup>

The disciplinary action taken by the post office was a major grievance of the reinstated workers. The postal employees attempted to obtain reimbursement of the amount lost because of their temporary demotion. At the 1924 annual meeting, of the T.L.C. the Toronto District Labor Council introduced a resolution protesting the payment of helpers' wages to experienced men, the penalizing of the strikers, the dismissal of employees who participated in the strike, and the "compelling of strikers to educate strike breakers in the performing of their duties as Civil Servants." The resolution recommended the dismissal of the strike breakers and the

removal from office of Deputy Postmaster General Underwood, "whose influence can only be regarded as inimical to the best interests of the Postal Service." the convention accepted the resolution with the exception that the reference to Underwood was deleted by the resolutions committee.<sup>107</sup> The F.A.L.C. requested that the government grant amnesty to the strikers, and asked that "no financial loss ... accrue to those who exercised a right which every British subject is entitled to."<sup>108</sup>

No government action on the matter was forthcoming for two years. On 22 March 1926, a delegation of postal employees waited on the Postmaster General, and were informed that the government had decided to repay the money that had been lost by the strikers between their re-employment as 'helpers' and their reinstatement on September 1. The moral correctness of the penalty was reaffirmed: "it is not pretended that the striking employees had any legal right to be paid at a rate other than that upon which they agreed to return to work, and it is only on compassionate grounds that the matter can be given consideration." The settlement was offered "as tangible evidence of the desire of the government to engender in the postal service the fullest possible measure of good will and harmony" and thereby finish "an unpleasant chapter in the history of the Canadian postal service."<sup>109</sup>

The postal workers were clearly the most militant sector of the Canadian Civil Service. The C.S.C. had been charged with the responsibility of revising the salary schedules of the entire service and had begun with the postal department. If the postal workers had received substantial gains, then the pressure would be overwhelming to generalize the new rates to the service as a whole. It was with this consideration that the C.S.C. acted miserly with its recommendations. On the other hand, in order to make the staff association manageable, it was necessary to indicate

forcefully that only the use of appropriate channels would bring success and that resort to 'illegitimate' means would be confronted and defeated. If the postal workers could be compelled to toe that line, the remainder of the civil service would learn vicariously the appropriate lesson. Consequently, the government adopted a 'hard line' and refused to make concessions, and once the strikers had returned to work, repudiated in practice any verbal promises of fair treatment. To some degree, then, the government defeated the militancy of the civil servants and not until the Second World War did unrest again become potentially disruptive.

If employer-employee co-operation prevailed in the civil service by the middle 1920s, an important opposition continued to exist which retained some measure of an earlier radicalism. The Amalgamated Postal Workers, at the inception of the organization, had been a rival of the three 'eastern' postal unions. When its efforts to affiliate with the T.L.C. had been defeated, principally through the action of the D.P.C.A., which was granted jurisdiction from coast to coast, the A.P.W. had expanded its scope to include all Dominion civil servants, and tried to affiliate with the C.S.F.<sup>110</sup>

At the convention of the A.P.W. in Victoria in 1921, a new name and constitution was adopted based on the proposition that problems could not be most expeditiously handled with a departmental or occupational basis of organization, but rather with one single service-wide association. There was a need for unity on common issues, and the extension of the C.S.C.'s control to the outside service meant that there was essentially only one employer for the whole service.

Federal employees in departments other than the post office had formed a single association in B.C. and had affiliated with the C.S.F. Prior to its 1921 convention the A.P.W. had conducted a referendum among these employees and

determined that the majority of them favoured a single, dues-paying organization of all civil servants. Consequently, when the A.C.S.C. was formed, the B.C. federal employees disbanded and joined the Amalgamated.<sup>111</sup> Objectively the A.C.S.C. had become the rival of the Civil Service Federation.

The original executive of the A.C.S.C. represented six departments: Post Office, Immigration, Fisheries, Agriculture, Public Works, and Mines and Resources. The majority of its members were postal workers.<sup>112</sup> The new constitution provided for one amalgamated body representing all departments, branches and grades, and any employee of the Dominion government who had served six months was eligible for membership.<sup>113</sup> It provided as well for many branches, departmental and inter-departmental local units in each district,<sup>114</sup> which gave practical content to the principle of developing broad, democratic, local control. The Amalgamated was a reaction against the 'sectionalism' that kept the service divided and attempted to create one united service which would put an end to the mentality of "craft consciousness and class distinctions" in government employment.<sup>115</sup>

The opportunity to engage in common practice in 1924 was rejected by the western postal workers in their refusal to go on strike. Some efforts were made to 'raid' the Toronto and Halifax locals of the F.A.L.C. in 1929, with the result that some postal workers in Toronto joined the Amalgamated.<sup>116</sup> By 1933, however, the A.C.S.C. and the Postal Clerks' were making common representations on working conditions to the government.

The A.C.S.C. had been refused affiliation to the C.S.F. on two grounds. One of these was jurisdictional, since the F.A.L.C. was affiliated with the C.S.F. According to the Secretary of the Amalgamated, Fred Knowles, Alex McMordie of

the letter carriers told him voluntarily that the only reason the F.A.L.C. had affiliated was to prevent the A.C.S.C. from doing so.<sup>117</sup> The second fundamental difference was the organizational basis of the two associations. The A.C.S.C. advocated one single dues-paying organization comprised of all civil servants, while the Federation represented a number of independent 'class' or departmental organizations.<sup>118</sup> The Amalgamated manifested an 'industrial unionism' in the civil service, which prompted the C.S.F. to label it an 'O.B.U.' (One Big Union) and engage in some 'red-baiting,' which prompted mildly polemical replies.<sup>119</sup>

In the fall of 1929 the President of the C.S.F., V.C. Phelen, went on a 'western tour' into the heart-land of the Amalgamated, and in open meetings presented the Federation's point of view. While he subsequently reported that the membership of the rival organization had been depleted by ten or twenty percent (portents which presumably indicated "the early demise of that body"),<sup>120</sup> the A.C.S.C. was able to maintain most of its strength. Nevertheless, consistent with its more 'trade union' character, its completeness was considerable less than the C.S.F. which continued to represent the majority of organized civil servants.

The A.C.S.C. was intended to operate along 'trade union' lines and was recognized as a trade union by at least one section of the Canadian labour movement. The All-Canadian Congress of Labour had issued an invitation to the C.S.F. for affiliation in the months preceding June 1929. The Federation had rejected the proposal on the grounds that it was inconsistent with its constitution. With this decision as a background, the A.C.C.L. later reacted strongly to the C.S.F.'s claim that the F.A.L.C. was unique in being the only body of civil servants constituting a trade union. In response the *Canadian Unionist*, the official journal of the A.C.C.L., referred to the Federation as a 'company union' and a 'debating society of

government employees.' The reference to the F.A.L.C. was defined as an "ill-concealed slam at the A.C.S.C." by suggesting that it was not a 'trade union.' For the A.C.C.L. the hallmark of trade unionism had never been affiliation to the T.L.C. described as the "A.F. of L.'s Canadian subsidiary."<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, the A.C.S.C. did not make a move to affiliate with the A.C.C.L. until the Second World War when the vote to affiliate was lost by a narrow margin.

The basis of the pro-labour orientation of the A.C.S.C. was located in its membership. The majority of the members were postal workers, either clerks or letter carriers. The leadership during these years also came from carriers (such as Fred Knowles and President Christian Sivertz). Other civil servants who joined the union, as we have indicated above, were generally lower paid clericals. It would seem, then, that the 'trade union' character of the organization was directly linked to the class position of its membership and leadership. As such it functioned as an opposition to the C.S.F. Several examples can provide the flavour of its opposition.

Civil service organizations had been attempting for decades to obtain adequate superannuation privileges, and in 1924 the government passed an act to this effect which was greeted with delight by most civil servants. The Amalgamated demonstrated what the C.S.F. termed "their patent belligerence" and criticized the Act claiming that the "contribution is excessive in proportion to the allowance." The A.C.S.C. referred to the provision as "an act to provide funds for the Government wherewith to cover extravagances in quarters not named" and proposed that it be rejected in toto. The C.S.F. condemned this "impractical and immature" policy and advocated that the correct tactic was to accept the act and modify it carefully over time.<sup>122</sup>

In 1926 all civil service organizations had agreed to demand a \$300 increase

from the government, to be paid to all grades. The government's decision had been to pay \$120. Shortly after this announcement, "vociferous and ill-tempered protests from locals of the Amalgamated began to pour into Ottawa. *The Organizer* called the offer "an insult" and roundly condemned it. The A.C.S.C. protested by sending wires to the Ministers and MPs, and by holding local protest meetings which presented the case of the civil servants to the press. Telegrams were dispatched from these meetings to the government.

The C.S.F. took the position that the maximum attainable had been reached, and while regretting that it had not been larger, had "expressed satisfaction that the government had at least partially met the claims of the Service." The attitude of the A.C.S.C. was condemned, and it was claimed that the union was opposed to the increase. Knowles had advocated the withdrawal of the offer of \$120, but only in favour of a unified demand from the whole service that the increase be greater.<sup>123</sup> The Federation was more closely involved with the government's reasoning – one of the effects of employer-employee co-operation – and in the 1920s its moderate approach gave every indication of being the more practically successful.

In 1929 the Federation was successful in obtaining an agreement from the government to establish an enquiry into civil service salaries. The Beatty Commission, which had formerly investigated professional and technical services, was re-constituted and its terms of reference expanded to embrace the whole service. The A.C.S.C. opposed the commission, which led the C.S.F. to again conclude that the A.C.S.C. was against salary increases. The main plank of the amalgamated platform on salaries had been the granting of a minimum salary of \$100 per month. Their opposition was based on a belief that the commission merely delayed establishing this minimum, the necessity for which had been "adequately

proved" by the A.C.S.C..<sup>124</sup>

In the 1930s the government had reduced civil service salaries by ten percent. In January 1935 the Federation was willing to accept a restoration of half of this amount.<sup>125</sup> The A.C.S.C. refused to accept this offer and criticized the C.S.F. of being "in cahoots" with the government in an attempt to stifle the aims of the civil servants. The A.C.S.C. charged that the government was attempting to 'buy off' the Federation, in particular the postal unions, and that the Federation was co-operating. The C.S.F. demonstrated the logic of company unionism when it wondered how the Amalgamated hoped to be successful when it made such allegations.<sup>126</sup>

The A.C.S.C. also advocated joint councils in the civil service – their conception, however, was that these would be advisory in nature and deal with 'general principles' rather than act as an executive body.<sup>127</sup> All questions "where adjustments cannot otherwise be affected" would be referred to the council,<sup>128</sup> making it, in their view, a dispute resolution mechanism. This was clearly a more conservative conception than that advocated by the defunct A.F.E.O. – it was, however, more consistent with the demands made by the postal unions.

The Amalgamated Civil Servants of Canada, then, functioned largely as the voice of opposition in the late 1920s and during the 1930s. The service was not completely unified ideologically or organizationally. The Amalgamated was rooted in the lower grades of the civil service and in regions distant from the seat of the federal government. The C.S.F. reaction to the Amalgamated was expressed partly by opposition to the divergent concepts of amalgamation and unionism, but also according to its own class and regional snobbery. This is clearly evident in the following description, from the *Civil Service Review*, of a 1935 interview with the

Minister of Finance:

... The second 'spokesman' for the Amalgamated [Knowles spoke first], who had come from Kitchener, sat throughout the meeting and never opened his lips, a quite common practice of Amalgamated 'spokesmen' of the type who travel thousands of miles to Ottawa and who, after telling Civil Servants back home 'all about it,' are speechless at interviews. Bearing in mind the Amalgamated attitude and manner of speech perhaps their members suffer less by their officers' silence, at that.<sup>129</sup>

Despite the radicalism that emerged from the A.C.S.C. in the late 1920s and 1930s, the C.S.F. was the more successful, and its reformist ideology and co-operative policies were able to bring about certain reforms. For the majority of the service, then, the period following the defeat of the 1924 postal strike was one of growing conservatism.

## **Conclusion**

The Associated Federal Employees of Canada dissolved in 1924, and the three federal union charters were surrendered, although the Ottawa office cleaners continued to exist as a directly chartered local of the T.L.C.. The passing of the most radical of the staff associations was symptomatic of the success of the moderate organizations and the trend towards greater conservatism. both of these were social facts, however, and were rooted in objective conditions.

The defeat of the 1924 postal strike along with the experience of federal employees in 1919, and the harsh terms applied against the strikers by the government, defused the militancy of the postal workers which had existed since World War One. Adopting a policy of standing firm against 'illegitimate' forms of protest and making a hard line against the most militant sector of the civil service, the government was counting on an ideological 'ripple effect' which would convince other government employees of the disadvantages of trade unionism.

Accompanying this defeat of the more radical postal workers was some objective reassertion of the differential status of the 'middle class' civil servants. One major salary revision had taken place in 1924-1925. By 1927 the C.S.C. and the staff associations had devised a second revision. The associations had originally demanded an across the board increase of \$300, and the C.S.C. had offered \$60 for the lower grades, \$120 for the intermediate grades, and \$180 for the higher grades. The government then proposed that the increase be limited to \$120 but that it apply to all grades equally – a position which the C.S.C. accepted. With the possible exception of the professional and technical workers, these two revisions had bettered the position of civil servants relative to the country as a whole.<sup>130</sup>

The civil servants, through the C.S.F. and C.S.A.O. in particular, had been able to achieve a superannuation system based on the principles of equal payment from both the employees and the government. According to Hodgetts this system was in advance of pension schemes which were being developed in private industry.<sup>131</sup> The C.S.C. viewed the superannuation system as a "scientific system of retirement" complementary to scientific selection and scientific management.<sup>132</sup> According to the 1924 *Annual Report* of the C.S.C., superannuation relieves the Government of the embarrassment and extravagance of retaining the services of

officers who have outlived their usefulness; creates a proper flow of promotions; renders the service more mobile; deters efficient officers from leaving the public service for private employment where emolument and opportunity may be greater; helps to attract a better class of applicants for positions in the service and in general tends to promote efficiency in every way.<sup>133</sup> In short, Hodgetts concluded that: "During the twenties ... patronage was largely eliminated, some of the previously prevailing chaos disappeared, an orderly classification of positions was installed, and a superannuation system was established."<sup>134</sup>

The government's success in defeating the militant postal workers, coupled with the opportunity to promote reformist ideology by slowly compromising with the demands of the staff associations during the relatively prosperous 1920s, transformed the objective situation of the federal employees and undermined the radical attempts to unionize. The remaining staff associations were strengthened as they were able to achieve some reforms. This objective change in the relative position of civil servants tended to reinforce their 'salaried class' status and undermined the identification with the working class that some 'white-collar' civil servants had begun to develop at the end of the war. In the place of this 'working class' perspective, civil servants came to perceive of themselves more as a unique class unto themselves – the view that public servants were in essence classless and served the whole people equally. The ideological debate which had surrounded the movement to affiliate the C.S.F. with labour had, by the mid and late-1920s, largely been resolved in favour of the 'classless' perspective.

The C.S.A.O. and the C.S.F. had consistently promoted the ideology of co-operation with the employer. The only difference was that after 1924 only the A.C.S.C. opposed this line, and then only in very minor, quantitative aspects. In

1920 the C.S.A.O. made it clear that its object was to make the association “an actual and integral part of the machinery of reconstruction in the Service.” They were endeavouring to effect civil service reforms by approaching the authorities in a friendly and helpful spirit of cooperation.

This approach had its practical successes in the 1920s. For example, the elevator operators in the C.S.A.O. had interviewed the Deputy Minister in 1927 with suggestions for the improvement of working conditions. According to the *Civil Service News*, that official was “impressed by their earnestness, and most of their recommendations have been put into effect.” The article concluded by claiming that these concessions had “produced a feeling of contentment in their work, a knowledge that their difficulties are understood and appreciated, with the result that they are endeavouring one and all to serve to the best of their ability.”<sup>136</sup>

The C.S.A.O. claimed that its success in attaining civil service reforms was directly linked to its policy of couching requests in moderate terms and only bringing them forward after a “mature consideration” had determined that they were in the best interests of the service as a whole. It was because of the moderate rather than radical nature of the proposals that the government welcomed representations from the Association and implemented the proposals.<sup>137</sup>

Besides this reasoned and moderate approach to the government, the Association believed that good public relations were crucial for obtaining reforms. The civil servants could best secure the public’s confidence by assiduously applying the ‘service ethic’ to their individual work. According to the *Institute Journal* of the professionals in the civil service, the public confidence would be won “if all members of the Civil Service were devoted to a common interest – to curtail expense and waste, improve efficiency and service, and give a full day’s work for a full day’s

pay.”<sup>138</sup> In order to eradicate public misconceptions about the service it was necessary to be more conscientious in the application to one’s assigned tasks. The civil servants were instructed by their Association to put more than merely their time into their work: the civil servant should “study a little more about the usefulness and aims of his department; and be able to justify to the public at the part which he is playing in the development of his country.”<sup>139</sup>

According to the C.S.A.O., the civil service was composed of servants of the public, “and its members must have the large and generous view if they are to be worthy of their high calling.” The aims of the civil servant were not selfish, but were to give efficient service, and any improvement which they sought in their working conditions was in order to provide even better service in the future. The Association recognized that not all civil servants were activated by this ethic of service, but it was the conscious aim of the C.S.A.O. to promote and encourage the ideology. Since the public as a whole was the paymaster, civil servants ought to ally not with one class of the public, but with the public as a whole.<sup>140</sup>

All civil servants, whether pick and shovel workers in the Department of Public Works, or a Branch Head “who toils night and day at his desk,” were the servants of the people, and this distinction between private and public employment was thought to be more profound than any class distinctions. It was the difference between serving private, sectional interests and serving the whole country.<sup>141</sup> The service ethic was directly related to the view of the civil service as comprising a distinct class encompassing all occupations and united within an ideology of public service.

By the late 1920s this view seems to have largely prevailed (with the possible exception of the important Amalgamated Civil Servants of Canada). The desire for

a 'class spirit' was encouraged, but unlike the campaign of the A.F.E.O., the later use of the phrase implied the development of an *esprit do corps* which acted to separate civil servants from other workers. Writing in the first edition of the *Civil Service Review*, A. C. Campbell apologised for using the work 'class', and demonstrated what he meant by using the term:

When Smith & Co. Ltd. try to unite their employees in loyalty to the concern, the effect, if successful, is to make those employees a class and to make them class conscious.... I do not know of any company, body, crowd, class that has quite such reason to be class conscious and class proud as the Civil Service of Canada. We serve the people direct, the people of the dominion of Canada.... We have the traditions, even in the young life of our country, of tasks the most difficult done with noble faithfulness by our elders and forerunners in the Service. If the members of any class should be humbly and hopefully determined that his loyalty, devotion and honest industry shall make him worthy of a high calling, the Canadian Civil Servant is that identical person.<sup>142</sup>

Campbell argued that the civil service was a unique institution that could function efficiently only if the civil servants were fit for their calling. They had to have the right temperament and point of view. They must first be organizable (presumably by such 'moderate' associations as the C.S.F.); second, they were to be 'devotees,' that is, were to look upon public service as a permanent career; finally, they had to be economically content and "middle of the road."<sup>143</sup>

Jean Boivin has concluded that the pro-union orientation of 'white-collar'

civil servants was late in coming because “they identified psychologically with management and they considered themselves well-treated by their employees. A large number of these workers were into class-conscious in outlook; rather they were individualistic and conservative.”<sup>144</sup> Despite the use of the ‘service ethic’ to promote civil service organizational unity, it was in essence individualistic. What united federal employees was the fact that they all rendered individual services to the same body of people. Ideologically, the ‘service ethic’ was aimed at each individual’s application to his work, and was more in keeping with the nature of ‘white-collar’ employment. It achieved increased prominence at a time when traditional differentials, which had been to some degree undermined, had tended to reappear both in fact and in the consciousness of the employees.

By 1927 the Civil Service Association was claiming that dissatisfaction with the classification was purely an individual matter and that the solution rested in the power of each individual. Civil servants were to perform their duties with zeal and enthusiasm, always with a view to doing their individual best at even the most menial tasks. The rewards of promotion would surely follow such diligence and reclassification and salary increases would result from individual effort.<sup>145</sup>

In the late 1920s the view that rewards inevitably followed hard work was given much prominence in the *Civil Service News*. In one edition, five ‘classes’ of people were listed: the world’s prizes, honours, and best pay went to the ‘class’ of people who showed most initiative and performed their work without having to be told; the lowest ‘class’ could not do things right even with supervision and “is always out of a job, and receive the contempt [they] deserve.”<sup>146</sup> That man who could lose himself in his work would surely be the one to succeed best.<sup>147</sup> Genius, according to the *News*, was “only the power of making continuous efforts.... There

is no failure except in no longer trying. There is no defeat except from within, no really insurmountable barrier save our own inherent weakness of purpose."<sup>148</sup> Comforts and rewards depended on struggling for the glory of achievement.<sup>149</sup>

Interestingly, such observations, which were given front page prominence in the late 1920s, disappeared in this obvious form by the early 1930s. Perhaps it became at least implicitly obvious that individual effort was not necessarily the most important element and that objective circumstances provided important limiting conditions.

By the late 1920s, then, the civil service had reached a relatively harmonious plateau. The lot of the public employees had been improved relative to the immediate post-war years through conservative channels. Within this objective context, the ethics of public service and individual achievement held ideological sway. Significantly, the only major protest movement in the civil service was located in a regionally-based union made up of some of the lower clericals and postal workers. The fact that the C.S.A.O. and the C.S.F. promoted a 'middle class' ethic of individualism does not indicate that all members shared this consciousness. What was significant was the lack of opposition and the decline of the eastern protest movements.

### Notes – Part III

<sup>1</sup> 'Relative quiet' because there was a partial revival of civil service unrest, particularly in the post office, in the conditions created by the second world war.

<sup>2</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII, No. 6 (May 1919), p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg*, p. 133.

- <sup>4</sup> *The Postal Journal*, April 1919, in *The Civilian*, Vol. XII, No. 5, p. 182.
- <sup>5</sup> Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827- 1959* (Toronto: N. C. Press, 1973), p. 190.
- <sup>6</sup> Bercuson, *Confrontation*, p. 133.
- <sup>7</sup> Bercuson, *Confrontation*, pp. 133-135.
- <sup>8</sup> Sturart Marshall Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66* (Ottawa: Task Force on Labour Relations, 1966), p. 178.
- <sup>9</sup> Bercuson, *Confrontation*, p. 134.
- <sup>10</sup> Bercuson, *Confrontation*, p. 135.
- <sup>11</sup> Department of Labour, *Labour Gazette*, Vol. 19, p. 684.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 May 1919.
- <sup>13</sup> Bercuson, *Confrontation*, p. 135.
- <sup>14</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII, No. 6 (May 1919), p. 299; Calgary Albertan, 23 May 1919.
- <sup>15</sup> Department of Labour, File on Strikes and Lockouts, (Report of Cpl. Zaneth, R.N.W.M.P.)
- <sup>16</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XII No. 6 (May 1919), p. 199.
- <sup>17</sup> *The Civilian*.
- <sup>18</sup> Trades and Labor congress, *Report of Proceedings*, 1919, p. 208.
- <sup>19</sup> R. McWhirter to Meighen, 22 December 1919, Meighen Papers, Vol. 58.
- <sup>20</sup> C.S.C. to G. Buskard (Private Secretary to Meighen), 15 January 1921, Meighen Papers, Vol. 58.
- <sup>21</sup> H. L. Rogers to Meighen, 1 January 1921, Meighen Papers, Vol. 58.
- <sup>22</sup> W. Brend to Meighen, various dates, Meighen Papers, Vol. 8.
- <sup>23</sup> W. J. Boyd to Meighen, 13 February 1920, Meighen Papers, Vol. 8.

- <sup>24</sup> J. Halpenny to Meighen, 13 February 1920, Meighen Papers, Vol. 8.
- <sup>25</sup> Memorandum to C.S.C., Meighen Papers, Vol. 9.
- <sup>26</sup> Meighen to Johnson, 15 March 1921, Vol. 58.
- <sup>27</sup> Crothers to Meighen, 14 October 1920, Meighen Papers, Vol. 58.
- <sup>28</sup> J. W. Wilton to P. J. Veniot, 17 February 1930, Post Office Department, Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 101.
- <sup>29</sup> Report of J. W. Wilton, in *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> T.L.C. *Proceedings*, 1929, p. 32.
- <sup>31</sup> T.L.C. *Proceedings*, 1930, p. 98.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. X, No. 21 (1 February 1918), p. 450.
- <sup>33</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XI, No. 11 (October 1918), p. 305.
- <sup>34</sup> *The Civilian*, Vol. XI, No. 12 (November 1918), p. 341.
- <sup>35</sup> *Labour Organization in Canada*, (1920), p. 139.
- <sup>36</sup> *Labour Organization in Canada*, (1921), p. 135.
- <sup>37</sup> *The Canadian Civil Servant*, Vol. 34, No. 8 (June 1955), p. 2.
- <sup>38</sup> Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada*, p. 295.
- <sup>39</sup> *Canadian Congress Journal*, Vol. III, No.7, p. 130.
- <sup>40</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*.
- <sup>41</sup> *The Globe*, 17 June 1924.
- <sup>42</sup> *Canadian Congress Journal*, Vol. III, No. 9, p. 23.
- <sup>43</sup> *Canadian Congress Journal*, Vol III, No. 7, p. 30.
- <sup>44</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 126.
- <sup>45</sup> *The Globe*, 16 June 1924.
- <sup>46</sup> *The Globe*, 17 June 1924.
- <sup>47</sup> *The Globe*, 18 June 1924.

- <sup>48</sup> *Canadian Congress Journal*, Vol. III, No. 9, p. 23.
- <sup>49</sup> *The Globe*, 19 June 1924.
- <sup>50</sup> *The Globe*, 19 June 1924.
- <sup>51</sup> *The Globe*, 19 June 1924.
- <sup>52</sup> *The Globe*, 20 June 1924.
- <sup>53</sup> *Canadian Congress Journal*, Vol III, No. 9, p. 24.
- <sup>54</sup> *The Globe*, 21 June 1924.
- <sup>55</sup> *The Globe*, 21 June 1924
- <sup>56</sup> *Evening Telegram* (Toronto), 23 June 1924.
- <sup>57</sup> *Canadian Congress Journal*, Vol. III No. 9, p. 24.
- <sup>58</sup> *The Globe*, 23 June 1924; 27 June 1924.
- <sup>59</sup> *The Globe*, 20 June 1924.
- <sup>60</sup> H. P. McNaughton to Asst. Secretary C.S.C., 20 June 1924, C.S.C. Records, R.G. 32, Vol. 395.
- <sup>61</sup> H. P. McNaughton to Asst. Secretary C.S.C., 21 June 1924, C.S.C. Records, R.G. 32, Vol. 395.
- <sup>62</sup> H. P. McNaughton to Asst. Secretary C.S.C., 23 June 1924, C.S.C. Records, R.G. 32, Vol. 395.
- <sup>63</sup> *The Globe*, 26 June 1924.
- <sup>64</sup> *Toronto Daily Star*, 24 June 1924.
- <sup>65</sup> *The Globe*, 27 June 1924.
- <sup>66</sup> *Canadian Congress Journal*, Vol. III, No. 9, p. 24.
- <sup>67</sup> Reverend W. J. Spence (open letter), October 1924, C.S.C. Records, Vol. 395.
- <sup>68</sup> *Canadian Labor Press*, 30 June 1924.
- <sup>69</sup> G. R. Jackson to Charles Stewart, 1 July 1924, Post Office Department,

Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 98.

<sup>70</sup> *The Globe*, 16 June 1924.

<sup>71</sup> *The Globe*, 30 June 1924.

<sup>72</sup> *The Globe*, 20 June 1924.

<sup>73</sup> *The Globe*, 16 June 1924.

<sup>75</sup> *The Globe*, 23 June 1924.

<sup>76</sup> *The Globe*, 18 June 1924.

<sup>77</sup> *Evening Telegram* (Toronto), 23 June 1924.

<sup>78</sup> *The Globe*, 18 June 1924.

<sup>79</sup> *The Globe*, 26 June 1924.

<sup>80</sup> *Canadian Labor Press*, 30 August 1924.

<sup>81</sup> *Evening Telegram* (Toronto), 24 June 1924.

<sup>82</sup> *The Globe*, 26 June 1924.

<sup>83</sup> *The Globe*, 28 June 1924.

<sup>84</sup> *Toronto Daily Star*, 24 June 1924.

<sup>85</sup> *Canadian Congress Journal*, Vol. III, No. 9, p. 24.

<sup>86</sup> *The Globe*, 21 June 1924.

<sup>87</sup> *The Globe*, 28 June 1924.

<sup>88</sup> *The Globe*.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid. The Globe*, 26 June 1924.

<sup>90</sup> C.S.C. Memorandum. 17 June 1924, C.S.C. Records, Vol. 395.

<sup>91</sup> *The Globe*, 17 June 1924.

<sup>92</sup> *The Globe*, 18 June 1924.

<sup>93</sup> *The Globe*, 19 June 1924.

<sup>94</sup> *Evening Telegram* (Toronto), 19 November 1924.

- <sup>95</sup> *Labour Gazette*, Vol. 25, p. 142.
- <sup>96</sup> G. R. Jackson to Charles Stewart, 10 July 1924, Post Office Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 98.
- <sup>97</sup> *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 October 1924.
- <sup>98</sup> Memorandum, 8 July 1924, Post Office Department Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 98.
- <sup>99</sup> *Canadian Labor Press*, 31 July 1924.
- <sup>100</sup> Underwood to Foran, 19 July 1924, C.S.C. Records, Vol. 395.
- <sup>101</sup> C.S.C. to Boucher, 1 October 1924, *Ibid.*
- <sup>102</sup> Quoted in *Canadian Labor Press*, 15 July 1924.
- <sup>103</sup> C.S.C. Records, Vol. 395.
- <sup>104</sup> *Evening Telegram* (Toronto), 19 November 1924.
- <sup>105</sup> *Labour Gazette*, Vol. 25, p. 791.
- <sup>106</sup> T.L.C., *Proceedings*, 1924, pp. 109-110.
- <sup>107</sup> T.L.C., *Proceedings*, 1924, p. 138.
- <sup>108</sup> T.L.C., *Proceedings*, 1924, p. 139.
- <sup>109</sup> *Labour Gazette*, Vol. 26, p. 308.
- <sup>110</sup> *Civil Service Review*, (June 1929), Vol. II, No. 2, p. 21.
- <sup>111</sup> *Canadian Civil Servet*, Vol. 34, No. 8 (June 1955), p. 2.
- <sup>112</sup> *Canadian Civil Servet*, Vol. 34, No. 8 (June 1955), p. 2.
- <sup>113</sup> *The Organizer*, November 1925.
- <sup>114</sup> *Civil Service Review*, June 1929, (Vol. II, No. 2), p. 21.
- <sup>115</sup> *The Organizer*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (December 1928); Vol. VIII, No. 4 (January 1929).
- <sup>116</sup> *Canadian Civil Servant*, Vol. 34, No. 9 (July 1955), pp. 2-3.

<sup>117</sup> *Canadian Civil Servet*, Vol. 34, No. 8 (June 1955), pp. 5-6.

<sup>118</sup> This organizational contradiction existed internal to the C.S.F. as well since the C.S.A.O. represented all branches and classes of the 'inside service.' This conflict led eventually to the withdrawal of the C.S.A.O. from the C.S.F.. Together with the A.C.S.C., an enlarged rival of the C.S.F. was formed called the Civil Service Association of Canada. The CSAC and the C.S.F. then merged to form the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

<sup>119</sup> "Some of the opponents of Civil Service Unity (which really means better conditions), at a loss for argument, have recently given evidence of rather immature mental development by childishly calling us names. We should not be surprised at this. however, while primitive minds are said to be fond of bright colours, strange to relate they never refer to us as 'yellow', although [in reference to them] this is the first word that occurs to us." *The Organizer*, Vol. VIII, No. 6, (April 1929), p. 11.

<sup>120</sup> *Civil Service Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (December, 1929), p. 173; *Civil Service Review*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (March, 1930); Vol. 3, No. 1 (June 1930).

<sup>121</sup> *Civil Service Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (June 1929), pp. 83-84.

<sup>122</sup> *Civil Service Review*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>123</sup> *Civil Service Review*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>124</sup> *Civil Service Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (June 1930), pp. 59-60.

<sup>125</sup> *Civil Service Review*, Vol. VII, No. 10 (March 1935), p. 16.

<sup>126</sup> *Civil Service Review*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>127</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 120.

<sup>128</sup> A.C.S.C. memorandum, Post Office Department, Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 101.

<sup>129</sup> *Civil Service Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (March 1935).

- <sup>130</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, pp. 128-129.
- <sup>131</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 166.
- <sup>132</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 172.
- <sup>133</sup> C.S.C. *Annual Report*, 1922, p. xiv, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- <sup>134</sup> Hodgetts, *Biography of an Institution*, p. 115.
- <sup>135</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 1, No. 16 (17 January 1920), pp. 1-2.
- <sup>136</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 5, No. 11 (October 1921), p. 4.
- <sup>137</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (February 1928); Vol. 7, No. 1 (January 1929), p. 19.
- <sup>138</sup> *The Institute Journal*, (October 1926), quoted in Barnes, *Consult and Advise*, p. 19.
- <sup>139</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (January 1928), p. 3.
- <sup>140</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol 1, No. 4 (September 4, 1920), p. 2.
- <sup>141</sup> *Civil Service News*.
- <sup>142</sup> *Civil Service Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (May 1928), p. 31.
- <sup>143</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (September 1928), p. 130.
- <sup>144</sup> Jean Boivin, "Collective Bargaining in the Public Sector: Some Propositions on the Cause of Public Employee Unrest" in Morley Gunderson (ed.) *Collective Bargaining in the Essential and Public Service* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 3-4.
- <sup>145</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (April 1927), p. 11.
- <sup>146</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (February 1929), p. 1.
- <sup>147</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (March 1929), p. 1.
- <sup>148</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (April, 1929), p. 1.
- <sup>149</sup> *Civil Service News*, Vol. 7, No. 8 (August 1929), p. 1.