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MILITANT AND RADICAL UNIONISM
IN THE
BRITISH COLUMBIA FISHING INDUSTRY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the fishing industry in British Columbia and finds that it is failing to provide fishermen with incomes comparable to those available in other seasonal occupations in the province. Because of the common-property status of the fishery resource and the fact that access to that resource is virtually unlimited, there has been excessive investment of capital and labour at the primary level of the industry. In this situation net returns to fishermen are seriously depressed. This problem is further complicated by the fact that most fishermen have limited occupational mobility. It is suggested that this combination of low incomes and occupational immobility produces frustration which leads to serious unrest among the fishermen. While the source of the income problem lies largely in the common-property status of the fishery resource, this is not immediately apparent to the fishermen. They feel that their poor incomes are a reflection of the inadequacy of the prices they receive for their catch. Thus, their financial relations with the fish processing companies become the focus of their discontent. However, as long as the fundamental problem of unrestricted entry remains unresolved, there will be continued industrial unrest. Assuming this to be true, it is further suggested that the prevailing atmosphere of discontent and conflict will be favourable to the growth of radical ideologies and the emergence of radical leaders in fishermen's unions. In support of these hypotheses, evidence is presented of the high level of conflict between the fishermen and the processing companies, and of the radical left-wing orientation of fishermen's unions in British Columbia.

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INTRODUCTION

From the 1890's until the mid-1960's British Columbia held the undisputed title as the home of the most militant and radical elements in the Canadian labour movement.¹ And over the years the fishing industry appears to have provided a number of unions which have been among the most militant and radical in British Columbia.² If this is the case it goes against most of the common assumptions concerning the outlook of fishermen.

While fishing, like most enterprises has undergone its industrial revolution, it still has many characteristics which set it apart from most modern industries. In capitalist societies like Canada, the secondary or processing sector of the fishing industry is equivalent to any factory-based enterprise. But the primary sector is still peopled largely by small independent operators who control their means of production, and sell their product to the processing companies. The common assumption is that capital-owning petty producers are basically conservative and

¹ H.A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, Toronto, MacMillan, 1948, Chapter XII, "Revolutionary Unionism"; Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada, Montreal, Canadian Social Publications, Ltd., 1966; Paul Phillips, No Power Greater, Vancouver, Broadway Printers, 1967; Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968; Stuart Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66, Task Force on Labour Relations Study No. 22, Ottawa, Privy Council Office, 1968; and Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, Kingston, Ontario, Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's Univeristy, 1968.

² Percy Gladstone and Stuart Jamieson, "Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science (hereafter cited as CJEPS), v. 16 #2, May, 1950. pp. 146-171.

identify with the capitalist class rather than with the proletariat.

This leads one to believe that fishermen and their organizations would be essentially conservative.³ Fishermen appear unlikely candidates to form trade unions, particularly militant trade unions with a high propensity to strike.

The fishing industry in British Columbia, based as it is predominantly on salmon⁴ which is a coastal fishery, has a high ratio

³ Independent fishermen, like farmers, can be considered "petits bourgeois" since, technically, their living comes neither from employing labour nor from selling the disposal of their own labour. While it is commonly assumed that members of the "petite bourgeoisie" identify with the capitalist class to which they aspire, more critical analysis suggests that they are ambivalent in their identification. Since they are of neither the capitalist class nor the working class, the two basic classes in the free-enterprise industrial economy, the "petits bourgeois" are inclined to deny the existence of class. Meanwhile, as the industrial economy develops the independent producer becomes increasingly vestigial, so that the "petit bourgeois" class (or non-class) is threatened.

MacPherson suggests that the illusive consciousness and the perennial insecurity of the "petite bourgeoisie" produces a characteristic oscillation between radicalism and conservatism. In the case of the prairie wheat-farmers this has led to the formation of various political movements aimed at changing the existing social order. But these movements have generally failed to make fundamental changes because the farmers have been unwilling to challenge the individual property rights on which the social order is founded. In the final analysis, the farmers' conservatism seems to have predominated. See C.B. MacPherson, Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1953. Chapter VIII, "The Quasi-Party System", pp. 215-250; especially Section 2, "Political Implications of Independent Commodity Production", pp. 221-230.

⁴ The greatest emphasis in study will be on the salmon fishery since this is by far the dominant sector of the fishing industry in British Columbia. According to annual data on fishing licences and annual catch statistics, 70-80% of all commercial fishermen in B.C. are salmon fishermen, and salmon accounts for 60-75% of the landed value of all fish in British Columbia.

of independent vessel owners or small-time capitalists in its work force.⁵ It should therefore provide an outstanding example of the conservative outlook which one is inclined to attribute to the "petite bourgeoisie".

Beyond this over-riding social characteristic, the structure of the primary fishing industry hardly seems conducive to the organization of labour unions. Compared with most industrial workers, fishermen work in isolation, alone in their boats or at best in small groups on larger vessels. They are scattered over thousands of miles of coastline in pursuit of fish. Even when they are not fishing, approximately fifty per cent of licensed commercial fishermen live in remote coastal communities close to the fishing grounds.⁶

In purely economic terms, fishermen are extremely competitive. There are far more fishermen in British Columbia than is necessary to catch the available fish. In no other industry is the total potential product so limited, relative to the number of workers in the industry, that one man's output represents a direct loss of potential output for all the others. An improved crop on one farm in no way limits the potential output of

⁵ Approximately three of every five commercial fishermen in B.C. are classified as vessel owners. See Some Economic Aspects of Commercial Fishing in British Columbia: A Summary Report of Results from the Fishery Economic Survey, 1970, Vancouver, Economics Branch, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, June, 1971. p. 5.

⁶ William F. Sinclair, The Importance of the Commercial Fishing Industry to Selected Remote Coastal Communities in British Columbia, Vancouver, Department of the Environment, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, August, 1971. pp. 12-13.

other farms. High output by a single miner or logger does not significantly affect the potential output of his co-workers. But the available fish stocks are severely limited by nature and by regulation, so what is caught by one man (or one unit of production) is lost to all the others. Under these conditions it seems unlikely that fishermen could be organized for collective or co-operative action.

Yet in British Columbia, fishermen have organized unions and have participated in numerous strikes. Moreover, socialists and communists have been prominent in unions of British Columbia fishermen, an extremely unlikely development in organizations of small-time capitalists.

It is worth surmising whether this apparent anomaly is accidental and has developed in spite of conditions in the fishing industry which militate against the organization of labour unions, particularly militant and radical unions; or whether it is an outcome of other more powerful forces acting on the fishermen which have naturally led them to come together, in spite of the difficulties, in organizations that identify with the proletariat rather than the capitalist class. This latter possibility constitutes the central hypothesis of this study. What follows is an exposition of the economic and social forces in the industry which promote militant unionism, and a review of the record of fishermen's unions, particularly the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU), to demonstrate the consistent pattern of militant and radical unionism among fishermen in British Columbia.

For purposes of this study the term "militant" is used to describe a union which is aggressively combative and ready for direct confrontation, particularly in the form of strikes. A high propensity to strike is taken as prima facie evidence of militancy.

The term "radical" denotes unions which deviate from the norm of trade union behavior and policy as established by the mainstream of the labour movement. Deviance can be in either the business sphere or the political sphere; and the term can be applied equally to unions on the right wing and on the left wing of the labour movement. One might identify as radical, unions that are outside the "house of labour" (in Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress) as a result of their actions and policies, or unions which support leaders and policies identified with extreme political factions, such as the Communist Party.

CHAPTER ONE

SOME ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS
OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

a. Open Access - The Economic Implications

A considerable body of literature has appeared since World War II devoted to an analysis of the economics of the fishing industry.¹ Much of it attempts to account for the depressed state of the fishing industry in many countries around the world. And the key is largely to be found in what economists call the "open access" or "common property" status of the industry. In essence these terms describe the situation where there are no property rights attached to the fishing resource and anyone who wishes is free to exploit it subject to the various regulations which govern the industry.

The tradition of unlimited access, while not universal, is deeply rooted in English Common Law. When the barons forced King John to sign the Magna Carta in 1215 one of the conditions they exacted was that the king could not grant special rights for fishing and navigation on public waters. This has been interpreted to mean that the right to fish in these waters is universal and inalienable, and is beyond the power of the crown to restrict.²

¹ For bibliography see Francis Christy Jr. and Anthony Scott, The Common Wealth of the Ocean Fishery, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1965.

² W.C. Arnold, "Financial Problems of the Alaska Salmon Industry," in Biological and Economic Aspects of Fisheries Management, ed. J.A. Crutchfield, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1959. p. 97.

Sol Sinclair, in his report on licence limitation in British Columbia, claims that the legal tradition is not unchangeable as all such traditions evolve in time to suit new conditions. He points out that: "This adherence to the historic right to fish has persisted, no doubt largely due to the belief in the inexhaustible capacity of the sea to produce fish."³ We have known for quite some time now that the fishery resource is not inexhaustible; but it is only very recently that we have come to challenge the right of unlimited access to that resource. Until 1969, when the first licence limitation proposals for B.C. which have substantially restricted access to the fishery went into effect, the fishing industry in that province was marked by all the problems associated with unlimited entry. The full effects of the limitation program have yet to be felt; so it is fair to say that the attitudes of fishermen in British Columbia have been forged in the atmosphere created by open access.⁴

Michael Graham, in his "Great Law of Fishing" effectively summed up the central problem created by open access: "Fisheries that are unlimited become unprofitable" or "Fisheries that are unlimited become inefficient" in terms of effort and reward.⁵ If fish are to be regarded

³ Sol Sinclair, License Limitation - British Columbia: A Method of Economic Fisheries Management, Department of Fisheries of Canada, Ottawa, 1960. p. 87.

⁴ For a discussion of the 1969 licence limitation program and its likely effects see Peter H. Pearce, "Rationalization of Canada's West Coast Salmon Fishery: An Economic Evaluation," mimeographed manuscript, Department of Economics, University of British Columbia. n.d.

⁵ Michael Graham, The Fish Gate, Faber and Faber, Ltd., London, 1943, revised edition 1949. p. 153.

as a common-property resource, and anyone who wishes is free to exploit that resource, then the fishing industry inevitably, in time, becomes uneconomic.

The first and most obvious problem created by unlimited access is the danger of over-exploitation. When too many people are attempting to catch limited stocks of fish, there is grave danger that these stocks will be thinned to the point where they are no longer available in commercial quantities, or worse, that the stocks might be fished to extinction. The sorry state of the B.C. herring fishery in recent years bears ample testimony to this harsh fact of life. In order to save the herring resource from virtual extinction the federal fishery authorities have had to impose a total ban on the fishing of herring for reduction purposes.

But the problems to which Graham is referring go far beyond the obvious diseconomies involved in destroying the resource outright. Open access leads to severe overcrowding on the fishing grounds. This may not be too serious on the high seas where space is not in short supply, but in the salmon fishery, which is conducted close to shore, the problem of overcrowding is acute. With literally hundreds of boats working in a confined area, it is impossible for fishermen to make efficient use of their gear. Boats must wait in line to make a set thus losing valuable fishing time. Inevitably, gear accidentally becomes tangled and is

sometimes completely destroyed. All this translates into a direct economic loss for fishermen.

Beyond these external diseconomies, there are internal problems created by open access which have an even more detrimental effect on fishermen's incomes. In a reasonably well-managed fishery, which the Pacific salmon fishery is, presumably the threat of depleting the resource is eliminated. But to achieve this the managers have only two choices: to limit the number of units fishing, or to limit the efficiency of the units that are fishing. Until 1969 there was virtually no attempt to limit the number of boats or men in the fishery, so all that could be done to protect the resource was to limit the efficiency of all participants. Rather than setting catch quotas, as has been done in the halibut fishery, since this would fail to protect the various races of salmon returning to spawn, the authorities have relied heavily on limiting the times when fishing is permitted. They have also placed some limits on the efficiency of the gear used. For example, the length and mesh-size of nets are strictly regulated; and the highly efficient monofilament salmon gillnets are completely banned. As more and more men in more efficient boats have entered the fishery, the authorities have been forced to limit fishing time to the point that today fishing in many areas is only permitted for two days in a week. With fishing time limited as strictly as it is, fishermen are forced to invest in more efficient gear in order to increase their catch in the short time available to them. In the aggregate, fishing capacity goes up, and the authorities are forced to restrict fishing time even more severely. The process continually reinforces itself. Fishermen

are not able to realize a full return on their capital investment, nor the equivalent of a competitive wage for their labour.

Crutchfield and Pontecorvo, elaborating on a theory first put forward by H. Scott Gordon,⁶ point out that free entry leads to complete dissipation of any economic rent from the fishing industry. Economic rent is sustainable income in excess of production costs, when costs are understood to include the minimum return on capital necessary to induce re-investments in boats and gear.⁷ In the "open access" situation people will continue to invest as long as income continues to exceed costs so defined. On one level this means that persons with low opportunity incomes, those who regard any profit over the minimum return on capital necessary to keep them solvent as excessive, will be drawn into the fishing industry. The fact that the number of licensed fishermen in B.C. tends to increase during periods of general recession and unemployment in other industries⁸ is a reflection of this aspect of open access. On another level persons already in the industry will be under pressure to invest in more sophisticated (i.e., more expensive) boats and gear in order to maintain their catching capacity in the face of increasing competition. This pressure toward increases in capital investment is self-reinforcing since those who fail

⁶ H. Scott Gordon, "The Economic Theory of a Common Property Resource: The Fishery," Journal of Political Economy, v. 62, April, 1954. pp. 124-142.

⁷ James A. Crutchfield and Guilio Pontecorvo, The Pacific Salmon Fisheries, A Study of Irrational Conservation, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1969. p. 29.

⁸ J.J. Deutsch, S.M. Jamieson, T.I. Matuszewski, A.D. Scott and R.M. Will, "The Fishing Industry of British Columbia," Economics of Primary Production in British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1959, v. 3. part 1. p. 65.

to adopt the latest equipment find themselves at a serious competitive disadvantage. Open access eventually results in serious over-investment with far more men and equipment engaged in the industry than is necessary to efficiently harvest the available stocks of fish. Thus the average return on invested capital and labour will be lower than it would be if access to the resource were limited.

In the B.C. fishing industry the problems created by unlimited entry are exacerbated by the relative ease with which fishermen can obtain financial backing. The processing companies have been more than willing to advance the necessary capital since in return for this credit the fishermen are obliged to sell all of their catch at the prevailing minimum price to the company extending the loan. Each company desires as large a portion of the total catch as possible in order to assure full utilization of its fixed capital. Thus each company attempts to secure the services of as many fishermen as possible, and one means of achieving this is to tie fishermen under credit agreements.

Evidence of the extent of over-capitalization in the B.C. fishing industry is provided in Figure I and Table I. These compare the annual value of fish landings and capital investment since 1940, with both items calculated in five year moving averages to compensate for sharp cyclical fluctuations in fish landings. Prior to 1947 landed value was slightly higher than the capital value of the fishing fleet. In 1947 the two were equal at twenty-five million dollars. But since then capital investment has exceed landed value at an ever increasing rate.

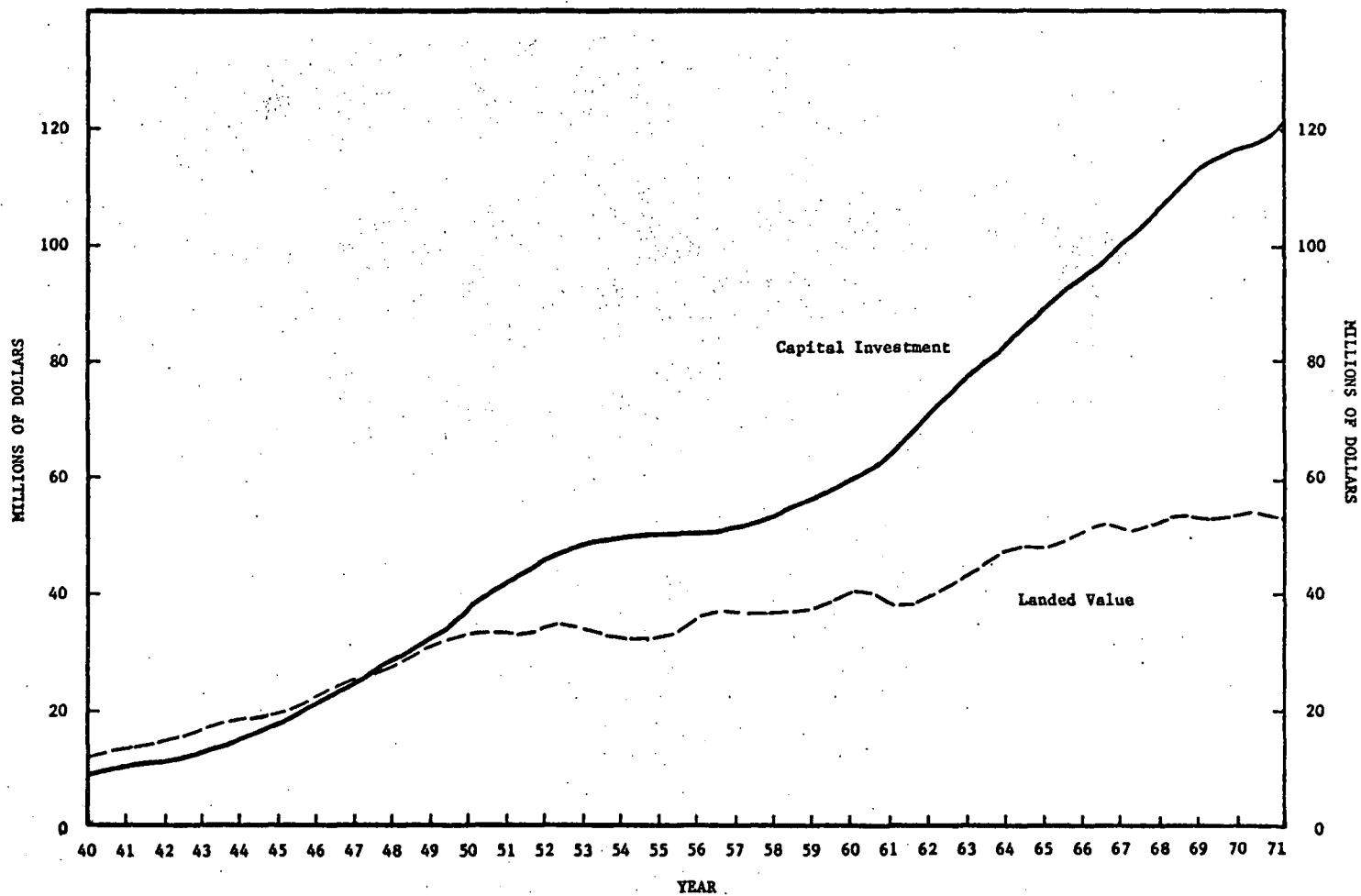


Figure I. Landed Value of Fish in British Columbia as Related to Capital Investment in Boats and Gear, 1940 - 1971. (in five year moving averages).

Table I. Landed Value of Fish in British Columbia as Related to Capital Investment in Boats and Gear, 1938 - 1971. (million dollars).

| Year | Landed Value | | Capital Investment | |
|------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Actual | Five Year Moving Average | Actual | Five Year Moving Average |
| 1938 | 8.7 | - | 8.9 | - |
| 1939 | 7.9 | - | 8.0 | - |
| 1940 | 9.1 | 12.0 | 9.1 | 9.6 |
| 1941 | 15.8 | 13.4 | 10.4 | 10.4 |
| 1942 | 18.4 | 15.3 | 11.6 | 11.7 |
| 1943 | 15.7 | 17.7 | 12.7 | 13.4 |
| 1944 | 17.3 | 18.8 | 14.5 | 15.7 |
| 1945 | 21.2 | 19.6 | 18.0 | 18.3 |
| 1946 | 21.4 | 23.0 | 21.7 | 21.9 |
| 1947 | 22.4 | 25.0 | 24.6 | 25.0 |
| 1948 | 32.6 | 28.0 | 30.5 | 28.6 |
| 1949 | 27.3 | 31.8 | 30.1 | 32.9 |
| 1950 | 36.3 | 33.4 | 35.9 | 37.6 |
| 1951 | 40.6 | 33.2 | 43.4 | 41.8 |
| 1952 | 30.2 | 34.8 | 48.3 | 45.6 |
| 1953 | 31.8 | 33.2 | 51.1 | 48.2 |
| 1954 | 35.0 | 32.4 | 49.4 | 49.4 |
| 1955 | 28.3 | 32.5 | 49.0 | 50.1 |
| 1956 | 36.6 | 36.5 | 49.3 | 50.6 |
| 1957 | 30.8 | 36.7 | 51.8 | 51.6 |
| 1958 | 52.1 | 36.6 | 53.5 | 53.5 |
| 1959 | 35.7 | 37.1 | 54.6 | 56.1 |
| 1960 | 28.0 | 40.2 | 58.1 | 59.3 |
| 1961 | 38.8 | 37.5 | 62.7 | 64.8 |
| 1962 | 46.7 | 39.8 | 67.8 | 71.4 |
| 1963 | 38.6 | 43.4 | 81.0 | 77.6 |
| 1964 | 47.1 | 47.4 | 87.3 | 83.2 |
| 1965 | 45.8 | 47.6 | 89.3 | 89.7 |
| 1966 | 58.7 | 51.1 | 90.8 | 94.7 |
| 1967 | 48.1 | 50.6 | 100.0 | 100.2 |
| 1968 | 55.7 | 52.8 | 106.0 | 106.4 |
| 1969 | 44.6 | 52.2 | 115.0 | 113.3 |
| 1970 | 56.9 | 53.2 | 120.2 | 116.6 |
| 1971 | 55.7 | 52.4 | 125.2 | 120.1 |

Source: Department of Fisheries of Canada, Fisheries Statistics of British Columbia - Annual Report.

Data on the number of licensed commercial fishermen is available only to 1962. This indicates a long term upward trend rather than a decline⁹ (Table II). It follows that the potential increase in

Table II. Number of Licensed Fishermen, 1940 - 1962.

| Year | Number | Year | Number |
|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1940 | 10 444 | 1951 | 13 213 |
| 1941 | 10 217 | 1952 | 13 066 |
| 1942 | 12 199 | 1953 | 12 449 |
| 1943 | 11 903 | 1954 | 13 038 |
| 1944 | 12 463 | 1955 | 12 836 |
| 1945 | 13 292 | 1956 | 11 851 |
| 1946 | 13 665 | 1957 | 12 999 |
| 1947 | 12 491 | 1958 | 15 263 |
| 1948 | 12 226 | 1959 | 15 456 |
| 1949 | 12 242 | 1960 | 15 159 |
| 1950 | 12 159 | 1961 | 16 805 |
| | | 1962 | 16 437 |

Source: Federal-Provincial Committee on Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, A Summary Review of Information Related to the Problems of Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, Table 28. p. 64.

⁹ Presumably the licence limitation program introduced in 1969 has reduced the number of commercial fishermen since it has reduced the number of vessels in the fleet and thereby the number of available positions for fishermen. But in comparing data on the number of licensed fishermen before and after 1969 it should be noted that the major reduction in the total number results from the elimination of casual licence holders. A large number of the persons taking out commercial fishing licences in any given year before 1969 did not report any income from commercial fishing, or else, reported fish sales of such a small order that they could not be classed as commercial fishermen. See Federal-Provincial Committee on Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, A Summary Review of Information Related to the Problems of Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1964. p. 65.

While this fact indicates that the figures in Table II give an inflated picture of the number of commercial fishermen it does not affect the conclusion that there was an upward trend in the number of persons dependent on fishing for income since the casuals constituted a relatively stable portion of the total number of licence holders throughout the period under review.

fishermen's net earnings is largely being dissipated through excessive investment of capital and labour.

In other industries, where limited access permits the accumulation of economic rent, this is presumably divided among the owners and the workers in the form of greater profits and higher ^{wages} taxes. Whatever way the rent is divided, it is reasonable to assume that an industry which produces economic rent will yield a greater personal income to all participants than will an industry which produces no rent.¹⁰ So it is likely that the personal economic return to fishermen is not as great as that to workers in other industries.

A review of available income data for British Columbia salmon fishermen^{10a} clearly reveals that earnings from fishing are lower than those from comparable seasonal industries in the province. Logging, construction and water transportation are three industries which may be regarded as alternative employment for fishermen. A comparison of average annual incomes of workers in these industries with that of fishermen is presented in Table III.

¹⁰ Like all generalities this one is limited by exceptions. It is conceivable that increased profits in the form of economic rent will be appropriated entirely by the state through taxes, or will be retained completely by the owners; but these possibilities are exceptional and do not discredit the generalization.

^{10a} ¹¹ Sources used in the calculations of fishermen's incomes in this study are:

i. D.R. Buchanan and B.A. Campbell, The Incomes of Salmon Fishermen in British Columbia, 1953- 1954, Economics Service, Department of Fisheries, Ottawa, 1957.

Table III. Comparison of Average Annual Incomes of Workers in Logging, Construction and Water Transportation with the Average Annual Income of Salmon Fishermen.

| | 1953 \$ | 1954 \$ | 1970 \$ |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Logging ¹ | 3095 | 3980 | 8464 |
| Construction ¹ | 4122 | 3898 | 10230 |
| Water Transportation ¹ | 3093 | 3270 | 8471 |
| Fishing ² | 2690 | 2850 | 4852 |

- Sources: 1. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Review of Employment and Payrolls, DBS 72-201. Average annual income is calculated by multiplying the average weekly income in each industry by 52. This is the appropriate multiplier since the DBS figures include vacation pay and are adjusted for the seasonal pattern of work in these industries.
2. See footnote 10a. These figures include income from all sources, including non-fishing employment and social security benefits.

10a. (cont'd.)

- ii. Blake A. Campbell, A Review of Fishing Earnings of Salmon and Halibut Fishermen in British Columbia, 1957 and 1958, Department of Fisheries, Pacific Area, Vancouver, December, 1960.
- iii. Some Economic Aspects of Commercial Fishing in British Columbia - A Summary Report of Results from the Fisheries Economic Survey, 1970, Economics Branch, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, Vancouver, June, 1971.
- iv. W. Alan Wilson, A Survey of Commercial Fishermen's Incomes in British Columbia - Detail Report No. 2, An Analysis of Results from the Fishery Economic Survey, 1970, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, Department of the Environment, September, 1971.
- v. Michael Hunter, An Analysis of Gross Returns to Commercial Fishing Vessels in British Columbia, 1969-1970, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, Department of the Environment, Vancouver, October, 1971.

Insofar as possible casual fishermen have been eliminated from all calculations of average incomes for fishermen. The 1953-54 study, Buchanan and Blake, op.cit., expressly excludes persons who fished less than 14 days, had gross receipts of less than \$250 from salmon fishing, or had gross receipts from salmon fishing that represented less than 20% of total net income for the year. The 1957-58 study, Campbell, op.cit., provides no information on days fished or on nonfishing income. However, it provides tables on gross income which isolate those fishermen who had gross fishing earnings of less than \$250; these fishermen have been eliminated from the calculations. The 1970 studies, Wilson, op.cit. and Hunter, op.cit., do not allow for distinctions between casual and full-time fishermen. For

(cont'd.)

Not only is the average annual income of fishermen consistently lower than the lowest average income available in alternative occupations; in each of the years reviewed, less than 25% of fishermen earned an income equivalent to that of the average worker in the lowest paid alternative employment. In 1953 only 23.8% of fishermen earned the \$3093 of the average worker in water transportation, and in 1954 only 21.1% of fishermen matched the income of the average water transportation worker. In 1970 the gap between the average income of fishermen and that available in logging, the lowest paid of the three alternative occupations, had spread to \$3612, despite the fact that 1970 was a record year for the landed value of salmon in British Columbia, and the fact that fishermen were receiving unemployment insurance benefits for which they were ineligible in 1953 and 1954. Only 13.5% of fishermen in 1970 managed to achieve income parity with the average logger.

10^a (cont'd.) purposes of this study it is assumed that there were no casual fishermen in 1970 since the new licence limitation program, which was partially designed to eliminate casual fishermen from the industry, was in effect for the 1970 season.

Owners of seine boats and halibut longliners are excluded from the income calculations since they are employers rather than labourers.

It should be noted that the 1953-54 data is based on a sample of only 172 fishermen; the 1957-58 data is based on an analysis of sales slips or gross returns from all licensed fishermen; and the 1970 data is based on a combination of gross returns for all fishermen and a sample survey of 2371 fishermen. All figures in the income tables refer to net income before taxes.

Sol Sinclair points out that "the comparison of fishery incomes with other similar industry incomes must take into account the length of the time employed as well as the season of the year".¹¹ He suggests that one compare net incomes from fishing with incomes available in alternative occupations for the period May 1st to October 31st, which is roughly equivalent to the fishing season in British Columbia. Table IV provides such a comparison. It is apparent that the average income from fishing was better than the composite income available in the alternative employments in three of the five years.

Table IV. Comparison of Average Incomes from Logging, Construction and Water Transportation for the Period May 1st - October 31st with the Average Income from Fishing.

| | 1953 \$ | 1954 \$ | 1957 \$ | 1958 \$ | 1970 \$ |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Logging ¹ | 1990 | 2072 | 2312 | 2728 | 4303 |
| Construction ¹ | 2121 | 1958 | 2379 | 2212 | 7286 |
| Water Transportation ¹² | 1554 | 1646 | 1933 | 1887 | 4273 |
| Composite | 1922 | 1892 | 2208 | 2276 | 5621 |
| Fishing ² | 1972 | 2119 | 1862 | 3188 | 2954 |

Sources: 1. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Employment and Average Weekly Wages and Salaries, DBS 72-002. Incomes are calculated from the average weekly wage at the beginning of each month by multiplying the mean of the average weekly wages for all six months by 26, the number of weeks between May 1st and October 31st.

2. See footnote 10.

¹¹ Sol Sinclair, op.cit. p. 208.

At first glance this indicates that fishing incomes are competitive with those from other seasonal industries; but a simple comparison of averages is somewhat misleading. Workers in logging, construction and water transportation are paid a regular hourly or daily wage and individuals put in roughly the same hours of work. Average income figures these occupations, therefore, provide a fairly accurate picture of the amount being earned by most workers in these industries. But fishermen are paid on a peice-rate basis and since catches of individual fishermen vary greatly there are wide disparities in incomes. Buchanan and Campbell reported that only 38% of fishermen received incomes equal to or greater than the average in 1953 and 1954. They attributed this skewed distribution to the fact that the average income figure for fishermen is inflated by the exceptional earnings of a small minority at the high end of the income scale.^{11a} While the exact proportion of fishermen receiving the equivalent of an average income may vary from year to year these findings are representative of the long-term pattern.

^{11a} Buchanan and Campbell, op.cit. p. 56.

However, closer examination of the data on fishing incomes reveals that in most years less than one-third of the fishermen realized a net income from fishing equivalent to the composite income of the other industries (Table V). Even in the boom year of 1958 less than one-half of the fishermen earned what might be considered their opportunity income; and in 1970 the number had fallen to less than one-sixth.

Table V. Percentage of Fishermen with Income from Fishing Equal to the the Composite Average Income Available from Logging, Construction and Water Transportation for the Period May 1st - October 31st.

| Year | 1953 | 1954 | 1957 | 1958 | 1970 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Percentage (%) | 32.7 | 34.8 | 23.2 | 48.5 | 16.2 |

From these statistics it is evident that the fishing industry has failed to provide most of the fishermen in British Columbia with incomes equal to those available to workers in comparable occupations. As noted above this failure can largely be attributed to the open access status of the fishery resource.

b. The Immobility of Fishermen

If personal incomes from fishing are significantly lower than incomes available in other industries, why do people remain fishing?

H. Scott Gordon suggests two possible reasons: (1) the great immobility of fishermen; and (2) the hope every fishermen has for the "lucky"

catch.¹² He defines immobility in terms of fishermen's isolation from the mainstream of society. Other factors of immobility are the fishermen's educational limitations, their romantic ties to the sea, and their lack of savings to start in another occupation.¹³ The isolation means that fishermen have a lack of knowledge of available alternatives. Sinclair questions whether fishermen in British Columbia today can be considered isolated in light of their access to modern communications media and employment service offices. He further notes that a large number of fishermen in B.C. live in and around the urban centres of Vancouver and Victoria where they can hardly be considered isolated.¹⁴

But Sinclair seems to miss an essential feature of Gordon's argument. Isolation must be understood in social as well as in physical terms. While it is fair to say that fishermen living near the urban centres are hardly isolated, their occupation isolates them more than other industrial workers. Rather than taking them into a social situation such as the factory, fishing takes its workers away from land, alone in their boats, or at best, with a small group of other fishermen. Gladstone and Jamieson note that fishermen tend not to mix with landbased

¹² H. Scott Gordon, op.cit. p. 132.

¹³ "Lack of savings" ties a fishermen to the fishing industry not so much because he needs savings to finance his entry into another occupation, but because he needs savings to liquidate the debts incurred to purchase his boat and gear, and to finance his annual operations.

¹⁴ Sol Sinclair, op.cit. p. 79.

people when they are not working, but rather seek out other fishermen for social interchange.¹⁵ For fishermen around Vancouver and Victoria, this can only be partially true; but fishermen do tend to be a group apart.

Education is also an important factor, even for the urban-based fishermen. Many people are attracted to fishing because it is one of the only remaining occupations where education is not a prerequisite for success. This was borne out in the findings of the "Fishery Economic Survey" in British Columbia in 1970. The report indicates that the level of education attained by fishermen has little effect on their fishing income; but it does influence their non-fishing income, with persons having some high school education earning almost 30% more than those with only elementary education, and university graduates earning twice as much non-fishing income as high school graduates (Table VI).¹⁶

¹⁵ Stuart Jamieson and Percy Gladstone, "Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia," CJEPS, v.16 #1, February, 1950. p. 6. Lipset, Trow and Coleman in their study of the International Typographical Union note that people who regularly work odd hours, for instance night-shift workers, are more likely to confine their social activities to their occupational group than are people who regularly work during the normal working day. See S.M. Lipset, M.A. Trow and J.S. Coleman, Union Democracy, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1956. pp. 135-140.

¹⁶ W.Alan Wilson, The Socio-Economic Background of Commercial Fishing in British Columbia - Detail Report No. 1, An Analysis of Results from the Fishery Economic Survey, 1970, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, Department of the Environment, Vancouver, August, 1971. p. 23.

Table VI. Average Incomes of British Columbia Fishermen in 1970, by Income Source and Educational Level Attained.

| Education | Total Fishing | Paid Non-Fishing | Unemployment Insurance | Total Income |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| none * | 2266 | 411 | 65 | 2742 |
| Elementary | 3619 | 1099 | 166 | 4884 |
| High School 1-3 years | 4220 | 1603 | 142 | 5965 |
| High School 4-5 years | 3734 | 1737 | 94 | 5565 |
| High School Grad. | 3847 | 2005 | 102 | 5954 |
| Some University | 3074 | 2460 | 72 | 5606 |
| University Degree | 2697 | 5356 | 61 | 8114 |

* Most of the fishermen who reported no education at all were in the oldest age groups provided for in the questionnaire. There was also a sharp drop in fishing income for persons 65 years of age and over.

Source: W. Alan Wilson, The Socio-Economic Background of Commercial Fishing in British Columbia - Detail Report No. 1, An Analysis of Results from the Fishery Economic Survey, 1970, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, Department of the Environment, Vancouver, August, 1971. p. 23.

The report goes on to note that 38.2% of fishermen in British Columbia have only elementary schooling, with this figure reaching 52.4% for fishermen in the Prince Rupert area, the most isolated fishing area in the province (Table VII).¹⁷

Another federal government report indicates that the level of formal education among commercial fishermen in British Columbia is substantially lower than that among the total male labour force in the province (Table VIII). Data from the 1970 "Fishery Economic Survey"

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 22.

Table VII. Educational Level Attained by British Columbia Fishermen,
by Main Areas, 1970.

| Education | Vancouver | Nanimo | Prince Rupert | Victoria | British Columbia |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------|---------------|----------|------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| none | 0.8 | 1.5 | 2.8 | 1.2 | 1.4 |
| Elementary | 34.4 | 36.5 | 49.6 | 29.7 | 36.8 |
| High School 1-3 years | 30.2 | 29.3 | 23.7 | 32.5 | 29.2 |
| High School 4-5 years | 12.2 | 12.5 | 10.3 | 13.9 | 12.2 |
| High School Grad. | 13.9 | 14.9 | 8.5 | 12.1 | 12.9 |
| Some University | 6.5 | 4.7 | 4.1 | 9.3 | 6.1 |
| University Degree | 2.0 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.4 |

Source: W. Alan Wilson, The Socio-Economic Background of Commercial Fishing in British Columbia - Detail Report No. 1, An Analysis of Results from the Fishery Economic Survey, 1970, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, Department of the Environment, Vancouver, August, 1971. pp. 24-25.

Table VIII. Educational Comparison of British Columbia Fishermen, 1970
with all Male Members of the British Columbia Labour Force,
1965.

| Education | Fishermen 1970 | Male Members of B.C. Labour Force 1965 |
|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| | % | % |
| Grade 8 or less | 47.2 | 27.5 |
| Grade 9-12 | 45.3 | 57.9 |
| Post Secondary | 7.5 | 14.6 |

Source: William F. Sinclair, The Importance of the Commercial Fishing Industry to Selected Remote Coastal Communities of British Columbia, Fisheries Service - Pacific Region, Department of the Environment, Vancouver, August, 1971. p. 30.

indicate that only 25% of fishermen in British Columbia have any formal training which might suit them for other occupations, and the author concludes by stating that "the number of fishermen who may be able to move into skilled or semi-skilled non-fishing employment, . . . is limited".¹⁸

A special case must be made for Native fishermen, no matter where they live. These are the least mobile of all fishermen, even when they are not isolated in any physical sense. They often lack the education to equip them for any other occupation. Even with education, Indians must face racial discrimination when they seek work other than fishing. Many Indians are discouraged by the constant setbacks faced by their fellows who have tried to leave fishing for a better job elsewhere. At least in fishing they have some independence, and they are able to preserve some of their traditional life style and values.

The financial factors of immobility are probably most important. Beyond the lack of savings which results directly from the substandard incomes from fishing, many fishermen are tied to the industry by contractual obligations to the companies, entered into in order to raise the money to go into fishing in the first place. Also, their heavy investment in boats and gear may well be a liability rather than an asset. If the fishermen cannot dispose of their capital assets at

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 26.

a reasonable price, they are forced to stay in the industry and make the most of their lot.

Sol Sinclair agrees with Gordon's claim that the prospect of the lucky catch keeps many fishermen in the industry against overwhelming odds. "Fishermen are renowned gamblers and incurable optimists."¹⁹ Admittedly, a gambling spirit and romantic ties to the occupation play some role in encouraging fishermen to stay in the industry when better and more stable incomes are to be found elsewhere. But neither Sinclair nor Gordon presents any substantive evidence to indicate how strong a hold these forces exert on fishermen. In the absence of such evidence it seems fair to say that fishermen, like most individuals, are influenced more by immediate economic (income) considerations than they are by a vague gambling spirit and romantic ties to the sea.

That fishing is failing to provide an income equivalent to that available in other occupations, and yet fishermen are not moving into better paying occupations indicates that they are unable to leave the fishing industry for economic and social (ethnic and geographic) reasons and/or that they are unqualified for any better paying jobs. In other words, as a result of circumstances largely beyond their control, fishermen are trapped in an occupation which yields them an extremely low income by prevailing standards.

¹⁹ Sol Sinclair, op.cit. p. 79.

c. Some Implications of Low Incomes and Immobility

The persistence of low fishing incomes has provided a strong stimulus for B.C. fishermen to organize for mutual protection and advancement. Over the years the fishermen advocating organization have pointed out that only through collective action would they be able to fight for improved incomes. The forces operating against common action, the competitive nature of their work, the wide dispersion of the work force, and the complex gear rivalries and ethnic antagonisms, have been strong. But the common plight of poor incomes has encouraged fishermen to organize in spite of these barriers.

The situation of the B.C. fishermen is not dissimilar to that of the prairie wheat-farmers who have formed numerous organizations to improve their bargaining position vis a vis the railways, the grain elevator companies and the grain exchanges. But whereas producers' co-operatives and farm-oriented political movements have been the predominant form of organization among the farmers,²⁰ the fishermen have opted for labour unions.

The emergence of labour unions as the main form of organization for British Columbia fishermen has largely been determined by historical

²⁰ S.M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism; The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan: A Study in Political Sociology, updated ed., Anchor Books, Garden City, New York, 1968.

factors unique to the fishing industry in that province. As early as 1899 representatives of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council took the lead in organizing fishermen for price negotiations with the canning companies.²¹ While their efforts to achieve immediate price gains met with mixed success, they served to firmly establish ties between fishermen and the broader labour movement. At the time it was quite natural for fishermen to join unions and for outside union organizers to be active in the fishing industry because many of the fishermen were employed for most of the year in the longshoring and construction industries, and they had close ties with the unions in these industries.²² Once the pattern for fishermen to organize into unions was established, it persisted even after fishing became more of a full-time occupation, and fishermen lost their immediate ties with the labour movement.

The overwhelming importance of the salmon fishery is a major factor influencing the pattern of organization among fishermen in British Columbia. Since salmon fishermen work in large numbers in concentrated areas, albeit areas that are widely separated from each other, they

²¹ In 1893 the fishermen organized the Fraser River Fishermen's Protective and Benevolent Association. However, this organization was not conceived as a labour union; its primary function was to lobby for legislative restrictions against Japanese and American fishermen who were entering the Fraser River fishery in increasing numbers. The Association collapsed before the opening of the 1894 season. See H.K. Ralston, The 1900 Strike of Fraser River Sockeye Salmon Fishermen, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1965. pp. 51-61.

²² Percy Gladstone and Stuart Jamieson, "Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia," CJEPS, v.16 #2, May, 1950. p. 153.

are more susceptible to organization than those such as the inshore fishermen on Canada's east coast who are widely dispersed in small groups. Furthermore, the salmon fishermen in B.C. have always had to deal with highly organized canners' combines. In recent years the fishermen have been almost totally dependent on a few large processing companies to buy their catch;²³ and most fishermen are committed to sell all their catch to a particular company since they are tied under conditional sales agreements, as noted above. Thus B.C. fishermen, while technically considered independent entrepreneurs, are in practical terms the employees of the processing companies, and are being paid on a piece-rate basis.

The price for fish is the fishermen's equivalent of wages. The desire to improve the price for fish has been the driving force behind the creation of fishermen's unions. As long as the problem of low incomes persists it is likely that these unions will be under considerable pressure to fight for higher prices. Thus one can expect that these unions will be militant in their dealings with the processing companies.

But, as the previous analysis has made clear, the real problem for fishermen lies not so much with the processing companies as with

²³ The UFAWU estimates that approximately 90% of the canned salmon industry in B.C. is controlled by two companies, B.C. Packers and the Canadian Fishing Company. See UFAWU, "Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry," April 22, 1969. p. 32.

the common-property status of the resource. Ironically, because of open access, the incomes of most fishermen have remained poor despite the limited gains made by the unions over the years. These very gains have served to attract new entrants, so while the aggregate income may have risen, individual incomes have continued to be marginal or worse. No matter how militant they are, the fishermen cannot fundamentally alter their position while the resource remains common property. In this light, organization and militant activity among fishermen must be viewed as an incoherent protest against the common-property situation. As long as this fundamental problem remains unresolved the existence of militant fishermen's unions is to be expected.

Fishermen have long been aware that unlimited entry into the industry has contributed to their low earnings.²⁴ But they have been unable to break away from their central concern with price agreements between themselves and the processing companies, largely because of the institutional structure of the industry. The fact that fishermen have been organized into unions has made the labour-management issue paramount among the fishermen's concerns. The need to secure decent prices presents a constant and immediate challenge to fishermen, and diverts their attention from the fundamental problem of free entry. They are so involved in their industrial relations with the processors that they are unable to devote sufficient effort to fighting open access. Under some other institutional

²⁴ As early as 1946 the UFAWU was calling for some sort of licence limitation, and that call has been regularly renewed.

structure, for instance producers' co-operatives, the labour-management fishermen issue would disappear and/would be in a better position to see the open access issue in a proper perspective. If this enabled them to move to resolve the problems created by unrestricted entry it is likely that a fundamental condition favouring militancy and radicalism would be removed since personal incomes would tend to rise.²⁵

Lipset has suggested that there is a connection between low income and radical or left-wing political behaviour.²⁶ He points to the various movements among North American wheat-belt farmers as an example of this. He also notes that fishermen's unions in Western Europe and on the Pacific Coast of North America have a reputation for being radical. The connection between poverty and radicalism is difficult to establish. Some of the poorest people in the world seem totally alienated

²⁵ That unions limit the fishermen's ability to deal with the fundamental problem in the fishing industry is not meant to imply that co-operatives provide an intrinsically superior form of organization. Nor is it meant to imply that because co-operatives eliminate the labour-management issue on which so much conflict in the fishing industry is rooted, they are inherently better than unions.

Fishermen in British Columbia have experimented widely with producers' co-operatives. (See A.V. Hill, Tides of Change, Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative Association, Prince Rupert, 1967.) But the majority have found the co-ops inadequate and have opted for unions. The reasons for this are complex, but the fact that fishermen have opted for unions indicates that this form of organization is more satisfactory under present conditions.

²⁶ S.M. Lipset, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics, Anchor Books, Garden City, New York, 1963. pp. 100-107.

from or disinterested in politics; and the middle class has played a major role in many radical movements. The poor have been attracted to reactionary movements like Fascism as often as they have been attracted to revolutions of the left. It seems fair to say that poverty, especially poverty above the subsistence level which affords its victims the luxury of reflection on their lot, produces alienation, and alienation can often find expression in support of radical political movements.

George Sorel has argued that industrial conflict can breed radical ideologies.²⁷ While he was commenting specifically on the radicalizing effect of participation in violent conflict, his suggestion may have wider application. The persistence of industrial conflict, as in the fishing industry as a result of the poor income situation, may bring radical leaders to the fore. The situation is ripe for those who are so motivated to charge that the workers' plight is a result of deep-seated inequities in the "system", and that the only solution lies in radical change of that system. It is a fairly easy step to incorporate these radical elements into a program that is already geared for conflict. Thus the existence of radical fishermen's unions, while not inevitable, should not be surprising.

The forces contributing to continued conflict in the fishing

²⁷ George Sorel, Reflections on Violence, translated by T.E. Hulme and J. Roth, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1950. Stuart Jamieson has reasoned along similar lines, and suggested that industrial unrest in British Columbia may have fostered the radical ideologies that have been prominent in the labour movement in the province, rather than having been a product of these radical ideologies. See S.M. Jamieson, "Regional Factors in Industrial Conflict: The Case of British Columbia," CJEPS, v.28 #3, August, 1962. pp. 405-416.

industry may well put fishermen's unions beyond the pale of the mainstream labour movement in terms of political orientation. In most industries the labour-management issue, the conflict over incomes, is the source of conflict and unrest. But in fishing, as was noted above, it is merely a focus. In most industries unions have passed from the crusading and conquest period of their early years to the stage of "mature" industrial relations with both themselves and the employers becoming more accommodating.²⁸ Concurrently, the atmosphere has become hostile to radical ideologies. This is assumed to be a natural outcome of years of collective bargaining negotiations; but it can only be so when these negotiations are able to deal with the source of unrest and conflict. In fishing the source of tension is beyond the power of either "labour" or "management" to control. So unrest and conflict continue and the atmosphere remains favourable to radical ideologies.

²⁸ See Richard A. Lester, As Unions Mature, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1958.

CHAPTER TWO

MILITANCY: THE STRIKE RECORD IN THE BRITISH COLUMBIA FISHERY

a. Comparison with Other Industries

According to the definition being employed in this study, a high propensity to strike is taken as prima facie evidence of militancy. Thus militancy is a relative concept which hinges on some measure of the inter-industry to strike.¹

One method of establishing whether fishermen have a high propensity to strike is to compare the strike record in the British Columbia fishing industry with that in logging and construction, which are considered among the most strike-prone industries in the province.² Table IX provides such a comparison over two decades.³ In each decade fishing

¹ For a thorough discussion of the various measures of strike propensity see A.M. Ross and P.T. Hartman, Changing Patterns in Industrial Conflict, Wiley and Sons, New York, 1960.

² J.J. Deutsch, S.M. Jamieson, T.I. Matuszewski, A.K. Scott and R.M. Will, "Industrial Relations in the Basic Industries of British Columbia" Economics of Primary Production in British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1959, v.4. p.4.

³ For consistency, Table IX has been constructed entirely from information contained in the Labour Gazette, published by the Department of Labour in Ottawa. There are discrepancies between this source and the Annual Report of the Department of Labour of British Columbia in their data on strikes and lockouts in the three industries under review. This is especially noticable in the reporting of strikes in the construction industry, with the Annual Report listing a number of minor disputes not recorded in the Labour Gazette. There are also variations in the coverage of the other two industries, but these follow no consistent pattern and the net totals for the decennial periods are similar. Information from the federal fisheries authorities indicates that eight strikes in the 1950's were not reported in the Labour Gazette. These factors should be noted in any evaluation of Table IX.

Table IX. Comparison of Strikes in Logging, Construction and Fishing for Decennial Periods, 1930-1959, as Reported in the Labour Gazette.

| | Number of Strikes | Number Involved | Man-Days of Work Lost |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <hr/> | | | |
| Logging | | | |
| 1930-1939 | 14 | 5 221 | 157 970 |
| 1940-1949 | 12 | 15 649 | 421 554 |
| 1950-1959 | 14 | 24 981 | 860 905 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Construction | | | |
| 1930-1939 | 13 | 536 | 5 417 |
| 1940-1949 | 7 | 1 113 | 12 162 |
| 1950-1959 | 43 | 16 322 | 468 886 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Fishing | | | |
| 1930-1939 | 17 | 9 615 | 107 480 |
| 1940-1949 | 6 | 9 670 | 53 460 |
| 1950-1959 | 10 | 32 495 | 495 480 |
| <hr/> | | | |

accounted for a larger number of persons involved in strikes than either logging or construction, and in the 1930's there were more strikes in fishing than in either of the other industries. In all three decades the greatest time-loss from strikes was recorded in logging, followed by fishing.

Table X. Comparison of Major Strikes (involving more than 1000 persons) in Logging, Construction and Fishing for Decennial Periods, 1930-1959, as Reported in the Labour Gazette.

| | Number of Strikes | Number Involved | Man-Days of Work Lost |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <hr/> | | | |
| Logging | | | |
| 1930-1939 | 2 | 4 300 | 145 000 |
| 1940-1949 | 2 | 14 100 | 405 000 |
| 1950-1959 | 2 | 22 415 | 836 605 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Construction | | | |
| 1930-1939 | - | - | - |
| 1940-1949 | - | - | - |
| 1950-1959 | 6 | 12 250 | 413 050 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Fishing | | | |
| 1930-1939 | 3 | 5 700 | 63 200 |
| 1940-1949 | 3 | 9 260 | 46 500 |
| 1950-1959 | 8 | 31 620 | 406 900 |
| <hr/> | | | |

The aggregate figures in Table IX tend to obscure some important variations in the pattern of strikes in the three industries. Table X indicates that in each decade there were more large-scale confrontations in fishing than in either of the other industries. This was particularly true in the 1950's when eight of the ten strikes in the fishing industry were in this category, compared with only two of fourteen in logging and six of forty-three in construction.

While the total number of strikes in the fishing industry after 1940 may seem low relative to logging and construction, the strikes which have occurred in fishing have probably had a greater impact on the industry. These comparisons, while not conclusive, do indicate that the fishing industry should be considered at least as strike prone as logging and construction, and thereby lend support to the hypothesis that fishermen's unions are militant.

The comparisons contained in Tables IX and X are inadequate since they tend to seriously underrate the relative significance of strikes in the fishing industry. The fishing season in British Columbia, particularly the salmon season, is much shorter than the normal work year in the other industries. Therefore a one-week strike by salmon fishermen must be regarded as more significant than a similar strike by loggers or construction workers. Furthermore, since there are fewer fishermen than loggers or construction workers, a strike by a given number of fishermen is likely to be more significant than a strike by a similar number of workers in either of the other industries.⁴

Bearing this problem in mind, an index by industry of man-days of work lost as a percentage of the man-days of work in a year would provide a more satisfactory measure of strike propensity. Where reliable statistics exist this is a relatively simple measure to compute. Unfortunately,

⁴ Deutsch et al. estimate that construction workers constituted 7.7% of the labour force in British Columbia in the period, 1949-1956; logging accounted for 6.1%; and fishing, 3.4%. See Deutsch et al., op.cit., v. 4. p. 6.

the necessary information is not available for the fishing industry in British Columbia. Data are available indicating the number of fishing days in each year; but because there is a complex pattern of openings and closings in various fishing areas along the B.C. coast, and the fleet is widely dispersed among these areas, and because many fishermen work for only part of the season, there are no accurate figures on the number of man-days of fishing in a given season. The fact that salmon runs occur with definite peaks in each area poses a further complication. A long strike which is settled before the main part of a run appears may not be as serious as a short strike at the height of a run.

b. General Analysis of the Strike Record in the Salmon and Herring Fisheries

Even without systematic reference to patterns in other industries an isolated examination of the strike record in the fishing industry indicates that fishermen have a high propensity to strike. Table XI provides a list of all known strikes in the British Columbia salmon fishery.⁵ In addition to the forty-six strikes listed in the table, there

⁵ This record is as complete as available sources allow, but it is quite possible that a number of strikes, particularly in the early period, have not been recorded. To quote Gladstone and Jamieson, whose pioneer work in tabulating strikes in the fishing industry has been an invaluable source for the present study:

"Strikes by fishermen are in many cases exceedingly difficult even to identify, let alone measure accurately. . . . where the number involved in . . . disputes was only a small fraction of all fishermen in the district, and failed to have any significant effect on company operations and on markets, they were not included in the . . . tabulation. The few such small-scale strikes that were included were those that happened to be reported in local newspapers or government publications."

Table XI. Record of Strikes in the Salmon Industry of British Columbia.

| Year | Duration | Location | Organizations Involved | Number Involved | Man-Days of Work Lost* | Particulars |
|-------|---------------|---|--|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1893 | Jul 14-Jul 23 | Fraser River | Fraser River Fishermen's Protective and Benevolent Association | 1600 | | against price reduction - sockeye |
| 1894 | | Skeena River | Indians (unorganized) | | | price dispute - sockeye |
| 1896 | | Skeena and Nass Rivers | " | | | price dispute - sockeye |
| 1897 | | " | " | | | price dispute - spring |
| 1897 | | Fraser River | Whites, Indians and Japanese (unorganized) | | | against price reduction - sockeye |
| 1899 | Jun 20-Jun 27 | Rivers Inlet Skeena and Nass Rivers | Indians (unorganized) | 2500 | | price dispute - sockeye |
| 1900 | Jul 1-Jul 31 | Fraser River | British Columbia Fisher- men's Union; Fishermen's Benevolent Society (Japanese) | 8000 | | against price reduction - sockeye |
| 1901 | Jul 1-Jul 19 | " | Grand Lodge of B.C. Fishermen's Unions | 8000 | | against price reduction - sockeye |
| *1903 | Jul 1-Jul 15 | Fraser River- New Westminster | | 4100 | | price increase - salmon |
| 1904 | Jun 1-Jul 6 | Skeena River | Indians (unorganized) | 800 (300) | | price increase - sockeye |
| +1907 | May | " | | | | price increase - spring |

Table XI (cont'd).

| Year | Duration | Location | Organizations Involved | Number Man-Days of Involved Work Lost* | | Particulars |
|------|---------------|--|---|---|--------|--|
| 1907 | Jun 22-Jun 29 | Fraser River | Grand Lodge of B.C. Fishermen's Unions | 75 (50) | | against price reduction - spring |
| 1913 | Aug 1- Aug 7 | " | FBS (Japanese) | 2000 | | against price reduction - sockeye |
| 1917 | | Skeena River, Rivers Inlet | United Fishermen of British Columbia | | | price dispute - sockeye |
| 1922 | Jun 20-Jul 9 | Rivers Inlet | UFBC; British Columbia Fishermen's Protective Association | 950 | 6,650 | price increase - sockeye |
| 1924 | Jun 16-Jun 24 | Skeena River- Port Essington | Japanese Fishermen's Association (Local) | 573 | | price increase - sockeye |
| 1925 | May 11-May 18 | Fraser River- New Westminster | BCFPA; FBS (Japanese) | 630 | 3,780 | against price reduction - spring |
| 1925 | Sep 23-Sep 26 | Fraser River | BCFPA; FBS (Japanese) | 1000 | 2,000 | price increase - pink and chum |
| 1927 | Sep 21-Sep 22 | " | BCFPA; FBS (Japanese) | 1000 | 1,000 | against price reduction - sockeye and pink |
| 1928 | Aug 20-Aug 23 | " | BCFPA; FBS (Japanese) | 1500 | 4,500 | price increase - sockeye and spring |
| 1931 | Jun 1-Jun 23 | Prince Rupert | Northern B.C. Salmon Fishermen's Association | 300 | 6,000 | price increase - sockeye and coho |
| 1931 | Sep 24-Oct 2 | Barkley Sound | BCFPA | 500 | 4,000 | price increase - chum |
| 1932 | Jun 25-Jul 10 | Skeena and Nass Rivers- Port Essington | BCFPA; Fishermen's Industrial Union; UFBC | 1800 | 15,200 | price increase - sockeye |
| 1932 | Jul 10-Jul 17 | Rivers and Smith's Inlets | BCFPA; FIU | 1400 | 8,000 | price increase - sockeye |
| 1933 | May 16-Jun 15 | west coast- Vancouver Island | FIU | 250 | 6,500 | in sympathy with Oregon and Washington trollers |

Table XI (cont'd).

| Year | Duration | Location | Organizations Involved | Number Involved | Man-Days of Work Lost* | Particulars |
|-------|---------------|--------------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------------|--|
| 1934 | May 15-May 22 | west coast-Vancouver Island | Fishermen's and Cannery Workers' Industrial Union | 50 | 350 | price increase - sockeye |
| 1935 | May 16-Jun 26 | Gulf of Georgia | Fishermen's Joint Council; FCWIU; BCFPA; Native Brotherhood (Indian); Amalgamated Association of Fishermen (Japanese); United Fishermen's Federal Union | 500 | 10,000 | price increase - blueback, also a number of cannery workers were indirectly affected |
| 1935 | Sep 9-Sep 11 | Bute Inlet | FCWIU | 80 | 160 | price increase - sockeye |
| 1936 | May 26-Jun 3 | Upper Fraser | Upper Fraser Fishermen's Union | 70 | 540 | price increase - red spring |
| 1936 | Jun 1-Jun 3 | Lower Fraser | BCFPA | 270 | 810 | in sympathy with Upper Fraser Fishermen's Union |
| 1936 | Jul 5-Jul 31 | Rivers Inlet | Fishermen's Joint Council | 2500 (1000) | 40,000 | price increase - sockeye, whole season lost |
| 1938 | Sep 23-Oct 3 | Alert Bay and Johnstone Strait | Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union; Salmon Purse Seiners' Union | 450 | 3,450 | against price reduction - chum |
| 1940 | Jul 1-Jul 10 | B.C. coast | United Fishermen's Federal Union; PCFU | 1500 | 10,000 | against price reduction - pink |
| *1942 | Sep 21-Sep 30 | Fraser River | United Fishermen's Federal Union; BCFPA | 3260 (1700) | 10,000 | against price reduction - salmon |
| 1947 | Feb 22-Mar 22 | Gulf of Georgia | United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union | 250 | 6,000 | price increase - blueback |
| 1949 | Sep 26-Oct 1 | B.C. coast | " | 4500 | 26,500 | price increase - chum |
| *1952 | Jul 20-Jul 24 | " | " | 6000 | 24,000 | against price reduction - salmon |
| *1940 | Jun 24-Jun 30 | Fraser River | | 100 | 600 | price dispute - spring |

Table XI. (cont'd).

| Year | Duration | Location | Organizations Involved | Number Involved | Man-Days of Work Lost* | Particulars |
|--------|---------------|------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---|
| *1952 | Sep 6-Oct 20 | B.C. coast | UFAWU | +3000 | +112,500 | against price reduction - chum |
| *1953 | Jun 15-Jun 24 | " | " | 1500 | 12,000 | price increase - salmon |
| *1954 | Jun 20-Jun 27 | " | " | 5620 | 44,900 | price increase - salmon |
| *1954 | Aug 7-Aug 15 | " | " | +641 +(9000) | +3,846 (54,000) | strike of tendermen, 5000 fishermen strike in sympathy, 18 canneries closed affecting 4000 shoreworkers |
| *1957 | Jun 22-Jul 13 | " | " | 5500 | 77,000 | price increase - salmon |
| +1957 | Oct 5-Oct 15 | " | " | 4500 | 40,500 | against price reduction - chum |
| *1959 | Jul 25-Aug 9 | " | " | 5000 | 65,000 | fishermen |
| | Jul 29-Aug 10 | " | " | 3700 | 38,150 | allied workers |
| | | | | | | entire industry; price increase - salmon, and wage increase |
| *1963 | Jul 14-Aug 3 | " | " | 6000 | 104,000 | fishermen |
| + 3 | Jul 17-Aug 10 | " | " | 4600 | 55,860 | allied workers |
| | | | | | | entire industry; price dispute - salmon, and wage increase |
| +1971 | Jun 26-Jul 11 | " | " | 4500 | 67,500 | price increase - salmon |

Figures in brackets () indicate the numbers indirectly involved, when known.

Sources: Percy Gladstone and Stuart Jamieson, "Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia", CJEPS, v.14#2, May, 1950.

*Labour Gazette, 1900 - 1963.

+Daily Newspapers, Vancouver and Victoria.

have been twelve strikes in the herring fishery, six in the halibut and five in other fisheries, for a total of sixty-nine work-stoppages in the eighty years since the first recorded dispute in 1893.⁶

Of the forty-six strikes of salmon fishermen, thirty-four have involved the loss of more than one thousand man-days of fishing, and twenty-four have involved more than one thousand men. There have been strikes in the salmon fishery in thirty-five of the eighty years since 1893, and in eleven of these thirty-five years there has been more than one strike.

To determine the significance of strikes in the herring fishery it is necessary to use some indicator other than numbers involved and man-days of work lost, since this information is not available in all instances. Table XII provides a review of strikes in conjunction with data on production and landed value in the herring fishery from 1951 to 1964.⁷

⁶ Federal-Provincial Committee on Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, A Summary Review of Information Related to the Problems of Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, pp. 124-126.

⁷ The herring fishery in British Columbia did not become fully developed until after World War II. Before the war, most of the herring was cured and sold as food; but limited markets for North Pacific herring as a food forced the industry to operate far below the potential warranted by the bountiful fish stocks. The introduction of technology for reducing herring to meal and oil opened vast new markets, and the industry expanded to meet this demand. Through the 1950's and most of the 1960's, herring accounted for 10 to 15% of the landed value of all fish in British Columbia. By 1966 the industry had over-expanded, and catches began to decline sharply as stocks became depleted. In 1967 the situation became so critical that federal authorities imposed a ban on fishing herring for reduction purposes; this ban is still in effect at the time of writing (December, 1972). Since the industry was at its height from the early 1950's to the mid-1960's, this is the appropriate period in which to examine the state of labour relations.

Table XII. Herring Landings and Landed Value - 1951-52 to 1963-64 as Related to Strikes.

| Year | Production | Landed Value | Dates of Tie-up Affecting Herring Fishing |
|------------------|------------|--------------|--|
| Apr 1- Mar 31 | 000 Tons | \$ 000 | |
| 1951-52 | 198,160 | 6840 | No tie-up. |
| 1952-53 | 11,867 | 386 | Oct 1, 1952 - March, 1953. |
| 1953-54 | 212,096 | 5252 | No tie-up. |
| 1954-55 | 170,019 | 4301 | No tie-up. |
| 1955-56 | 251,857 | 7215 | July 1, 1955 - Nov 18, 1955. |
| 1956-57 | 178,182 | 5558 | Oct 15, 1956 - Dec 2, 1956. |
| 1957-58 | 84,612 | 2810 | Oct. 1957 - Dec. 1957) Partial Jan, 1958 - Mar. 1958) |
| 1958-59 | 231,205 | 7658 | May 1 - June 16, 1958. |
| 1959-60 | 184,806 | 6126 | June 1 - Oct 7, 1959. Jan.- Feb., 1960 (Partial) Early Feb - Mar 10, 1960. |
| 1960-61 | 171,714 | 3482 | May 1 - Nov 20, 1960. |
| 1961-62 | 221,721 | 4633 | Oct 1 - Nov 20, 1961. |
| 1962-63 | 264,400 | 5768 | Oct 1 - Dec 1, 1962. |
| 1963-64 | 259,510 | 6117 | No tie-up. |

Source: Federal-Provincial Committee on Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, "A Summary Review of Information Related to the Problems of Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry", Ottawa, Queen's Printer, November, 1964. p. 25.

There were tie-ups in all but four of the thirteen years under review, and it is estimated that herring landings over this period were reduced by 400,000 tons or approximately 20% of the total landings reported. In monetary terms this represented a loss to fishermen of \$11,000,000 in gross earnings.⁸ That these fishermen were willing to repeatedly to go on strike in the face of such costs must be taken as evidence of militancy by any reckoning.

The term "militant" as defined in the introduction to this study means "aggressively combative and ready for direct confrontation". Readiness to strike on its own is but one aspect of militancy. Equally important is the manner in which a group engages in confrontation. A review of some of the major strikes in the B.C. salmon fishery highlights the aggressive and combative spirit of fishermen's unions over the years.

c. Historical Review of Major Strikes in the Salmon Fishery

1. Early fishermen's unions and the strikes of 1893 and 1900

The strike of 1893, the first recorded strike in the industry, was brief but it was marked by many of the elements which characterized later disputes. The Fraser River Fishermen's Protective and Benevolent Association had been organized primarily to lobby for restrictions against

⁸ This report notes that all of these strikes in the herring fishery were related to the price paid by the companies for the fish. See Federal-Provincial Committee on Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, op.cit. pp. 24-26.

Japanese fishermen who were threatening to displace white and Indian fishermen from the Fraser River. By virtue of the fact that it was the only organization of fishermen, the Fishermen's Association became involved in a strike when the canners announced a reduction in the price for sockeye and its members refused to fish.⁹

During the strike the fishermen were accused of using "questionable methods and intimidation in preventing the Indians from fishing, while other pernicious methods were adopted to prevent the cannery men obtaining assistance".¹⁰ However pernicious the fishermen's methods, the canners were able to persuade the provincial government to dispatch a number of special constables under a provincial police sergeant to the strike area the day after the strike began.¹¹ A number of union men were arrested on charges of intimidation. According to Ralston: "The harassing nature of these arrests can be judged by the cases being adjourned several times at the request of the prosecutors until the strike was over, when the charges were apparently quietly dropped."¹² The fishermen, in their turn,

⁹ H.K. Ralston, The 1900 Strike of Fraser River Sockeye Salmon Fishermen, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1965. p. 52.

¹⁰ Vancouver World, July 14, 1893. p. 4; July 15, 1893. p. 2. Quoted in Percy Gladstone, Industrial Disputes in the Commercial Fisheries of British Columbia, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1959. p. 134.

¹¹ Ralston, op.cit. p. 58.

¹² Ibid. p. 56, footnote 47.

claimed that Indian agents, cannery owners and even a priest were using undue influence to get the Indians to return to work.¹³

Throughout the strike, the Fishermen's Association maintained an ambivalent attitude toward the Japanese. It claimed to have Japanese support for the strike. But it could hardly be expected to welcome them into its ranks, considering its primary objective was to have them barred from the fishery.

All of these factors, the intransigence and aggressive tactics of the canners, the supposed resort to violence and intimidation by the fishermen, and the involvement of the provincial police, figured in later disputes. And the stress among ethnic groups, particularly the hostility between the whites and Indians and the Japanese was a central feature of virtually all of the strikes on the Fraser River, until the federal authorities began phasing the Japanese out of the fishery in the 1920's.

The strike of 1900 stands out not only because of its size (it involved 8000 men and the loss of half of the fishing season), but also because it is still held up to fishermen as the source of their militant heritage, the fishermen's equivalent of a founding revolution.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid. p. 56.

¹⁴ This is a general impression which the author has formed from a survey reading of all volumes of The Fisherman, and from interviews with union officials.

The actual conduct of the strike with the fishermen persisting in their confrontation with the canneries in the face of great odds is an outstanding example of militant unionism.

The unions which conducted the 1900 strike were organized in response to the creation of a powerful salmon canners' combine in 1898.¹⁵ Joseph H. Watson, a member of the organizing committee of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, took the initiative in organizing the fishermen. Watson had become involved in the affairs of the fishermen when he was appointed to a committee of canners' and fishermen's representatives to report on the federal government's amendments to the fishery regulations in 1898. He was not a fisherman, but since there was no organization of fishermen to nominate a representative, the Trades and Labour Council named Watson.¹⁶ Quick to recognize the need, he personally organized two unions of fishermen in 1899 and 1900. The first, established in New Westminster, was chartered by the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC); the second, in Vancouver, was chartered by the American Federation of Labor.¹⁷

¹⁵ From time to time the cannery operators had tried to form associations or combines to regulate the production and marketing of British Columbia salmon. The first really effective combine, the British Columbia Salmon Packers' Association, was not established until 1898. This organization was tightened in 1900, with the formation of the Fraser River Canners' Association. This new organization attempted to set maximum prices for raw salmon and to set production quotas for each cannery. It had the power to levy fines on member canneries that violated its decisions. See Ralston, op.cit. p. iii.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 87.

¹⁷ Gladstone, op.cit. pp. 138-139.

The vice-president of the Vancouver union, Frank Rogers, was another veteran trade unionist. Rogers was first and foremost a professional labour organizer. He was a convinced socialist and a strong advocate of militant trade unionism. At the time Watson organized the Vancouver-based union, Rogers was working as a longshoreman in the city. He was connected with the TLC through his activity in the longshoremen's union. Rogers soon superceded the more moderate Watson as the effective leader of the fishermen, though by his own admission he never fished a day in his life.¹⁸

The two unions co-ordinated their activities under the name of the British Columbia Fishermen's Union. A concerted effort was made to recruit all fishermen in the Fraser River in preparation for the inevitable showdown with the Cannery Association over the price for salmon for the 1900 season. But racial antagonisms proved to be too deep. The Japanese had not forgotten the efforts of the old Fraser River Fishermen's Protective and Benevolent Association to have them excluded from the fishing industry. And the whites and Indians were all too aware of the continued expansion of the Japanese contingent in the fishery.¹⁹ The Japanese, under the aegis of their consul in Vancouver, established the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society, which was primarily a cultural and welfare

¹⁸ Ralston, op.cit. p. 98.

¹⁹ The Japanese did not enter the British Columbia fishery in any concentration until the early 1890's, but after that their numbers increased rapidly. It is estimated that by 1899 there were approximately 4000 Japanese fishing in this province and most were concentrated on the lower Fraser. See Charles Young and Helen R.Y. Reid, The Japanese Canadians, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1938. p. 42.

organization rather than a labour union.²⁰

When the fishing season opened in 1900 the canners were offering 20 cents a fish, with the understanding that this price could be reduced at any time. The rival fishermen's groups all rejected this offer and were in accord in their demand for 25 cents a fish throughout the season.²¹ By July 10, it became apparent that the fishermen were not going to fish at the price offered by the canners. As soon as the strike became general the canners persuaded the provincial government to assign a force of some forty special constables under the command of Chief Constable R.B. Lister of the provincial police to patrol the strike area. Lister was ordered to keep in touch with the stipendary magistrate in Vancouver in case reading of the Riot Act should become necessary. He was also given the authority to swear in as many more special constables as he deemed necessary.²²

As in 1893, the union was harassed through the unwarranted arrest of some of its members. Lister thought the strike was the work of two "labour agitators by the name of McClain [sic] and Anderson". On July 11, Captain J.L. Anderson, who was president of the Vancouver union, was arrested and charged with intimidation as a result of his activities as a spokesman in a union patrol boat. The charges were

²⁰ Ralston, op.cit. p. 102.

²¹ Twenty-five cents a fish had been the prevailing price throughout the 1899 season. For an analysis of the significance of the canners' offer and the fishermen's demand, see Ralston, op.cit. pp. 105-113. Unless otherwise noted all details pertaining to the 1900 strike are from Ibid. pp. 113-167.

²² Gladstone, op.cit. p. 140.

dismissed when the Indian boy who had laid them admitted under cross-examination in court that he had been directed to do so by the management at one of the canneries. Will MacClain, the other "agitator" could not be arrested but he was at this time dismissed from his job as a machinist with the Canadian Pacific Railway.²³ Charges of intimidation were brought against two other union members but were dismissed by the presiding magistrate on the grounds that the alleged offences took place outside the three mile limit and therefore beyond the jurisdiction of the courts. This sort of harassment only served to harden the fishermen's resolve to stay on strike.

In order to gain support and raise funds, the fishermen held a number of public demonstrations. At one such demonstration an estimated 1000 fishermen and their supporters paraded through downtown Vancouver to an open-air meeting where they heard speeches by Watson, Anderson, MacClain and others. One of the speakers declared that "the cardinal principle^{le} . . . the fishermen were struggling for was recognition of the union".²⁴

By July 18, the strike showed no sign of breaking; it was, in fact, becoming more widespread and effectively enforced. So the canners

²³ Like Rogers, MacClain was not a fisherman, but a professional organizer. Both men were leaders of the United Socialist Labour Party of British Columbia and played active roles in the Trades and Labour Council. MacClain was not officially a member of the fishermen's union until after the strike.

²⁴ Vancouver Province, July 16, 1900. p. 3. Quoted in Gladstone, op.cit. p. 141.

finally met with the fishermen's representatives and made their first genuine attempt to negotiate. Before the fishermen had met to discuss new proposals arising from these negotiations, two fishing boats were sent out from Pheonix cannery in Steveston, protected by ten special constables in three cannery tugs. This was a transparent attempt to provoke the strikers. Ralston describes the ensuing incident.²⁵

"As might be expected, union patrol boats responded vigorously. Led by Rogers, they seized one boat with its boat-puller though failing to capture the second. The captured boat was towed to the wharf at Steveston. There the unfortunate boat-puller was hauled up on a box by Rogers, to be jeered at as a 'scab' and then man-handled by the crowd who treated him 'like a football' as he fled."

As a result of his part in this incident Rogers was arrested and placed in jail in Vancouver.

The cannery wired the government claiming that the special constables were useless and the situation was completely out of hand. They argued that the militia was "urgently required or great loss of life and property would result".²⁶ The government refused to call up the militia and noted that it could only do so at the request of three justices of the peace in the municipality affected. On July 23, three sympathetic justices of the peace were found and armed militia contingents from Vancouver and New Westminster were on duty the next morning.²⁷

²⁵ Ralston, op.cit. p. 129.

²⁶ Quoted in Ibid. p. 130.

²⁷ One of the justices of the peace was a shopkeeper who had formerly been a partner in a cannery, another was a foreman at the Pacific Coast Cannery, and the third was the owner of the Dinsmore Cannery. Ibid. pp. 137-138.

Under this protection the Japanese resumed fishing on the canners' terms.²⁸

Despite the severe blow dealt to the strike by the desertion of the Japanese, who constituted almost half of the labour force, the whites and the Indians held out for another week and finally managed to force the canners to reach a negotiated settlement for a straight price of 19 cents through the season. They failed to get the canners to recognize the union, but managed to maintain their organization and expand it to other centres in preparation for price negotiations in the 1901 season.

ii. The strikes of 1901 and 1913

Well before the opening of the 1901 season the fishermen had organized the Grand Lodge of B.C. Fishermen with headquarters in Vancouver and five locals from New Westminster to Port Simpson.²⁹ While the Japanese still had their own organization, the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society, full co-operation between the two organizations was said to be assured. However, when negotiations opened on May 20 between the Canners' Association and the Grand Lodge, the Japanese did not take an active part. The absence of the Japanese from these discussions provided some intimation of the difficulties to come.

²⁸ These terms included the undertaking to pay 20 cents for the first 600 fish delivered by each fishermen each week and 15 cents for each fish thereafter. Canneries would take at these prices all the fish they could handle, and the limits on deliveries, if necessary, would be imposed equally on all fishermen. Ibid. pp. 132-133.

²⁹ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 145. All details on the 1901 strike are from Ibid. pp. 145-150.

Despite the early start on negotiations the fishermen and the canners were unable to reach any agreement by the time fishing was scheduled to start in early July. It is difficult to determine the central issue in the ensuing strike, but it seems not to have been the price for fish. When negotiations had opened in May the canners had offered 12 cents a fish, without committing themselves to this price for the duration of the season. This represented a considerable cut from the 19 cents through the season won in the previous season's strike. But the fishermen themselves were demanding only 15 cents for the season. Since a heavy run of fish was expected, they were willing to take considerably less per fish. On a number of occasions the fishermen and the canners seemed close to an accord on prices, but a more fundamental problem was blocking agreement. The fishermen stated "we would fish for 11 cents for the season, supposing the canners would give us the preference, not employing Japanese except after we have been equipped with boats and nets, and if the canners would take all the fish the union men can bring in".³⁰ The essential struggle was obviously between the rival groups of fishermen.

Gladstone's account of the open conflict that followed is worth quoting at length.³¹

"Despite reports that the Japanese were armed and were going fishing, there was actually no fishing. However, by July 15, persistent reports that they were to start fishing brought action from the union. Patrol boats were put on the river to prevent fishing. However, the Japanese had their own patrol to protect their fishermen.

³⁰ Vancouver Province, July 10, 1901. p. 1. Quoted in Gladstone, op.cit. p. 149.

³¹ Ibid. pp. 149-150.

"Violence was reported with both parties being armed. Police protection was negligible, though several fishermen were arrested. . . .

"A favourite tactic of the Fishermen's Union was to pick up Japanese fishermen, cast their boats adrift, then leave them marooned at a previously chosen island. The idea was to leave them marooned for the season where they would be fed every few days, maintained comfortably, though 'closely guarded'. When the authorities discovered the first hideout, the union chose a second and more remote island. The authorities were unable to discover this second island. By July 12, the union had marooned 36 Japanese."

A settlement for 12½ cents for one quarter of the season's pack and 10 cents for the remainder was finally arranged through the unofficial mediation efforts of a group of Vancouver businessmen. When fishing resumed on July 19 the canneries were hard-pressed to handle the record catch. This strike ~~strike~~ illustrated another facet of the fishermen's militancy. Not only were they prepared to tackle their traditional protagonists, the canners, but they were also ready to engage in pitched battle with rival groups of other fishermen who seemed to threaten their livelihood.

The strike of 1913 provides additional evidence of this latter facet of fishermen's militancy, with a novel twist. By 1913 the Japanese held 44.4% of all the salmon fishing licences on the Fraser River, while the whites and Indians held 36.6 and 19.0%, respectively.³² This was a dramatic reversal of the situation in 1900 and 1901, and the Japanese were now the dominant and aggressive group on the river. According to reports in the local press they had a "complete organization in Steveston

³² Ibid. p. 155.

with a Union Hall and office", while the white fishermen "being of all nationalities besides English-speaking" lacked organization.³³

The Japanese went on strike on August 1, when the canners reduced the price for sockeye from 25 to 15 cents. The white fishermen were willing to compromise at 20 cents on the understanding that the canners would take 200 fish a day from each boat. The Japanese insisted on maintaining the old price, claiming that their agreement called for 25 cents through July and August. Through their organization, they kept the white fishermen in port for the seven days of the strike. The stories of intimidation, violence and property damage on the part of the Japanese were reminiscent of the tactics used by the whites and Indians against the Japanese in 1901. The strike came to an end on August 7 when the Japanese, without informing the other fishermen, returned to fishing. All groups were forced to settle for 15 cents a sockeye with a limit of 200 fish.³⁴ While the strike was a failure for the fishermen and while it was of minor significance when compared with the mammoth confrontations of 1900 and 1901, it serves to demonstrate that militancy is not racially determined. The key to overt militancy in the fishing industry seems to be sufficient organizational strength to undertake and sustain confrontation.

During World War I there was a sharp decline in union activity

³³ Vancouver Province, August 4, 1913. p. 4. Quoted in Gladstone, op.cit. p. 155.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 155.

and in the number of strikes. Many of the fishermen were drawn into the armed forces so a manpower shortage developed and individual incomes rose for the remaining fishermen. This development was enhanced by generally high war-time prices for salmon. Meanwhile, the 1913 slide at Hell's Gate almost decimated the Fraser River fishery, forcing many people to leave the industry and greatly weakening the traditional centre for organizational activity among fishermen.

Throughout the 1920's most of the fishermen were disorganized or, at best, organized into weak local unions. There were sporadic work stoppages, but none to match the bitter-fought strikes of the pre-war years. The British Columbia Fishermen's Protective Association (BCFPA), which might have been able to take the lead in reviving and directing the militancy of the fishermen, chose to devote itself primarily to seeking legislative restrictions against the Japanese.³⁵

iii. Strikes in the 1930's

The disarray and complacency of the fishermen in the 1920's rapidly gave way to renewed organizing activity and militancy with the coming of the great depression in the 1930's. The most dramatic development of this decade was not in any specific strike, but in the rise of an unabashedly revolutionary union in the industry. This was the Fishermen's Industrial Union (FIU), the fishermen's section of the Workers' Unity League (WUL) which was the labour federation organized by the Communist

³⁵ Ibid. p. 162.

Party in Canada.³⁶

In the four years of its existence, the FIU played a prominent part in four major strikes. Two strikes in 1932, one on the Skeena and Nass Rivers, and the other at Rivers and Smith's Inlets, were closely related.³⁷ Some 1800 Skeena and Nass Fishermen went on strike on June 20, demanding 40 cents a sockeye while the canners offered 27½ cents. The strike was almost broken without the fishermen recording any gains when several Indians in the Nass area resumed fishing under police protection on July 6. By July 8 the Japanese on the Nass had followed the Indians back to fishing, and two days later most of the Skeena fishermen gave up the strike.

The canners refused to recognize the FIU and would only negotiate with the TLC-chartered United Fishermen's Federal Union (UFFU). But undaunted by the seeming failure on the Skeena and the Nass, the FIU spread the dispute on July 10 to Rivers and Smith's Inlets where 1400 fishermen tied up their boats. Several of these strikers were arrested for allegedly intimidating strikebreakers and cutting nets. Again the canners refused to recognize the FIU and would only negotiate with the BCFPA, which like the UFFU had a TLC charter.

The strike of 1932 officially ended on July 20, with the fishermen receiving 30 cents per sockeye and a 20% reduction on the

³⁶ For details on the FIU and the WUL see Infra. pp. 101-106.

³⁷ Details on these strikes are from Gladstone, op.cit. pp. 175-177.

price of nets. The fishermen who had resumed fishing for 27½ cents were compensated through greater concessions on fishing gear, food and fuel. According to Gladstone: "The final settlement created general dissatisfaction and led to increased strength for the militant FIU. The dissatisfaction was of such proportions that, in the Rivers Inlet area, the BCFPA was ousted by the FIU. Thereafter, the BCFPA did not exert any influence over fishermen north of the Fraser River".³⁸

In 1936, the Fishermen's Joint Council through its affiliated unions³⁹ became involved in a major strike of seine and gillnet fishermen.⁴⁰ Some 1400 fishermen at Rivers Inlet went on strike on July 5 for an increase in the minimum price from 40 to 50 cents a sockeye. By July 13, approximately 1100 additional fishermen in Alert Bay, Smith's Inlet and Butedale had joined the strike. By July 19, eight salmon canneries had closed affecting 1000 shoreworkers and other employees.

On July 15 the fishermen lowered their demands to 45 cents. The canners refused this but offered to submit the dispute to binding arbitration if the fishermen would resume fishing at 40 cents. The fishermen rejected the arbitration proposal and renewed their original

38 Ibid. p. 177.

39 The Fishermen's Joint Council was a federation of the five major fishermen's unions: the FCWIU, the UFFU, the BCFPA, the Native Brotherhood of B.C., and the Amalgamated Association of Fishermen (Japanese). For further details on the Joint Council see Infra. p. 109.

40 Details on the 1936 strike are from Gladstone, op.cit. pp. 180-182.

demand for 50 cents. Some of the boats resumed fishing under police protection for the canners' original offer of 40 cents. But the great majority of fishermen left to take up fishing in southern areas. In effect, the entire fishing season in the Rivers Inlet district was lost.

iv. The war years

World War II, like World War I, proved an economic boon to fishermen. The ultimate windfall for white and Indian fishermen came with the expulsion of the Japanese from the B.C. coast in 1942. With this single move, one of the most persistent sources of tension among fishermen was removed. Furthermore, the boats of the Japanese, many of them expensive, efficient vessels, were redistributed among the remaining fishermen at bargain prices.⁴¹ The labour force was so drastically reduced that Icelandic fishermen from Manitoba had to be recruited to keep the industry operating at capacity. This was one of the few periods in the history of the industry when the excess capacity created by open access was not a problem. Despite these conditions promoting industrial peace there were three strikes during the war years. However, these disputes will not be discussed since they do not provide any special evidence of militancy.

The most significant developments during the war were in the organizational sphere. These developments are discussed in detail in the next chapter.⁴² For now it is sufficient to note that, in 1945,

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 187

⁴² See Infra. pp. 109-111.

they culminated in the chartering of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU), the first organization to have effective coast-wide jurisdiction over workers in all sectors of the fishing industry.

The emergence of an all-encompassing union like the UFAWU opened a new era for industrial relations in the fishing industry. For the first time fishermen and shoreworkers could exert co-ordinated pressure on the processing companies in support of their wage and price demands. For the first time the possibility of an industry-wide strike was a realistic threat.

v. The post-war years

During the first few years of its existence the new union concentrated on consolidating its position in the industry. A great effort was made to recruit new members, and the union engaged in only a few relatively minor strikes. The first large-scale confrontation with the processing companies did not come until 1949, when 4500 seine and gillnet fishermen went on strike to back up their demands for an increase in the price for chum salmon. The strike lasted only six days and was settled through a negotiated compromise.⁴³

In July, 1952, 6000 salmon net-fishermen struck for four days to back up demands for the maintenance of 1951 prices. The strike was settled with the fishermen accepting decreases of from 1½ to 5 cents

⁴³ Labour Gazette, November, 1949. p. 1507; December, 1949. p. 1653.

a pound on all varieties except sockeye, for which they received the same price as in 1951.⁴⁴

These strikes were dwarfed in significance by a prolonged dispute over the price for fall chums in September and October of 1952. On September 5, more than 90% of all fishermen voted to reject the operators' offer of 5½ cents a pound, and to go on strike for their demand of 11 cents, the price they had received in 1951. The operators claimed their offer was the best they could make in light of a large carryover of canned salmon from the previous year, and extremely poor market prospects for the foreseeable future.⁴⁵ The union charged that the offer was far too low and announced that it had a written offer from an independent American buyer for 8 cents a pound, with an undertaking to buy over two million pounds of fish a week. This offer was also rejected, ostensibly on the grounds that Canadian fishermen would not undercut their counterparts in Washington who, at the time, were receiving 14 cents a pound.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Victoria Daily Colonist, July 18, 1952. p. 20; July 20, 1952. p.3; July 22, 1952. p. 1; July 25, 1952. p. 1.

⁴⁵ British Columbia salmon had traditionally been marketed primarily in Great Britain and other Commonwealth countries in the sterling trading bloc. In the early 1950's Canada was making a concerted effort to move from the sterling to the dollar bloc. To this end, policies were adopted which made U.S. dollars rather than British pounds the currency of exchange. This severely limited Canada's trade with sterling countries since they had only limited dollar reserves. In addition, Britain was reducing its trade in hard currency in an effort to speed up post-war reconstruction.

⁴⁶ Vancouver Province, September 5, 1952. p. 17; September 8, 1952. p. 2.

Negotiations continued, and on September 11 the canners presented a new offer with prices ranging from 5½ to 7 cents according to the area where the fish were caught. The union countered with a demand for prices of 8 to 11 cents. At a mass meeting on September 12, the fishermen supported their negotiating committee's rejection of the latest offer, indicating that it "wasn't worth voting on". The operators claimed this rejection killed "all hopes of ending the strike". With the disputants still far from agreement and the strike entering the sixth day, negotiations ended.⁴⁷

Faced with this apparent impasse, the union petitioned the federal government to provide a price support program for fall chums in order to alleviate the immediate crisis, but no action was forthcoming from Ottawa.⁴⁸ A delegation from the UFAWU, the Native Brotherhood and the Fishing Vessel Owners' Association of British Columbia met with the provincial cabinet in Victoria, and requested support from that source in their representations to Ottawa. They also asked for financial assistance from the province for fishermen who would be "in dire need" through the winter because they were not eligible for any unemployment insurance benefits. These requests also came to naught.⁴⁹ Additional requests, made to R.W. Mayhew, the federal fisheries minister, called for federal subsidies to finance an expansion of storage facilities, an improved marketing program and the removal of all currency restrictions on trade with sterling bloc countries. Mayhew assured them the matter would receive early

⁴⁷ Ibid. September 12, 1952. p. 21; September 13, 1952. p. 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid. September 8, 1952. p. 16; September 12, 1952. p. 21.

⁴⁹ Ibid. September 17, 1952. p. 21.

consideration by the federal cabinet; but nothing was done and the strike continued.⁵⁰

On September 19, with the strike entering its third week, the union was served with a court injunction restraining its officers and members, or "their agents and servants" from picketing or otherwise interfering with anyone who attempted to fish in spite of the strike. And to add to the union's troubles, two Japanese fishermen filed a claim in the B.C. Supreme Court, that the UFAWU was "an illegal conspiracy or combine", and should therefore be dissolved by court order. This charge was based on the technicality that, in law, fishermen are considered self-employed and, therefore, are not entitled to organize in labour unions.⁵¹

Meanwhile, negotiations were re-opened and the operators presented a new proposal improving on their September 11 offer by $\frac{1}{2}$ cent per pound. The UFAWU negotiators rejected this, deciding to hold out for their demand of 8 to 11 cents. But in a surprise move, the negotiators for the Native Brotherhood broke with the union on September 22, and signed with the canners for $5\frac{1}{2}$ to $7\frac{1}{2}$ cents per pound. They announced that the Indians, who were estimated to constitute almost half of the 3000 striking fishermen, would resume fishing on September 24. According to Bill Scow, the president of the Native Brotherhood, the Indians were

⁵⁰ Ibid. September 18, 1952. p. 19.

⁵¹ Ibid. September 20, 1952. p. 1.

"fed up" waiting for supposedly better offers from the United States which had failed to materialize. He pointed out that the Indians were totally dependent on the fishery for a living, and they could not afford to lose the entire season on account of the strike. Officers of the union retorted by calling the Indian capitulation "strike-breaking". They declared any fish caught while the strike was still on would be considered "unfair" and would not be handled by the union tendermen or shoreworkers. This declaration was endorsed by over 90% of the allied workers.⁵²

So long as the allied workers supported the strike, the Indians could not fish and the conflict remained deadlocked. For the first time, the union had used its power to tie up the entire industry to win a dispute in one section of it. But as a result of the open split between the two fishermen's organizations, the canners now had a definite advantage over the strikers.

Once the Native Brotherhood had signed, the operators refused to negotiate further with the union. In an attempt to resolve the deadlock, the fishermen approached the provincial labour minister, Lyle Wicks, and asked him to intervene and bring the parties back to the bargaining table. After considerable effort he managed to arrange a meeting for October 10. After four days of negotiations it was revealed that both sides had made some concessions. The operators had raised their offer another $\frac{1}{2}$ cent, while the fishermen indicated they were willing to accept a reduction of two cents from the 1951 prices; there was now

⁵² Ibid. September 23, 1952. p. 13; September 24, 1952. p. 35.

only one cent separating the two sides.⁵³

The cannery's latest offer was put to a secret ballot vote of the fishermen, but it was rejected. The union negotiators then suggested compulsory arbitration, which was unacceptable to the cannery. In a "last ditch" effort to reach a settlement, Wicks proposed a compromise. The fishermen would resume fishing at the price offered by the cannery and the final price would be settled through arbitration. This proposal was accepted by 70% of the fishermen in a secret ballot vote. The strike officially ended when the fishermen resumed fishing on October 20.⁵⁴

This strike which lasted forty-four days was the longest in the history of the B.C. salmon fishery.

vi. Strikes in 1953 and 1954

In June, 1953 and again in June, 1954, the UFAWU led strikes of salmon net-fishermen to back up demands for increased prices on all varieties of salmon. Both of these disputes were settled through a negotiated compromise. The next industry-wide tie-up came in August, 1954.

On July 13, 1954, the 641 tendermen in the industry voted

⁵³ Ibid. October 2, 1952. p. 23; October 7, 1952. p. 14; October 8, 1952. p. 21; October 11, 1952. p. 57; October 14, 1952. p. 16. The fishermen's decision to accept a price cut of two cents per pound was largely inspired by the news that the fishermen in Puget Sound had just accepted a similar reduction.

⁵⁴ Ibid. October 16, 1952. p. 21; October 18, 1952. p. 1.

overwhelmingly to reject a conciliation board report on their wage dispute with the processing companies. Negotiations continued but the operators insisted on acceptance of the report as a basis for agreement, while the tendermen persisted in their demand for a monthly wage increase of \$30 in a one-year contract. On August 3, the tendermen voted 81.6% in favour of strike action to back up their demands.⁵⁵

August 7 was set as the strike deadline and the union fishermen agreed to stop fishing until the tendermen's dispute was settled. The cannery workers were advised by the union to stay on the job because wage negotiations for them, which were in progress, could be detrimentally affected by a sympathy strike. At the last minute, the cannery owners offered \$20 per month in a two-year contract, but this was rejected and the strike commenced as scheduled.⁵⁶

While the dispute directly involved only 641 tendermen, it idled 5000 fishermen. Without the fish coming in, there was virtually no work for the canneries, and eighteen were forced to close, idling an additional 4000 workers.⁵⁷ The strike ended on August 15 when a compromise settlement was accepted by the tendermen.⁵⁸

While this strike was relatively brief, it was significant

⁵⁵ Vancouver Sun, July 14, 1954. p. 2; August 4, 1954. p. 21.

⁵⁶ Ibid. August 7, 1954. p. 8.

⁵⁷ Ibid. August 9, 1954. p. 2; August 11, 1954. p. 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid. August 14, 1954. p. 1; August 16, 1954. p. 17.

on two grounds. It again demonstrated that an industry-wide union could completely tie up the industry, even when the immediate dispute involved only a small portion (7%) of the total union membership. The fact that the fishermen were willing to strike in sympathy at that particular point in the season may be even more significant, for the strike took place in the middle of a large sockeye run and probably resulted in the loss of a considerable portion of their potential income for that year.

vii. The industry-wide strike of 1963

There have been five strikes of salmon fishermen in British Columbia since 1954 (Table XI). Of these, two have been industry-wide disputes where the allied workers have gone on strike to back up wage demands at the same time the fishermen were on strike in price disputes with the canners. The two disputes, in 1959 and in 1963, differ from earlier industry-wide tie-ups in that all sectors of the industry were directly involved in the strikes.

After a secret ballot vote of union members, held on July 11 and 12, 1963, indicated that the fishermen and shoreworkers were overwhelmingly in favour of strike action,⁵⁹ the UFAWU executive called for

⁵⁹ In the union-conducted secret ballot, 81.7% of the fishermen and 78% of the shoreworkers opted for strike action. The tendermen opted, by two votes, for continued negotiations without a strike. In the government-supervised ballot of shoreworkers, which was required under the B.C. Labour Relations Act, 54.1% were in favour of strike action. The difference in the results of the two ballots stemmed from different eligibility requirements, the government giving a vote to casual, as well as to full-time shoreworkers. See Vancouver Province, July 15, 1963. p. 1.

a tie-up of the entire industry, including halibut and groundfish operations. The salmon fishermen started their strike on July 14, and by July 17, the entire fishing industry was brought to a standstill. The union had permitted the shoreworkers to continue working until all the fish caught before July 14 were processed.⁶⁰

On July 16, the canners made a last minute offer on fish prices and wages, and asked the union executive to submit it to a free vote of the members. This the executive refused to do saying the offer was not near enough to the union demands to warrant a vote.⁶¹

From the very begining the strike came under fire from non-union fishermen, who claimed it was a threat to their livelihood. The main source of opposition was the 1000-member Pacific Trollers Association (PTA), though it is estimated another 1500 to 2000 unorganized fishermen

⁶⁰ Ibid. July 18, 1963. p. 17.

⁶¹ A comparison of the 1962 prices, the prices offered by the canneries, and the prices demanded by the union as of July 16, 1963 is given below. See Ibid. July 17, 1963. p. 3.

| | 1962 Price | Cannery Offer | Union Demand |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|
| red springs and sockeye | 33¢/pound | 34¢/pound | 36¢/pound |
| cohoes and white springs | 24 " | 24 " | 30 " |
| pinks | 11½ " | 10 " | 15 " |
| chums | 11-14" | 12-15" | 12-15" |
| allied workers | | 4% wage increase | 4½% wage increase |

were also opposed to any interruption in fishing operations. Technically, they were free to continue fishing, but with the allied workers on strike and all the canneries closed, they had no place to sell their catch.⁶²

An even more ominous threat to the strike came from within the ranks of the strikers themselves. Peter Williams, president of the Kitwancool branch of the Native Brotherhood, charged that the union was dictating to the Indians by not allowing them to vote on the July 16 offer. And Harold Sinclair, secretary of the Skeena local of the Native Brotherhood, claimed that the Brotherhood should break with the union if it were to act in the best interests of its members. Between them, Sinclair and Williams claimed to speak for 1500 Indian fishermen and shoreworkers in northern B.C., a substantial portion of the 10,600 persons directly involved in the strike.⁶³ The executive of the Native Brotherhood suspended Williams and Sinclair and denied that there was any dispute between their organization and the UFAWU.⁶⁴ This action restored some semblance of solidarity to the strike, but it did not remove the grievances of the northern Indians, which probably/^{were}very real. Because of their almost total dependence on the fishing industry for a livelihood, these people stood to lose the most in a prolonged strike. Their position was even more critical since they feared that the fishing season, which ends earlier in northern areas, might be over before the strike was settled to the union's satisfaction.

⁶² Ibid. July 19, 1963. p. 2.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. July 22, 1963. p. 2.

On July 22, it appeared that some progress toward ending the tie-up had been made when the union signed an agreement with the Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative Association giving the shoreworkers in Co-op plants the 4½% pay increase demanded by the union. This meant the Co-op members were free to resume fishing.⁶⁵ It was reported that 600 Co-op fishermen had left for the fishing grounds, but a substantial number of others, who were also members of the PTA, decided not to fish, in sympathy with striking trollers in Washington. The PTA members finally did resume fishing on July 25.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, on July 19, the union revised some of its price demands, bringing them considerably closer to the offer made by the canners on July 16.⁶⁷ However, these new demands were rejected by the canners, who still insisted that the union take a free vote of its members on their earlier offer. When the union negotiators refused to do this, the dispute remained deadlocked.

As the strike dragged on, the union raised money for its strike fund by selling salmon direct to the public for considerably less than the prevailing retail price. This program was fairly successful, with sales in Vancouver alone netting \$35,000 in one day.⁶⁸ However, this

⁶⁶ Ibid. July 25, 1963. p. 1.

⁶⁷ The union still called for 36 cents for sockeye and red springs, but reduced its demand for coho and white springs to 25 cents. The new demand for chums called for a flat price of 14 cents, and the demand for pinks was reduced to 12 cents. See Ibid. July 20, 1963. p. 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid. July 22, 1963. p. 1.

activity was sharply curtailed on July 25 when the National Harbours Board barred the fishermen from holding the sales on federal wharves, and the city of Vancouver pressed charges against the UFAWU for selling fish without a licence.⁶⁹ In Vancouver, ten members of the union, including Homer Stevens, the secretary-treasurer of the union and undisputed leader of the strike, were arraigned in connection with the fish sales, and six others were similarly charged in Burnaby.⁷⁰ The Trail local of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers tried to assist the fishermen by conducting a salmon sale in that town, but met with stiff opposition from local merchants.⁷¹

The UFAWU was confronted with further legal problems when Mr. Justice Craig Munroe of the B.C. Supreme Court issued an injunction on July 27, ordering the union to instruct halibut crews that they were free to resume fishing in spite of the strike in other sectors of the industry. The union appealed the injunction, and in the interim refused to comply with the order. As a result, the Fishing Vessel Owners' Association of B.C. initiated contempt of court proceedings against the union and against Stevens. On August 1, Mr. Justice Munroe issued a new, more direct order for the union to release the halibut boats immediately, and made it clear that failure to comply would force the crown to charge Stevens with contempt of court.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid. July 25, 1963. p. 1; July 29, 1963. p. 1.

⁷⁰ Ibid. August 1, 1963. p. 2.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. July 29, 1963. p. 1; August 2, 1963. p. 2.

On July 24, with an unexpectedly heavy run of Fraser River sockeye building up in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission granted the first of several twenty-hour four/extensions to American fishermen in order to prevent excessive escapement of spawning fish.⁷³ The prospect of an exceptionally good run of sockeye cast the strike in an entirely new light. Fishermen who had originally supported the strike began to weaken, feeling they would fare better with a good catch at the canners' price than they would if they missed the best part of the run in an effort to obtain better prices. Reports of record catches by the Americans continued to drive this point home through the duration of the strike.

News of rising discontent among the strikers began to pour in. In Victoria, a delegation of thirteen fishermen, five of them union members, barged unannounced into the office of the labour minister, L.R. Peterson, and demanded that he intervene to end the strike. The fishermen in Alert Bay announced that they planned to vote on the canners' offer, independent of the union. In Prince Rupert, Tom Parkin, the union's public relations officer, chaired a special meeting of union members at which 75% of those attending voted confidence in the executive's conduct of the strike. However, others outside the meeting were highly critical of the executive.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid. July 24, 1963. p. 2.

⁷⁴ Ibid. July 26, 1963. p. 1.

In light of the apparent weakening of the strike effort, the executive decided to hold a secret ballot confidence vote in all locals. On July 29, before the final count was in, the newspapers reported that the Alert Bay and the Klemtu locals had voted against the executive. The returning officers had been sworn to secrecy until all the results were in; but apparently they felt so strongly about the strike that they revealed the count to the press. Stevens charged that the action was a blatant attempt to influence the vote in other centres.⁷⁵ The next day the press reported that the Campbell River and Prince Rupert locals had voted against the executive. Only the Sointula local was reported to be firm in its support of the executive and the strike.⁷⁶ Finally on July 31, the union executive released the final results of the vote: 2306 for the strike and 2299 against. But a breakdown of the results was even more revealing. The cannery workers voted 904-556 against the strike, while the fishermen voted 1750-1395 for it. The Vancouver local, the largest in the union, supported the strike by a vote of 472-74.⁷⁷ These results placed the executive in a difficult position. It was clear that the allied workers were now prepared to settle the strike and accept the 4% wage increase offered by the cannery workers. Yet, in keeping with their militant heritage, most of the fishermen were prepared to continue their strike, despite the rising odds against its eventual success. The cannery workers had been able to hold out for more than two weeks in the face of an

⁷⁵ Ibid. July 29, 1963. p. 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid. July 30, 1963. p. 1.

⁷⁷ Ibid. July 31, 1963. p. 1.

industry-wide tie-up at the height of the season; with the shoreworkers back on the job, it would be doubtful whether the fishermen could make any further gains against the canners.

While the confidence vote was in progress, labour minister Peterson and the federal fisheries minister, H.J. Robichaud, arranged for the re-opening of negotiations. After three days of heated discussion, they persuaded the fishermen to submit the dispute to binding arbitration on the understanding that the final decision on the scope of the arbitration would be left to the sole arbitrator whom they would appoint forthwith.⁷⁸ To the fishermen, the possibility of presenting their case to an impartial referee seemed a better alternative than continuing the strike with their won ranks disunited; on August 3, 86% voted in favour of the executive's recommendation to resume fishing pending arbitration.⁷⁹

According to calculations made by the federal fisheries department, the strike cost approximately \$7,000,000 in lost earnings to fishermen and allied workers. Based on a calculation of the number of sockeye and pinks which would have been caught if there had been no strike, seine and gillnet fishermen lost \$3.5 million in gross income; shoreworkers and tendermen lost \$1,311,000 in potential wages. And the strike of the allied workers cost troll fishermen approximately \$2 million gross fishing income. The tie-up of the halibut fleet, which was not

⁷⁸ Ibid. August 2, 1963. p. 1.

⁷⁹ Ibid. August 5, 1963. p. 19.

directly involved in negotiations, represented a loss of an additional \$150,000.⁸⁰

In most industries, income losses as a result of strikes can eventually be made up since the work remains to be done. But in the salmon fishery, once the run has passed the income loss is permanent. The \$3.5 million lost by salmon net-fishermen amounted to 22.4% of their potential gross earnings from fishing for that year.⁸¹ Considering this cost, one must conclude that such a strike is not lightly undertaken. That fishermen were willing to take this loss in order to push their demands is a further indication of their militancy.

d. Additional Evidence of Militancy of the UFAWU

During the trawl-longline dispute in 1967 the shoreworkers at the Co-op plant in Prince Rupert, who were members of the UFAWU, refused to handle fish from vessels whose owners had been declared "unfair" by striking fishermen. As a result, these workers, some of whom had up to twenty years seniority, were locked out by the plant management and replaced by non-union personnel.⁸² An action of this sort, where workers were willing to lay their jobs on the line in support of a strike in another section of the industry, is an outstanding example of the spirit of militant unionism which characterizes the UFAWU.

⁸⁰ Ibid. August 3, 1963. p. 3.

⁸¹ This is calculated from the total landed value in 1963 of sockeye, pinks and chums which are the varieties primarily caught by net fishermen.

⁸² The Fisherman, August 4, 1967. p. 1.

At another point in the trawl-longline dispute, the UFAWU shoreworkers refused to unload fish from five trawlers in Prince Rupert on the grounds that the vessel owners had refused to honour a commitment to negotiate a trawl agreement with the union by March 17, and fish caught after that date was considered "hot". The vessel owners obtained an ex parte injunction ordering the officers of the UFAWU to instruct the shoreworkers to unload the fish. In response, the UFAWU General Executive Board took the unprecedented action of holding a membership referendum on the question of complying with the court order. The stated reason behind this move was that the union constitution clearly prohibited any officer or officers from settling a dispute without the approval of the membership. In a strike bulletin at the time the union argued:⁸³

"No one Person can Order Seven Thousand Members to go on Strike, to Call Off a Strike or to Handle Unfair Cargo. If the Court Considers He Has The Power to Order People to Work He Can Send Out Seven Thousand Injunctions and Seven Thousand Telegrams."

The members voted overwhelmingly to continue the embargo.⁸⁴

The UFAWU and its three titled officers were immediately charged with contempt of court. In finding them guilty, Mr. Justice Dohm stated:⁸⁵

"The executive of this Union attempted here to put the Union ahead of the Court by voting whether or not the Court's Order should be obeyed. If this were allowed to prevail chaos would result. . . .

⁸³ UFAWU, Strike Bulletin, March 27, 1967. Emphasis in original.

⁸⁴ The Fisherman, April 5, 1967. p. 1.

⁸⁵ Canadian Labour Law Reports, Court Decisions - cited 67 CLLC 14058, CCH Canadian Ltd., 1967. p. 277.

"I have read all report cases that could be found between the years 1740 and 1966, and in no case have I found anything that equals the contempt shown in this case. This was a planned flouting of the Court's authority."

The judge then passed sentence: for the union, a fine of \$25,000; for the three officers, imprisonment in Oakalla Prison Farm for a term of twelve months. To that date this was the most severe sentence ever imposed in the British Commonwealth for contempt in a case of this nature.⁸⁶

This was not the first time that the UFAWU had been penalized the for contempt of court in connection with/controversy over the use of court injunctions in labour disputes. In 1959, George North, in an editorial in The Fisherman, supported striking iron workers on the Second Narrows bridge project. He used the occasion to criticize the practice of forcing strikers back to work through court injunctions. As a result he was sentenced to thirty days in prison for contempt of court.⁸⁷

Opposition to the use of injunctions to break strikes is a fundamental policy of the entire labour movement in Canada. But few other unions have been willing to apply this policy as vigorously as the UFAWU, and to risk the penalties which the fishermen's union has willingly sustained in support of basic trade union principles.

⁸⁶ The Fisherman, November 17, 1967. p. 1.

⁸⁷ The Fisherman, October 23, 1959. p. 1. In addition to the prison term imposed on North, the Fisherman Publishing Society (in effect, the union) was fined \$3,000. According to the union's lawyers this was the first time in Canadian history that a newspaper editor had been jailed for contempt of court in a case of this sort.

In addition to being a militant union within its own industry, the UFAWU has always been a ready supported^y of other unions in their struggles with employers. In 1946, when the International Typographical Union (ITU) was banned from picketing the offices of the Vancouver Province, the UFAWU was prominent among the few unions that provided pickets to replace those of the ITU.⁸⁸ Since that time volunteer pickets from the fishermen's union have become involved, under similar circumstances, in a number of other strikes outside the fishing industry.⁸⁹ The UFAWU has also made frequent financial contributions to other unions when they have become involved in prolonged and costly strikes.⁹⁰

Working class solidarity is an ideal to which many unions pay "lip service", but few have lived up to the ideal through actions and financial contributions as consistently as the UFAWU. This readiness to become involved in the working class struggle wherever it is being fought can be viewed as evidence of militant unionism.

⁸⁸ Stuart Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66, Task Force of Labour Relations Study No. 22, Privy Council Office, Ottawa, 1968. p. 315.

⁸⁹ Since participation in these "citizen" picket lines" is purely voluntary, there is no official record of which strikes members of the UFAWU have participated in. However, Mike James recalled having seen members of the fishermen's union on picket lines for the Marine Workers' and Boilermakers' Industrial Union, the International Union of Moulders and Allied Workers, the National Association of Marine Engineers, and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers' Union at various times throughout the early 1960's. Interview with Mike James, assistant editor, The Fisherman, November 22, 1972.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

e. Analysis of Strike Action in the Fishing Industry

In Chapter I, theoretical arguments were set forth which pointed to the conclusion that fishermen would be inclined to organize in order to protect themselves against economic misfortune and, if possible, to improve their economic lot; furthermore, their organizations would tend to be militant as a result of the industry's inability to provide them with incomes comparable to those available in other occupations. The foregoing review of labour relations in the B.C. fishing industry provides ample empirical evidence in support of the hypothesis that fishermen would be inclined to organize, and that their organizations would be militant. But it remains to be seen whether this militancy is a product of the industry's inability to provide fishermen with incomes equivalent to those of other seasonal labourers.

It has been demonstrated that the fishing industry of British Columbia, at least the salmon fishery, is suffering from excess entry, which is characteristic of "open access" industries, and is failing to produce individual incomes equivalent to those available in alternative seasonal occupations. It has also been shown that virtually all of the strikes in the salmon and herring fisheries have centered on fish prices. So it is fair to assume that the fishermen's high propensity to strike is related to income expectations. The fishermen have generally justified their strikes with the claim that they are not being paid enough for their fish. But their discontent seems to be based on the conviction that their incomes are unsatisfactory in some absolute sense, rather than the fact that they are low relative to incomes outside the fishing industry.

Undoubtedly, the fishermen's conviction is based, in part, on the observed inequities between their own income position and that of other workers. But in the absence of statements from the fishermen themselves pointing to these inequities as the source of their discontent, it is impossible to connect income disparities and militancy in any formal sense. All that can be said with absolute confidence is that fishermen, like most people, want more; and like loggers, longshoremen, construction workers and certain other groups, they have been militant in backing up their demands. To account for this high level of militancy it may be necessary to go beyond an examination of income as an isolated factor.

Fishing incomes, in addition to being generally low, are exceptionally unstable. Table XIII compares annual fluctuations in the landed value of fish in British Columbia with changes in the number of licensed fishermen each year. While there are sharp increases and decreases in both columns, it is evident that the labour force does not expand and contract at the same rate as the total catch. It follows that there must be dramatic fluctuations in average incomes from year to year. The extent of this variation is borne out by available income data from 1957 and 1958. The average net fishing income of those reporting fish sales in excess of \$2500 rose from \$3323 in 1957 to \$4742 in 1958. This represented a 42.8% increase; and whereas only 32.6% of those reporting any fish sales were in the +\$2500 bracket in 1957, 46.9% were in this upper income group in 1958.⁹¹ While detailed income data is not

⁹¹ Federal-Provincial Committee on Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, A Summary Review of Information Related to the Problems of Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry. p. 67.

Table XIII. Number of Licensed Fishermen and Landed Value of Fish in British Columbia, 1945 - 1962.

| Year | Number of Licensed Fishermen* | Landed Value† \$(000's) |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1945 | 13 292 | 21 201 |
| 1946 | 13 665 | 21 372 |
| 1947 | 12 491 | 22 354 |
| 1948 | 12 226 | 32 643 |
| 1949 | 12 242 | 27 251 |
| 1950 | 12 159 | 36 345 |
| 1951 | 13 213 | 40 638 |
| 1952 | 13 066 | 30 158 |
| 1953 | 12 449 | 31 781 |
| 1954 | 13 038 | 35 044 |
| 1955 | 12 836 | 28 330 |
| 1956 | 11 851 | 36 597 |
| 1957 | 12 999 | 30 757 |
| 1958 | 15 263 | 52 053 |
| 1959 | 15 456 | 35 724 |
| 1960 | 15 159 | 27 962 |
| 1961 | 16 805 | 38 778 |
| 1962 | 16 437 | 46 716 |

Source: *Federal-Provincial Committee on Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, A Summary Review of Information Related to the Problems of Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, Table 28. p. 64.

†Department of Fisheries of Canada, Fisheries Statistics of British Columbia - Annual Report.

available for subsequent years, the information in Table XIII indicates that the gains of 1958 were virtually wiped out in 1959, and were turned into losses, relative to the 1957 figures, in 1960.

Income instability may be as important a factor as the general phenomenon of low incomes in conditioning the militancy of fishermen. B.C. fishermen are not alone at the low end of the income scale, in the province, or in the country. Many low income groups, including fishermen in the Atlantic provinces, have been singularly passive in the face of serious poverty. So low income on its own is probably not sufficient to produce militancy. What seems to distinguish B.C. fishermen from other low income groups is the fact that in some years their incomes are quite high, comparable with or even better than incomes available in alternative occupations. The income data in Table IV, above, illustrates this point quite clearly. The average fishing income was better than that from logging, construction and water transportation, for the period May 1 to October 31, in 1954 and 1958; it was competitive with other incomes in 1953. But in 1957, the average fishing income was the lowest of the four, and in 1970 it was \$1319 lower than the average income in water transportation, and \$4332 below that in construction. These extreme fluctuations may well counter the apathy and resignation that often characterizes low income groups.

Not only are average incomes for fishermen extremely variable from year to year, but the unit prices for fish, which are the fishermen's equivalent of wage rates, are also quite unstable. The circumstances

which create this price instability are largely beyond the control of either the fishermen or the processors. British Columbia salmon is primarily an export item, and like most, it is subject to sharp fluctuations in international markets. For few other products from this province are the market changes as drastic as those for salmon. Demand is highly elastic since salmon is sold in direct competition with other protein foods, such as meat and poultry, which many consumers consider more desirable. Salmon must compete with less expensive fish products which have the advantage in low income markets.⁹² There is virtually no control over the supply of salmon; the fish appears in cycles of scarcity and abundance, and despite the best efforts of biologists there is no way of obtaining a sure pre-season estimate of the size of the run.

In other food industries, the producers have some opportunity to tailor output to market demand. While farmers are still at the mercy of natural disasters, and unexpected fluctuations in world markets, individual farmers can control their own planted acreage. In addition, the government often pays farmers not to plant certain crops, or to adjust their crop mix to anticipated demand. While this program has not been entirely successful, it has helped to direct aggregate output so that it coincides more closely with potential demand. Livestock producers also deal with serious market instabilities, but they can control breeding within their own operations; and they have considerable flexibility in deciding when to place their product on the market.

⁹² Gladstone, op.cit. p. 67.

But these options are not available to the fishermen. Since fish is a highly perishable commodity it must be sold to a processor as soon as it is caught, no matter how unfavourable the market conditions might be. Supply is determined almost entirely by the vagaries of nature; and in the "open access" situation, characteristic of the fishing industry, output tends toward maximum physical yield. The only limit is that imposed by conservation authorities to protect the resource. Crutchfield has pointed out that:⁹³

"As long as everyone is free to enter the industry there is no incentive for any single unit or combination of units to reduce fishing intensity. To do so would simply result in larger catches for someone else and entry of still more vessels."

Even if there could be a collective reduction in fishing effort, it might lead to excessive escapement which would have adverse effects on future fish stocks. These serious instabilities of the supply and demand functions cannot but have an adverse effect on market stability.

Fish processors determine the price they can afford to pay fishermen from their assessment of market possibilities for the season's pack. But the market factors which influence the processors' decisions are far removed from the fishermen in the primary industry. Fishermen tend to regard every move by the processors as an arbitrary attempt to maximize corporate profits. The fishermen's assessment of what the processors can afford to pay is invariably in excess of the latter's offer. Therein lie the roots of the perennial conflicts between the fishermen and the fish companies.

⁹³ J.A. Crutchfield, "Economic Objectives of Fisheries Management," in The Fisheries; The Problems in Resource Management, ed., J.A. Crutchfield, University of Washington Press. Seattle. 1965. p. 50.

In owned or managed resource industries, wages or prices per unit of production tend to remain constant or even to increase over time. When demand falls off, the managers compensate by limiting output. Some workers may be laid off completely, but those who are retained can be fairly confident that their wages will not be cut. But in fishing, with unlimited access, there is no way to reduce total output to meet declines in markets. The only option for the processor is to offer less for the raw product; in effect, fishermen are forced to take a highly visible cut in wages. With the gross instabilities in markets for salmon and herring, these wage cuts are fairly common occurrences. This situation invites strike action by fishermen.⁹⁴

Table XIV and Figure II trace price movements for the three major species of net-caught salmon from 1950 to 1971. While there has been a definite upward trend in prices over the twenty-two year period,

⁹⁴ Wage disputes are by no means unique to the fishing industry; there is likely to be some degree of difference between employees' demands and employers' offers any time a contract comes up for re-negotiation. In most industries, however, there is a scale of confrontation, including tactics short of an outright strike, such as "work to rule" slowdowns, massive sick leaves, or rotating strikes in various sectors of the industry, which help press demands. In fishing it is impossible to organize these limited shutdowns, since the workers operate in independent units scattered along thousands of miles of coastline. If there is a dispute in any sector of the industry, a complete work stoppage in that sector is the only weapon the fishermen have.

Since the salmon season is short and most of the catch is landed in July and August, it is imperative that wage agreements be settled before major fishing commences. As long as fishing continues, it is to the processors' advantage to stall in price negotiations, since each day's landings at the height of the season represents a sizable portion of the total catch. Each day the fishermen continue fishing, they sacrifice a goodly portion of their bargaining position.

Table XIV. Landed Prices to Fishermen and Landed Price Indexes for Sockeye, Pink and Chum Salmon, and Salmon Composite, 1950 - 1971. (1951 - 1953 = 100.0).

| Year | Sockeye | | Pinks | | Chums | | Salmon Composite* | |
|--------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | ¢/lb | Index | ¢/lb | Index | ¢/lb | Index | ¢/lb | Index |
| 1950 | 20.0 | 83.3 | 7.0 | 84.8 | - | - | 13.18 | 100.5 |
| 1951 | 25.0 | 104.2 | 9.5 | 115.2 | 9.4 | 118.5 | 14.37 | 109.5 |
| 1952 | 25.0 | 104.2 | 8.0 | 97.0 | 7.4 | 93.3 | 12.94 | 98.6 |
| 1953 | 22.0 | 91.7 | 7.25 | 87.9 | 7.0 | 88.2 | 10.94 | 83.4 |
| 1954 | 22.0 | 91.7 | 7.75 | 93.9 | 7.3 | 92.0 | 12.96 | 98.8 |
| 1955 | 24.0 | 100.0 | 8.75 | 106.1 | 9.9 | 124.8 | 13.73 | 104.6 |
| 1956 | 24.0 | 100.0 | 8.75 | 106.1 | 12.1 | 152.5 | 18.25 | 139.1 |
| 1957 | 28.0 | 116.6 | 9.25 | 112.2 | 8.9 | 112.2 | 13.90 | 105.9 |
| 1958 | 28.0 | 116.6 | 9.25 | 112.2 | 9.8 | 123.5 | 20.04 | 152.7 |
| 1959 | 31.0 | 129.2 | 10.75 | 130.3 | 12.1 | 152.2 | 18.77 | 143.1 |
| 1960 | 32.0 | 133.4 | 11.0 | 133.3 | 15.3 | 192.9 | 23.72 | 181.7 |
| 1961 | 32.0 | 133.4 | 11.0 | 133.3 | 13.1 | 165.1 | 20.87 | 159.1 |
| 1962 | 33.0 | 137.5 | 11.5 | 139.4 | 12.2 | 153.8 | 18.22 | 138.9 |
| 1963 | 34.0 | 141.6 | 10.0 | 121.2 | 12.8 | 161.3 | 18.40 | 140.2 |
| * 1964 | 36.0 | 150.0 | 11.0 | 133.3 | 12.8 | 161.3 | 23.45 | 178.7 |
| * 1965 | 37.1 | 154.6 | 11.6 | 140.6 | 12.4 | 156.9 | 27.35 | 208.5 |
| * 1966 | 37.1 | 154.6 | 11.6 | 140.6 | 12.2 | 153.8 | 23.06 | 175.8 |
| * 1967 | 37.5 | 156.3 | 12.9 | 156.4 | 13.3 | 168.4 | 25.90 | 197.4 |
| * 1968 | 37.8 | 157.5 | 12.6 | 152.7 | 13.6 | 172.2 | 24.62 | 187.6 |
| * 1969 | 38.7 | 161.3 | 16.1 | 195.2 | 20.9 | 264.6 | 33.38 | 254.4 |
| * 1970 | 39.5 | 164.6 | 15.1 | 183.0 | 17.4 | 220.3 | 28.21 | 215.0 |
| * 1971 | 41.6 | 173.3 | 16.8 | 203.6 | 18.0 | 227.8 | 32.11 | 244.4 |

Sources: Federal-Provincial Committee on Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, A Summary Review of Information Related to the Problems of Wage and Price Disputes in the British Columbia Fishing Industry, Tables 7 and 8. p. 31.

*Department of Fisheries of Canada, Fisheries Statistics of British Columbia - Annual Report.

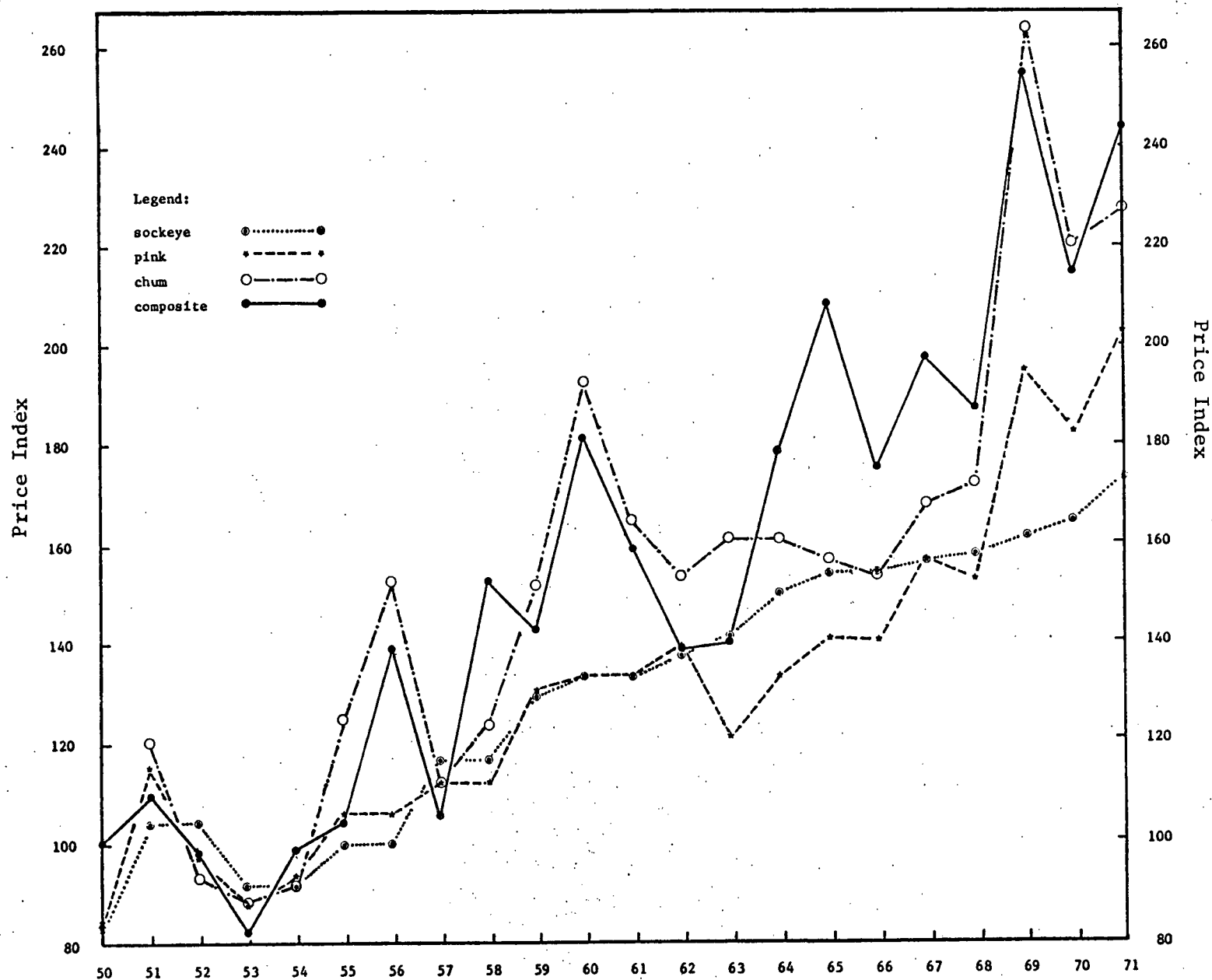


Figure II. Landed Price Indexes for Sockeye, Pink and Chum Salmon, and Salmon Composite, 1950 - 1971. (1951-1953 = 100.0).

price reductions were recorded for each of the three species. Although the price for chum salmon showed the steepest upward trend in the period under review, it was cut eight times. These price reductions sharply offset four significant peaks in 1951, 1956, 1960 and 1969. Price fluctuations were much less pronounced for the two other species. Pink salmon prices were cut five times, and sockeye prices, only once. However, these declines were quite serious since prices did not return to their former levels for a number of years.⁹⁵ The average price for salmon, taken as a composite of all six species, fluctuated widely around six ascending peaks, recorded in 1951, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1965 and 1969. This composite, while not representative of any individual species, may give the clearest picture of the price instability which confronts fishermen, considering that most of them fish for more than one species in the course of a season.

Price instability has been a definite factor promoting strikes in the fishing industry. Of the forty-six disputes noted in Table XI, above, at least fourteen were brought on by threatened price reductions.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Sockeye prices did not recover from the 1953 reduction until 1957. The 1952 and 1953 reductions in pink salmon prices were not offset until 1959; it took two years for pink prices to recover from the cut in 1963. The minor cut in pink prices in 1968 is an exception to this generalization.

⁹⁶ In addition to the fourteen strikes which were clearly against price cuts, a threatened reduction in the price for pink salmon was a major issue in the 1963 strike, noted in the table as a dispute. Five other strikes were listed as price disputes because it is not known whether they were against price reductions or for increases. It is also possible that in some of the strikes listed as being for price increases, the fishermen were demanding an increase while the processors were proposing a price cut.

Five of the eight strikes recorded in the 1950's occurred between 1952 and 1954. These can be directly related to declines in prices for all species from the high levels attained in 1951 (Figure II). One of the two strikes in 1957 was clearly against a reduction in the price for chum salmon (Table XI). The other may have been motivated by the desire to force prices back to their former levels and to wipe out losses sustained as a result of the earlier decline. The strike in 1959 was likely motivated by the prospect of drastically reduced landings after the record catch of 1958.⁹⁷

The sharp decline in strike activity since 1963 can partially be explained by the general stabilization and improvement of salmon-net prices (Figure II and Table XIV). One might have expected strikes in 1966, 1968 and 1970, the years when the composite price index declined. However, these declines were compensated for by a sharp increase in the total landed value of salmon (Table XV).⁹⁸ It should also be noted that price reductions for pinks in 1968 and 1970, and for chums in 1970 were preceded by major advances, so that after the decline prices were still in line with the long-term upward trend.

⁹⁷ Despite the price increases in 1959, the value of fish landings declined from \$52 million in 1958 to \$36 million in 1959. See Table XIII.

⁹⁸ The sharp decline in the composite price index in 1961 and 1962 was a direct function of the decline in chum prices. That there were no strikes in these years might have been a reflection of the increases in the total landed value of salmon combined with a relative decrease in the importance of chum salmon to total landings. See Department of Fisheries of Canada, Fisheries Statistics of British Columbia - Annual Report. Table 3. p. 2.

Table XV. Landed Value of Salmon, 1950 - 1971.

| Year | Landed Value | Year | Landed Value |
|------|--------------|------|--------------|
| | \$ (000's) | | \$ (000's) |
| 1950 | 24 336 | 1961 | 26 152 |
| 1951 | 28 396 | 1962 | 30 559 |
| 1952 | 19 555 | 1963 | 22 790 |
| 1953 | 21 848 | 1964 | 30 244 |
| 1954 | 23 579 | 1965 | 25 958 |
| 1955 | 18 481 | 1966 | 38 654 |
| 1956 | 21 356 | 1967 | 36 001 |
| 1957 | 18 885 | 1968 | 44 887 |
| 1958 | 37 129 | 1969 | 27 827 |
| 1959 | 20 503 | 1970 | 45 076 |
| 1960 | 18 401 | 1971 | 44 476 |

Source: Department of Fisheries of Canada, Fisheries Statistics of British Columbia - Annual Report.

While price trends were more stable in the 1960's than they had been in the previous decade, this fact alone hardly seems sufficient to account for the startling decline in the frequency of strikes. The obvious conclusion is that there has been a notable decline in the militancy of B.C. fishermen. However, in view of the long-term pattern with strikes tending to be concentrated in decennial periods, preceded and followed by similar periods of relative industrial peace, one is reluctant to identify the most recent trend away from strikes as permanent.

In examining Table XI, above, one observes a sharp increase in strike activity in the 1930's and again in the 1950's, and a noticeable decline in the number of strikes from 1905 to 1921, from 1939 to 1948, and in the past decade. The peaks in the strike record can be directly related to depressed economic conditions in the fishing industry. Relative

economic prosperity in the industry from 1905 to 1921, and during and immediately following World War II accounts, in large measure, for the decline in strike activity during these periods. However, the exceptionally low incidence of strikes since 1960 is more difficult to explain since economic conditions have not been particularly favourable for fishermen in recent years.

There is no detailed data on fishermen's incomes for the 1960's, but information in Tables III and IV, above, indicates that fishermen's net earnings have not increased at the same rate as those of other industrial workers. A number of factors are probably operating in determining this phenomenon. One of the most striking is the fact that the increase in capital investment in the fishing industry has taken place at a much higher rate than the increase in the value of fish landings. From Figure I, above, it is apparent that the ratio of capital investment to landed value has been increasing since the early 1940's, but never at such an accelerated rate as since 1958. Whereas \$54.6 million in boats and gear was used to harvest the \$35.7 million catch of 1959, \$125.2 million was invested to harvest a catch worth \$55.7 million in 1971.⁹⁹

The most immediate effect of this trend has been that any potential increase in fishermen's net earnings is being totally dissipated in excessive capital investment. As a result fishermen are poorer than ever relative to other labourers. As the income gulf between fishermen

⁹⁹ See Supra. pp. 12-13.

and other workers widens, the possibility of fishing incomes becoming more competitive with those in other industries, as they did on at least three occasions in the 1950's, becomes more and more remote. In these circumstances, it is conceivable that B.C. fishermen, like their counterparts in the Atlantic provinces, are becoming resigned to their position, and thereby less militant. Or is it possible that, with their increasing capital stake in the industry, fishermen are becoming more conservative and accommodating toward management.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ It should be noted that both of these hypotheses are purely tentative, and are offered only as possible explanations of an observed phenomenon. Unfortunately, it is impossible to confirm or disprove them without an elaborate survey of fishermen's attitudes, which is beyond the scope of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RADICALISM IN FISHERMEN'S UNIONS

a. The Early Background

While fishermen's unions in British Columbia have a long and consistent tradition of militancy, they have not been consistently radical throughout their history. Before 1930, most organizations of fishermen were patently conservative. The unions of white and Indian fishermen were largely preoccupied with securing legislative protection against the increasing competition from the Japanese. And the organizations of Japanese fishermen were reluctant to espouse policies which might further weaken their already tenuous position in Canadian society. Even the British Columbia Fishermen's Union (BCFU), which was led by such prominent socialists as Frank Rogers and Will MacClain, pursued no policies by which it could be identified as radical. The BCFU's refusal to adopt anti-oriental policies, and its willingness to accept Japanese fishermen into its ranks were probably the closest it came to being radical in the context of labour policies at the turn of the century. In the first third of this century the "oriental problem" seems to have overshadowed all other political issues in the eyes of organized fishermen.

This generalization was particularly true of organizations
the
in the Fraser River area where Japanese were most heavily concentrated. If there were any exceptions to this general pattern of conservative unionism they were in the northern fishing areas where economic conflict between fishermen and canners remained paramount.

The Finnish gillnet fishermen from the Skeena River and Rivers Inlet areas organized the United Fishermen of British Columbia (UFBC) in 1917. Little is known of the political orientation of this organization other than the fact that it was opposed to the anti-oriental policies of the British Columbia Fishermen's Protective Association (BCFPA), the dominant organization of fishermen in southern areas.¹ The UFBC was a small local affair centered in the Finnish settlement of Sointula, and since the majority of gillnetters outside of Sointula remained unorganized, the union was unable to bargain for fish prices. Furthermore, the union was restricted in its activities because the fishermen feared discrimination for union activities. The fact that twenty-four UFBC members were denied fishing licences for the 1918 season indicates that this fear was probably not without foundation.² While the UFBC itself may not have been identifiably radical, the Finnish gillnetters of Sointula, who constituted the bulk of its membership, in later years were to be in the forefront of such radical organizations as the Fishermen's Industrial Union (FIU), the fishermen's section of the communist Workers' Unity League (WUL).³

¹ Percy Gladstone, Industrial Relations in the Commercial Fisheries of British Columbia, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1959. pp. 163-164.

² Ibid. p. 163.

³ Ibid. p. 164. While there is no concrete evidence that the UFBC was a radical union in its own time, there is a strong possibility that it was, given the political background of the fishermen from Sointula. The first group of Finns to emigrate to B.C. were employed in the coal mines on Vancouver Island. Many of them were strongly influenced by the currents of Utopian socialism prevailing in the late nineteenth century. They found work in the coal mines so objectionable that they decided to establish their own communist Utopia on Malcolm Island, where they could be completely free from capitalist oppression. They originally planned to support their community through farming, but soon found the island was ill-suited

Another early organization of northern fishermen that exhibited some evidence of radicalism was the Queen Charlotte Salmon Trollers' Association (QCSTA). According to Gladstone, this organization patterned itself after the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in its use of strike and boycott tactics.⁴ It is not known whether the QCSTA was actually affiliated with the IWW or espoused the syndicalist ideals of that organization; however, this is quite possible as the IWW did make a number of attempts to organize fishermen in British Columbia.⁵ The use of strike and boycott tactics was common to most of the early fishermen's unions, and was not unique to the "wobblies". Gladstone's specific association of the QCSTA with the IWW would seem to imply more than simply the use of common militant tactics.

In 1920 the QCSTA was re-organized to include gillnetters

³ (cont'd.) for extensive agriculture. While they had no previous experience in fishing, they soon realized that it was the obvious occupation for them, located as they were at the mouth of the Johnstone Strait, one of the best fishing areas in British Columbia. See John Ilmari Kolehmainen, "Harmony Island - A Finnish Utopian Venture in British Columbia," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, v.4 #2, April, 1941. pp. 111-123; and A.V. Hill, Tides of Change, Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-operative Association, Prince Rupert, 1967. p. 10.

Martin Robin has noted that Finns in Canada have long been a prominent radical element in labour organizations. Many of them had left Finland before World War I to escape Czarist oppression, and they were active supporters of Bolshevism after the Russian Revolution of 1917. See Martin Robin, Radical Politics in Canadian Labour, 1880-1930, Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1968. p. 145.

⁴ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 162.

⁵ Ibid. p. 156.

as well as trollers and was renamed the Northern British Columbia Salmon Fishermen's Association (NBCSFA). As with the UFBC, little is known about the political orientation of the NBCSFA. But when it was disbanded in the 1930's the trollers in its ranks joined the new fishermen's co-operatives, and the gillnetters joined the Fishermen's Industrial Union.⁶

The formation of the FIU marked the beginning of a new era in the history of fishermen's unions in British Columbia. With few exceptions, fishermen's unions before the FIU were regional in character, and they tended to represent limited gear interests, rather than being amalgamations of fishermen from all sections of the industry. And, as has already been noted, the early unions seemed preoccupied with the "oriental problem" and largely ignored other political issues. The FIU departed radically from this early pattern in both its structural scope and its political orientation. But before elaborating on the program of the FIU it is worthwhile to examine some of the economic and social changes which took place in the 1920's and contributed to the emergence of the new type of unionism in the 1930's.

b. Changes in the Fishing Industry During the 1920's

Three developments in the 1920's helped set the stage for major changes in fishermen's unions. The first was the decision by the

⁶ Ibid. p. 162.

federal fisheries authorities to start phasing the Japanese out of the industry; another was the consolidation of the canning industry, particularly by B.C. Packers and the Canadian Fishing Company (Canfisco); the third was the introduction of gasoline engines in the gillnet fishery.

From the 1890's the dominant political issue in the British Columbia fishing industry was the unrestricted licensing of Japanese fishermen. A number of organizations of white and Indian fishermen, from the Fraser River Fishermen's Protective and Benevolent Association of 1893 to the BCFPA of the 1920's, were established primarily to lobby for legislative restrictions against the Japanese.

At the end of World War I the federal government adopted a policy to gradually eliminate the Japanese from the B.C. fishery, ostensibly to make room for returning war veterans who were being encouraged to settle on the B.C. coast and take up fishing as an occupation.⁷ This policy remained in effect throughout the 1920's. Between 1922 and 1927, 1200 Japanese fishermen were forced to seek other employment.⁸ Whereas in 1919 the Japanese had held almost half of all the fishing licences issued in British Columbia, by 1927 they had been reduced to a minority position in every section of the industry, including gillnetting where they had long been the dominant group.⁹

⁷ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 274.

⁸ Reginda Sumida, The Japanese in British Columbia, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1934. p. 109. cited in Gladstone, op.cit. p. 281.

⁹ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 281.

While organized opposition to the Japanese did not subside completely until they were expelled from the coast in 1942, it ceased to be a major issue in the fishing industry after the 1920's. By 1930 the ground was clear for fishermen's unions to concentrate on immediate economic issues rather than devoting their energies to seeking legislative action against the Japanese.

Consolidation of the canning industry into fewer and bigger operations during the 1920's made the move toward industry-wide organization more desirable than ever before. This process of consolidation was not confined to the 1920's; it had always been going on to some extent. However, economic conditions and technological developments in that decade led to a marked increase in mergers and takeovers. Before the 1920's many companies had operated a single cannery in some isolated fishing area. Within that area it was possible for a small union to negotiate prices and other working agreements with the lone cannery. But the introduction of faster fish-packing boats after World War I made it feasible for large, centrally-located canneries to bring in the catch from these isolated areas, and to take advantage of the economies of scale resulting from larger production runs. The small scattered canning operations were no longer economically viable. During the 1920's many of them were bought up and centralized or simply run out of business.¹⁰ Consequently, small isolated fishermen's organizations were no longer able to have much effect on the prices paid for fish.

¹⁰ Cecily Lyons, Salmon - Our Heritage, British Columbia Packers Ltd., Vancouver, 1969. Chapter 8. pp. 345-393. This provides a fairly complete record of the specific take-overs, mergers and canning company failures during the 1920's.

In 1917, Easthope Bros., Ltd. of Vancouver introduced a marine engine which revolutionized the fishing industry. Prior to 1917, most gillnet fishing was conducted from vessels known as Columbia River boats. These were powered by sail and oar, and were towed to the fishing grounds by company-owned steamers. Each boat had a two-man crew, one to set the nets, and one to "pull" or row. Most of the boats were owned by the canneries and were rented, or provided free of charge to fishermen who were directly employed by them.¹¹

The power boats required a much heavier capital investment and were costly to operate and maintain, but they provided the fishermen with unprecedented mobility. The companies were reluctant to undertake the high costs associated with the new boats, so they began extending credit to the fishermen, enabling them to buy boats outright. But in return for financial assistance the companies tied the fishermen to conditional sales agreements. Through these agreements the companies secured adequate control over the supply of raw fish without having to employ fishermen directly. In law, the fishermen became independent producers; but in effect they were still employees of the cannery which financed them.¹²

Each time a power boat replaced a sail boat, one fisherman was put out of work since the new boats did not require a "puller".

¹¹ UFAWU, "Submission to The Honourable Chief Justice A.C. Desbrisay, Commissioner Investigating the Workmen's Compensation Act," 1963. p. 14.

¹² Ibid. p. 14.

But with credit available from the canneries these displaced fishermen could acquire a new boat for themselves. Between 1928 and 1932, 1089 sailboats were retired; however, they were replaced by 1690 motor boats.¹³

This dramatic increase in fishing capacity coincided with the coming of the depression in the early 1930's. Few industries in British Columbia were as hard hit as fishing.¹⁴ Prices for fish plummeted while fixed costs for the fishermen soared. Since available stocks of fish were limited, the greater number of boats entering the industry only meant that the total catch had to be divided among more people. Few fishermen were able to recover even their investment capital, let alone realize any profit. Discontent was rampant. The depressed economic conditions stimulated drastic changes in the nature and outlook of fishermen's organizations.

The new motor-powered boats enabled fishermen to move into different fishing areas, and provided them with a capacity to enter various sections of the fishery as the seasons changed. This helped mollify long-standing regional and gear antagonisms. Coast-wide unions encompassing all gear-types became a practical proposition.

c. Communist Influence in Fishermen's Union's, 1931-1945

The obvious failure of the existing economic order and the

¹³ W.A. Carrothers, The British Columbia Fisheries, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1941, Political Economy Series #10. p. 27. cited in Gladstone, op.cit. p. 169.

¹⁴ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 169.

extreme hardship imposed by the depression in the 1930's forced many people to reassess their position. Some supported the newly formed Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and its socialist program as a possible solution to the crisis. Others backed movements like Social Credit. A minority, particularly labourers and intellectuals, opted for the more extreme solutions proposed by the communists.

Communist organizers were quick to take advantage of the growing discontent all over North America and they made especially strong efforts in the trade union movement. Following the policy enunciated at the Sixth World Congress of the Third International, held in Moscow in 1928, the communist parties in Canada and the United States created new labour federations to organize the more exploited and poorly paid workers into revolutionary unions directed against the capitalist system. The Canadian federation, The Workers' Unity League (WUL), made a particularly strong showing in the primary industries of British Columbia, including fishing.¹⁵

The Fishermen's Industrial Union - WUL can be considered the first unquestionably radical organization of fishermen in British Columbia. In keeping with the policy of the WUL, the FIU was established as a revolutionary union. According to its constitution:¹⁶

¹⁵ Percy Gladstone and Stuart Jamieson, "Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia," CJEPS, v.16 #2, May, 1950. p. 162. Communist organizers in British Columbia were also successful in organizing long-shoremen and unemployed workers. See Stuart Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-1966, Task Force on Labour Relations, Study No. 22, Privy Council Office, Ottawa, 1968. pp. 227-248.

¹⁶ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 172.

"(the FIU of Canada) organized and chartered by the WUL of Canada has automatically become an affiliate, and must at all times subscribe to and support the strategy and tactics of revolutionary class struggle as outlined in the program of the WUL, which is the Canadian section of the Red International of Labour Unions."

The union pledged itself¹⁷

"to promote and lead in the daily economic struggles of the fishing industry for higher living standards and social conditions. Repudiating arbitration and class collaboration in all price, wage and working disputes, relying entirely upon the militant activity of the organized fishermen and workers employed in the industry, and the mass support of the revolutionary working class as the final arbitrator between Capital and Labour, (and further) to work in the spirit of the working class struggling against the imposition of Capitalistic Exploitation, in this and other countries, and constitute an integral part of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement in the final struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a Revolutionary Workers' Government."

With all its revolutionary rhetoric the FIU did not lose sight of the immediate needs of workers. It was committed "to actively engage in the struggle for social insurance, adequate old age pensions, compensation for disability, sickness, maternity, and so forth, and to give every assistance to the organizing of unemployed workers in the fight for adequate relief measures and for non-contributory state unemployment insurance".¹⁸

The aim of the FIU was to organize all workers in the fishing industry, irrespective of age, race, sex and specific occupation, into one industrial union in Canada. This was the first union to claim such

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 173.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 173.

a wide scope, and as such it was a direct forerunner of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU). Between 1931 and 1945, numerous unions were formed and dissolved, merged and split in a complex process that was dominated by the communist organizers of the FIU who were continually manoeuvring toward their original objective of a single industry-wide union. With the chartering of the UFAWU they finally realized that objective.¹⁹

Somewhat ironically, the initial core group in the FIU came from within the conservative British Columbia Fishermen's Protective Association (BCFPA). According to Gladstone's account:²⁰

"In 1931, the Provincial Executive of the BCFPA in New Westminster expelled the militant Vancouver Local, the largest and most important in the organization. The expelled group came under the control of the Communist-led Workers' Unity League and formed the Fishermen's Industrial Union."

This account of the events leading to the formation of the FIU raises an interesting question. Was this radical union created by chance, with professional communist organizers from outside the fishing industry "capturing" dissident, but basically apolitical fishermen who accepted communist leadership for lack of a better alternative; or was the FIU created by an inherently radical group within the fishing industry?

¹⁹ George Miller, one of the original leaders in the FIU, was the first president of the UFAWU after it was chartered in 1945. Other FIU notables who eventually played major roles in the UFAWU were Bruno Kaario and Victor Makki from Sointula, and Nick Copetic, Gus Cogswell and George Hewison, all seine fishermen from Vancouver. Copetic was originally from Yugoslavia, while Hewison and Miller were Scots; Cogswell came to B.C. from the Maritimes. Interview with Hal Griffin, editor, The Fisherman, December 6, 1971.

²⁰ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 172.

It is difficult to answer this question with any degree of certainty since most of the key figures who were directly involved in the 1931 split within the BCFPA are either deceased or otherwise unavailable for interviews. But it is known that many of the Yugoslav seine fishermen, who by 1931 constituted one of the dominant groups in the Vancouver local, held radical political beliefs long before the conflict within the BCFPA came to a head. Apparently this radical group played a key role in bringing the dissident local under the influence of the Workers' Unity League.²¹

Another factor which may have helped to bring the Vancouver local of the BCFPA under the influence of the WUL was the peculiar occupational profile of many of the Vancouver-based fishermen. The Fraser River locals of the BCFPA, including New Westminster, were composed mainly of full-time fishermen and farmer-fishermen, while the Vancouver local was composed largely of fishermen who worked as industrial labourers during the off-season. Many of these men found winter employment as longshoremen. The WUL may have won the support of these longshoremen, prior to the split within the BCFPA, through its activities in organizing the Vancouver dockworkers.²²

²¹ Interview, Griffin, December 6, 1971. The Yugoslavs entered the B.C. fishing industry in large numbers throughout the 1920's. In this period there was a heavy migration to British Columbia from the Adriatic area. Some of these immigrants were drawn to this province by the vision of economic opportunity and readily available farmland. Others were radical activists who were forced to flee their homeland in the face of political oppression from the royalist regime. Because of close similarities with the sardine fishery in the Adriatic, many of these immigrants entered the various seine fisheries in British Columbia. One indication of the radical political orientation of these fishermen is that, in 1946, some 100 of them returned to Yugoslavia to help establish the new communist regime.

²² Interview, Griffin, December 6, 1971.

While the fishermen who held radical political views were likely a minority within the Vancouver local, they provided dynamic leadership and an analysis of the fishermen's economic plight, a plight that was rapidly worsening with the advance of the depression, which had a stronger appeal than the conservative, reformist approach of the BCFPA establishment. Conditions were such that for the first time fishermen were prepared to rally en masse around the banner of an unabashedly radical, even revolutionary organization.

In the 1932 season the FIU moved to expand from its original base in Vancouver. It quickly won the support of the radical Finnish gillnetters from Sointula who had spearheaded the opposition to the BCFPA during the 1920's. By the end of the season the FIU had virtually eliminated the BCFPA from the northern fishing areas; from that time on, the latter organization exerted no influence north of the Fraser.²³

In 1933 the FIU changed its name to the Fishermen and Cannery Workers' Industrial Union (FCWIU). At the union's annual convention in December of that year, it was reported that it had some 1500 members in eight locals from Vancouver to Prince Rupert.²⁴ By 1935 the FCWIU had displaced the BCFPA as the dominant organization in the B.C. fishing industry.²⁵

²³ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 177.

²⁴ Report of the 2nd Annual Convention of the FCWIU, December 10-11, 1933. cited in Ibid. p. 174.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 174.

For all the apparent success of the fishermen's section of the WUL, it is difficult to pinpoint the impact it had on the industry. Most of the leaders who were involved with these unions are now deceased, and the survivors claim only vague recollections. However, one gets the general impression that the FIU and the FCWIU were loose and unstable organizations. According to Hal Griffin, these unions were constantly in the stage of organizing. The convinced socialists among the fishermen, primarily Finns and Yugoslavs, with a smattering of British and Scandinavians, provided the hard core support. The bulk of the support, however, was recruited during specific disputes which generated "flash militancy"; but this membership was never secure from season to season.²⁶

According to Gladstone, strong efforts were made to resist the advance of the WUL-chartered fishermen's unions. Anti-communist elements among the fishermen organized a union known as the United Fishermen of British Columbia. In 1932 this union received a direct charter from the TLC and became known as the United Fishermen's Federal Union (UFFU), with headquarters at Vancouver. Its jurisdiction was restricted to herring and pilchard seining in order to avoid dualism with the faltering BCFPA, which was also a TLC-affiliate.²⁷

Despite the fact that the UFFU and the BCFPA had the backing of the mainstream labour movement in Canada, and that they were the only

²⁶ Interview, Griffin, December 6, 1971.

²⁷ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 175.

unions with which the canneries would negotiate, they were unable to stem the advance of the FIU and subsequent left-wing unions. Acceptance by the canners may have actually worked to the disadvantage of the TLC unions since they became discredited in the eyes of the fishermen after they settled the 1932 strikes on the Nass and the Skeena Rivers and at Rivers and Smith's Inlets on terms which the strikers considered unfavourable. In that instance, and others like it, the FIU won the support of the ^{its} fishermen through/ aggressive tactics.²⁸

The BCFPA was on the decline throughout the 1930's. And during the first seven years of its existence, the UFFU seemed almost moribund. According to Steve Stavenes, a charter member of the UFFU, the union did not hold a general convention until 1939. At that convention an insurgent slate led by Bill Burgess and backed by the communist elements in the industry, ousted the incumbent leaders. Only then did the UFFU launch an aggressive campaign to recruit new members from all branches of the industry.²⁹

Stavenes suggested that opposition to the communists in the fishing industry was not an issue in the UFFU during the early years. The UFFU was organized simply to fill a need for a union in the longline, and the pilchard and herring seine fisheries.³⁰ For all its claims of universality the FIU had failed to organize these sections of the industry; its main strength was among salmon fishermen and shoreworkers. George

²⁸ See Supra. pp. 57-58.

²⁹ Interview with Steve Stavenes, former president, UFAWU, December 8, 1971.

³⁰ Ibid.

North, a former editor of The Fisherman, (who is currently writing a history of unionism in the B.C. fishing industry) indicated, in an interview, that his research to date tends to confirm Gladstone's conclusion that the UFFU was originally established to oppose the communist fishermen's unions.³¹ Unfortunately, in the absense of the early records of the UFFU, it is impossible to confirm either interpretation. All that is known is that the UFFU failed to thwart communist influence in the industry, and in fact was brought under that influence by 1939. The process by which this was accomplished was complex and will be discussed in some detail.

By the mid-1930's the Third International had revised its separatist revolutionary strategy and sought to merge its subsidiary organizations with mainstream movements. According to critics of the Communist Party, this was a return to the old tactic of "boring from within"; the new strategy was simply an attempt to control the mainstream movements in a "united front".³² But according to the communists themselves, the "united front" was not a guise for communist control, but an instance of class collaboration which was necessitated by the immediate menace of fascism.³³ Whatever the underlying motivation, in 1935, the FCWIU abandoned its outright opposition to other unions in the fishing industry, and took the lead in establishing the Fishermen's Joint Council to co-ordinate the activities of the five major fishermen's organizations.³⁴

³¹ Interview with George North, former editor, The Fisherman, August 15, 1972.

³² Gladstone, op.cit. p. 178.

³³ Interview, Griffin, December 6, 1971.

³⁴ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 178.

Later in that year the Workers' Unity League and its affiliated unions were disbanded. Members of the FCWIU re-organized into local unions based on occupation; these separate organizations continued to work through the Fishermen's Joint Council.³⁵

In 1937 the fishermen who had formerly been members of the FCWIU re-organized into two unions and sought affiliation with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The gillnetters and trollers formed the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union (PCFU), while the seiners formed the Salmon Purse Seiners' Union (SPSU); both these organizations were chartered by the International Seamen's Union, AFL.³⁶

Soon after they were chartered, the PCFU and the SPSU came into conflict with the Canadian TLC over the issue of "dual unionism". In 1937 the TLC granted the UFFU nominal jurisdiction over all branches of the fishing industry, and attempted to resuscitate the BCFPA under a new charter granting it exclusive rights over trolling and gillnetting within the context of the broader jurisdiction extended to the UFFU. The cannery operators refused to recognize the PCFU and the SPSU and continued to deal exclusively with the two TLC-chartered unions.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid. p. 180.

³⁶ George Miller, George Hewison, Gus Cogswell and Nick Copetic were all organizers of the SPSU. Bruno Kaario and Victor Makki took an active part in the PCFU; a younger group of radicals, who were later to be active in the UFAWU, including Elgin and Angus Neish, Cliff Cook and Jack Gavin were also prominent in this union. Interview, Griffin, December 6, 1971.

³⁷ Gladstone, op.cit. p. 185.

The leaders of the two AFL affiliates undertook an intricate series of manoeuvres to settle these jurisdictional conflicts. In late 1938 the SPSU severed its connections with the International Seamen's Union. It was able to obtain a direct charter from the TLC, presumably because the UFFU continued to confine itself to herring and pilchard seining, and longlining. SPSU members then joined the UFFU in sufficient numbers to achieve a voting majority in the latter organization. Dual membership was possible since most salmon purse seiners also seined for pilchards and herring during other seasons of the year.³⁸ With their voting majority within the UFFU, the radicals were able to oust the conservative leadership and install officers who were favourably disposed to the objective of establishing a single, industry-wide union. A major step in this direction was taken early in 1940 when, by a substantial majority vote in both unions, the SPSU and the UFFU agreed to merge under the charter of the UFFU.³⁹

By the end of 1939 the PCFU had virtually eliminated the BCFPA. The latter organization could only claim 300 members, practically all of whom were in the Fraser River district; meanwhile, the PCFU had local councils in twenty-six major fishing communities along the coast. But the PCFU could not affiliate with the TLC since the BCFPA still claimed jurisdiction over gillnetters and trollers. The PCFU reached the peak of its organizational strength in 1941, and then it began losing members, particularly trollers, to the rapidly expanding fishermen's co-operatives. The leaders of the union were quick to recognize the danger this development represented for the future of their organization. Faced with the prospect

³⁸ Ibid. p. 186.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 186.

of a dying union, they proposed that the PCFU voluntarily disband and its members join the UFFU. After six months of debate this proposal was accepted and the UFFU became the undisputed^{ab} dominant union in every section of the primary fishing industry.⁴⁰

When the FCWIU disbanded in 1935 the cannery workers were left without any organization. This situation was remedied in 1941 when the TLC granted a charter to the Fish Cannery and Reduction Plant Workers' Union (FCRPWU). The task of organizing this union was undertaken and financed directly by the UFFU.⁴¹ These unions co-operated closely and in 1945 they merged into a single organization. The BCFPA also joined this merger. In March of 1945 the TLC issued a new charter giving the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union jurisdiction over all branches of the fishing industry in British Columbia.⁴²

The years between the onset of the great depression and the close of World War II were marked by unprecedented organizational activity in the B.C. fishing industry. The period saw the formation of the FIU, the first unquestionably radical union in the industry. The communists who founded this union engineered the creation of the UFAWU. While they had to diminish their overt revolutionary fervour to achieve their original objective of a single, industry-wide union, they established the pattern of left wing leadership which marks the UFAWU as a radical union to the present day.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 187.

⁴¹ Interview with Elgin (Scotty) Neish, former secretary-treasurer, PCFU, and executive board member, UFAWU, November 6, 1972. Alex Gordon, who at the time was an active member of the Canadian Communist Party, was hired by the UFFU as a full-time organizer for the FCRPWU.

⁴² Gladstone, op.cit. p. 188.

d. UFAWU: Communist Leadership and Suspension from the Trades and Labour Congress

In the public mind, the UFAWU had always been associated with the Communist Party, and as such has been assumed to be a "radical" union. Discussing communist influence in the UFAWU in 1963, Norman Hacking, marine editor of the Vancouver Province, wrote:⁴³

"The union is controlled by a tight little clique of active Communists whose influence is overwhelming.

"No other union in Canada, or the U.S. for that matter, is held so tightly in the grip of an able and fanatical group of Communists.

"The number of professed Communists in the union is few, which is to be expected among rugged individualists (as fishermen). But the policy makers - the men who make the decisions on negotiations and tactics - are Communist to the core."

He went on to identify some of the most influential members of the "tight little Communist clique":

"The undisputed boss of the union is Homer Stevens, the secretary-treasurer. . . . He has never disguised his loyalty to the Communist Party, and has followed every twist and turn of the party line with faithful acquiescence . . .

"The business agent is Alex Gordon, a Scottish-born Communist who absorbed his political principles in the tough school of revolutionary Clydeside.

"Bill Rigby, the union's welfare director, is a cherubic little man of great native shrewdness, who wields a great deal of influence behind the lines. He is a long-time Communist.⁴⁴

⁴³ Vancouver Province, August 12, 1963. p. 21.

⁴⁴ Bill Rigby's real name was Isaac Levine. He studied for three years at the Lenin Institute in Moscow before coming to Vancouver in the 1930's to head a school in Marxist theory for members of the Communist Party.

"Tom Parkin, the union's public relations officer, has held office with other Communist-controlled unions. He is a pleasant-spoken and an agile apologist for the party line.

"Bruce Yorke, union office manager and researcher, was a Communist candidate on the North Shore in a federal election. . . .

"The union newspaper, 'The Fisherman', is ably edited by George North, another party adherent. . . .

"His assistant is Harold Griffin, who formerly edited 'The Pacific Tribune', the Communist party organ in B.C.

"Solicitor for the union is John Stanton, a lawyer who has been an active Communist since his graduation from U.B.C. in the 1930's. . . .

"All are important cogs in the Communist party machinery in B.C."

Hacking described The Fisherman as "a mouthpiece for the Communist Party".

"Its attacks on the canners, daily newspapers and radio stations and on business in general are consistently bitter and vituperative.

"Every issue devotes considerable space to eulogizing the Communist way of life in Russia or Cuba and attacking the U.S. and the western powers."

While Hacking's comments about The Fisherman and his claim that the union is "tightly in the grip of an able and fanatical group of Communists" are overblown if not grossly exaggerated, his basic point that communists are at the helm of the Fishermen's Union is well taken.

44 (cont'd.) He was serving as secretary of the Vancouver branch of the Party when it was outlawed at the outbreak of World War II; he was arrested and sent to prison camp in eastern Canada for two years. On his return to Vancouver he was appointed editor of The Fisherman, and was elected secretary-treasurer of the UFAWU at its first convention in 1946. Rigby primed Stevens to succeed him as secretary-treasurer, and in 1948 he resigned from that office to organize the welfare fund and become the union's research director.

The continued presence of communists in key positions within the UFAWU has made the union an outcast within the Canadian labour movement. In August of 1953 the executive council of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada suspended the UFAWU's affiliation and let it be known that the suspension would stand until the union gave "proof of taking all reasonable and necessary steps to rid itself of communist leadership and leanings".⁴⁵

Immediately following the suspension, the Seafarers' International Union launched a raid on the UFAWU with the announced intention of cleaning the "reds" out of the B.C. fishing industry. Norm Cunningham, the SIU business agent in B.C., told a meeting of the Vancouver-New Westminster District Trades and Labour Council that his union welcomed the suspension of the UFAWU, and "was going to take over this commie-dominated outfit".⁴⁶

While the officers of the TLC may not have arranged this raid, Percy Bengough, president of the TLC, gave the green light to the SIU's raiding efforts, declaring: "As long as the UFAWU is under suspension it is open season on their jurisdiction as far as the Congress is concerned".⁴⁷ R.K. Gervin, B.C. vice-president of the TLC, stated that the fishermen of B.C. should "either get rid of their red leaders and reorganize under a new name or accept the SIU".⁴⁸ And Tom Alsbury, president of the

⁴⁵ Letter, TLC to UFAWU, signed Percy Bengough (president) and Gordon Cushing (secretary), August 19, 1953.

⁴⁶ Quoted in letter, UFAWU to TLC, signed Homer Stevens (secretary-treasurer) October 8, 1953.

⁴⁷ Vancouver Sun, October 21, 1953.

⁴⁸ Quoted in letter, UFAWU to TLC, October 8, 1953.

Vancouver-New Westminster District Trades and Labour Council issued a press statement in which he expressed the hope that B.C. fishermen "will disown their pro-communist leadership and join the duly formed locals of the Seafarers' International Union".⁴⁹

In May, 1970, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), in its general convention at Edmonton, overwhelmingly rejected a motion calling for direct affiliation of the UFAWU. At the beginning of the convention there was considerable rank and file support for the Fishermen's Union; but the Congress leadership put off the crucial vote until the fourth day and used the time to campaign vigorously against the affiliation bid. Their big argument was that the UFAWU was still communist-dominated and represented a direct threat to the Canadian labour movement. A supposed secret letter from the Communist Party of Canada, purporting that affiliation was a high Party priority for 1970, was circulated to convince the delegates of the danger of admitting the UFAWU to the Congress.⁵⁰

After the results of the vote on affiliation were announced, CLC president, Donald MacDonald made a statement from the chair:⁵¹

"May I say to some of the sinister forces operating in this convention, particularly the Communist Party of Canada, that the delegates who have the honour to represent the workers of Canada today have demonstrated to you what they think of your sinister efforts to pervert the movement."

⁴⁹ Quoted in Ibid.

⁵⁰ Bruce Young, "Loquacious Leftists Spurned by CLC," Western Fisheries, v.80 #2, May, 1970. p. 50.

⁵¹ Robert Chodos, "Fishermen Fight the Companies' Union," Last Post, v.1 #8, Summer, 1971. p. 18.

49 (cont'd.) This attempted raid on the UFAWU was an abysmal failure in spite of the considerable resources which the SIU had at its disposal and the fact that the raiding effort had the blessing of the TLC. The defeat of the SIU resulted from a combination of circumstances. Fishermen have a strong trade consciousness and feel little in common with sailors in the merchant marine. Therefore the Seafarers' Union was an inappropriate alternative to the UFAWU. Furthermore, the SIU had an unsavoury reputation among the fishermen as a result of the part it had played in the destruction of the Canadian Seamen's Union in the late 1940's. In The Fisherman newspaper the leaders of the UFAWU had a strong weapon for maintaining solidarity within their own organization, and they used it skillfully to draw attention to the shortcomings of the SIU. Just five months before the raid the leaders of the UFAWU had been returned to office with an overwhelming majority, defeating an opposition slate of candidates in a secret ballot referendum. In light of this, charges that the Communists were controlling the union by undemocratic means carried little weight with the fishermen. While there may have been serious unrest within the UFAWU after three major strikes in less than twelve months, the leaders had proven themselves sufficiently responsive to win a strong vote of confidence from the members on the eve of the SIU's attack.

In recent years the CLC has taken the position that the UFAWU can re-enter the mainstream of the labour movement by merging with the Canadian Food and Allied Workers' Union (CFAW), the Canadian division of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (Meat Cutters). Merger talks were undertaken in April, 1970, but they came to naught. The main difficulty was the unacceptability to the UFAWU of certain terms in the Meat Cutters' constitution. The Meat Cutters were willing to pledge that clauses such as the one giving wide powers to the international and the one directed against "the undermining efforts of Communist agencies and others who are opposed to our basic principles of democracy and democratic unionism" would not be applied.⁵²

But the UFAWU negotiators expressed doubts about the validity of the pledge since "a constitution supercedes any merger agreement", and the proposed merger terms stated specifically that "the constitution of the Merged Organization shall be the constitution of the Amalgamated".⁵³

The officers of the CLC have pointed to the fact that the Congress is willing to accept the UFAWU if it will merge with the CFAW as an indication the the "communist question" is no longer an issue; they argue that they have insisted on the merger merely to consolidate the food workers in Canada into one union.⁵⁴ But in light of the clear

⁵² Ibid. pp. 65-66.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 66.

⁵⁴ Donald Cameron, "Down Home No More," Maclean's, January, 1972. p. 40.

bias against communists in the constitution of the CFAW's parent organization, this claim seems somewhat disingenuous.

In 1971 the CFAW launched a raid on the UFAWU in Nova Scotia after the latter union had successfully led a seven-month strike to win bargaining rights and a signed contract for trawler fishermen in Canso, Mulgrave and Petit de Grat. The CLC officially sanctioned the raid in spite of earlier promises that it would not interfere with the UFAWU's organizing drive in the Maritimes. Donald MacDonald clearly indicated the nature of the CLC's continued objection to the UFAWU when he stated that if the B.C. union were "to grab control of the industry," it would "usher in a decade of violence and confusion which could spell ruin for the fishermen".⁵⁵ By implication, this statement was meant as an indictment of the communist leadership of the UFAWU.

At the 1972 convention of the CLC the delegates re-affirmed the position that the UFAWU could gain admission by merging with a Congress affiliate; but it was reported that there was strong rank and file support for the direct affiliation of the union if this was what the fishermen wanted.⁵⁶ This support became very evident at the convention of the B.C. Federation of Labour in November, 1972, when the International Woodworkers of America (IWA) submitted a resolution calling for immediate

⁵⁵ Chodos, op.cit. p. 18.

⁵⁶ The Fisherman, May 19, 1972. p. 1.

seating of the UFAWU. This resolution was ruled out of order on constitutional grounds; but, after heated debate, the convention endorsed a statement pledging the Federation officers to "make the strongest possible representation" to the CLC executive council for direct affiliation of the Fishermen's Union.⁵⁷ Finally, after twenty years as an outcast, the UFAWU was re-admitted to the mainstream labour movement on December 8, 1972.⁵⁸

A review of recent labour history in North America indicates that the purge of communists from the labour movement in the 1940's and 1950's was almost total. Today, the UFAWU, with its communist leadership, is practically alone among the significant unions in Canada. A number of individual communists are still active in the labour movement; but in few other unions do have as much influence as they have in the UFAWU.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Vancouver Sun, November 10, 1972. p. 21.

⁵⁸ Ibid. December 8, 1972. p. 1.

⁵⁹ Two other notable survivors of the anti-communist purge were the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (Mine-Mill) and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). The Canadian branch of Mine-Mill was expelled from the Canadian Congress of Labour in 1948; however, the union successfully retained its jurisdiction over most of the workers in the non-ferrous metal mining and smelting industry until in merged with the United Steel Workers of America in 1967. The Canadian branch of the UE was expelled from the CCL in 1949. This union has managed to retain its jurisdiction in some of the major plants in the Canadian electrical products industry and has even managed to expand from its traditional base in Ontario by establishing a local in Vancouver. Like the UFAWU, the UE remained an outcast from the mainstream labour movement because of its continued support of communist leaders. It was finally admitted to the CLC, along with the UFAWU, in December of 1972. For a brief analysis of the position of the UE in the electrical products industry, see Howard J.C. Elliott, "A Study of Industrial Relations in the Electrical Products Industry," unpublished draft study prepared for the Task Force on Labour Relations, Privy Council Office, Ottawa, 1968. pp. 48-53. And for a review of the role of Mine-Mill, at least in B.C., see J.J. Deutsch, S.M. Jamieson, T.I. Matuszewski, A.D. Scott and R.M. Will, "Industrial Relations in the Basic Industries of British Columbia," Economics of Primary Production in British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1959. v.4, pp. 57-63.

e. The Nature of Communist Control in the UFAWU

Within the terms of the definition of radicalism being used in this study, the UFAWU clearly is a radical union. Until very recently, it was forced to operate outside the mainstream of the labour movement as a direct result of its continued support of communist leaders. It remains to be seen whether these leaders hold power by virtue of positive support from the membership, or by supressing potential opposition.

Writing in 1950, Gladstone and Jamieson suggested that the communist leaders of the UFAWU were secure in office and were not likely to be confronted with opposition from within the union in the near future, because they were providing effective and dynamic leadership, and were producing the sort of results the members desired.⁶⁰ Fourteen years later, Norman Hacking confirmed that assertion, writing:⁶¹

"Homer Stevens and his Communist friends have always been easily re-elected to office because most union members consider they have received the tough leadership they need."

However, he added an ominous suggestion:

"The rank and file has never managed to produce a group strong enough to offer an alternative to the ruling clique. A few abortive attempts at rebellion have been ruthlessly crushed, either on the convention floor or by veiled threats on the fishing grounds."

⁶⁰ Gladstone and Jamieson, op.cit. p. 169.

⁶¹ Vancouver Province, August 12, 1963. p. 21.

In the context of popular attitudes about the dictatorial nature of communism nothing more need be said to fan the belief that, in the final analysis, the leaders of the UFAWU hold power through some kind of conspiracy which deprives the members of their democratic rights. Hacking's choice of words was likely dictated by his interpretation of events. He fails, however, to provide any evidence in support of his claim that the few efforts to oppose the incumbent leadership in the UFAWU have been "ruthlessly crushed". The Fishermen's Union has always boasted of being one of the most democratic unions in North America, and despite all their charges to the contrary, the harshest critics of the UFAWU have never been able to refute this claim.

It is one of the few unions left on the continent which holds an annual general convention and which provides for an annual secret ballot referendum to elect its three titled officers, the president, the secretary-treasurer and the business agent. All the members of the executive board, including the vice-presidents, are elected each year by secret ballot at the general convention. And locals are required to hold secret ballot elections for their own officers each year.⁶² The welfare director, the editor of The Fisherman, and the union organizers are all appointed by the executive board, and they can be dismissed at any time by a majority vote of that board.⁶³ If the leaders are acting

⁶² UFAWU constitution, Articles V, VI and X.

⁶³ Interview, Griffin, December 6, 1971.

in an unrepresentative manner there is, at least on paper, every opportunity for members to replace them. But account must be taken of the possibility that the leaders can suppress legitimate opposition by extra-constitutional means.

Lipset, Trow and Coleman have suggested that the leaders of a union might suppress opposition, even if their organization is nominally democratic, by appealing to the "cult of unity".⁶⁴ The appeal for workers' solidarity is a potent force in any labour union because members recognize that disunity in the ranks only works to the advantage of the employers. "This position finds further support in the Marxian analysis of political and class struggle . . . (which) holds that formal political groupings can exist only on the basis of 'real' differences in their material interests."⁶⁵ Such "real" differences do exist between economic classes, but presumably union members have the "same basic interests", so there is no cause for having organized factions within labour unions. If such factions are suppressed, the potential for opposition to the leadership is effectively eliminated.⁶⁶

The appeal for unity and internal solidarity could supposedly be used to suppress opposition in the UFAWU, and to maintain communist

⁶⁴ S.M. Lipset, M.A. Trow and J.S. Coleman, Union Democracy, Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1956. pp. 238-244.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 240.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 238.

domination despite the democratic provisions in the constitution. But there is little reason to believe that this is the case. The fishing industry is extremely complex. There are numerous conflicts of "basic interests" among fishermen in various gear sections, and between fishermen and allied workers. For example, trollers are allowed to fish without restriction, while seiners and gillnetters are limited to fishing two or three days a week in specific areas; and the Gulf of Georgia is reserved for gillnetters and closed to seiners. By law, fishermen are not considered true labourers, but private entrepreneurs; shoreworkers, on the other hand, are conventional wage labourers. The interests of fishermen in various geographical locations differ widely; the fishery regulations and the prices paid for fish vary greatly from area to area.⁶⁷ The UFAWU has to accommodate all these "real" differences, so it has provided for semi-autonomous district and occupational councils.⁶⁸ These "organized factions" provide a solid base for opposition if the members ever become dissatisfied with their leaders.

Even allowing for the existence of factions in the UFAWU, it has been suggested that the communist leaders maintain their dominant position by forcing the union into strikes, even when these have been

⁶⁷ The tidal fisheries in B.C. are all regulated by the federal government, but there is further regulation in specific fisheries; salmon fishing on the Skeena River is controlled by the Skeena Salmon Management Committee; pink and sockeye fishing on the Fraser River is controlled by the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission; all halibut fishing is regulated by the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

⁶⁸ UFAWU constitution, Article V.

against the best interests of the members.⁶⁹ The argument implies that the leaders are able to enforce artificial unanimity by keeping the union in constant conflict with external enemies. While the union is under attack, criticism of the leaders is taken as disloyalty to the organization. By this reasoning the militancy of the UFAWU is merely created by the communist leaders to ensure their continued dominance.

This argument ignores the fact that the power to call strikes rests completely with the members. The requirement in the UFAWU constitution for a two-thirds majority secret -ballot vote of members affected to authorize any strike is more stringent than the simple majority vote required by the Labour Relations Act. Power of the leaders to prolong a strike is strictly limited, since a strike is ended as soon as a simple majority of the members affected vote to accept a company offer. The provision that all voting on strike issues be by secret ballot eliminates the possibility that union leaders can intimidate members with forced appeals for loyalty to the organization.⁷⁰ Therefore, the implication that the UFAWU leaders manipulate conflict merely to consolidate their own power is without foundation.

Given the democratic structure of the UFAWU and the absence

⁶⁹ John Gibson, "Strikes: Do They Aid Fishermen, or Feed Power Hunger," Western Fisheries, v.74 #3, June, 1967. p. 11.

⁷⁰ UFAWU constitution, Article XIII. In 1957 and 1971, the fishermen voted to end strikes in spite of the recommendation of their negotiators that they reject the companies' offer. Interview with Homer Stevens, president, UFAWU, August 30, 1971.

of any evidence that the officers of the union hold their power through intimidation or other more subtle extra-constitutional means, one is inclined to accept the conclusion, originally suggested by Gladstone and Jamieson, that the communist leaders in the Fishermen's Union have been able to maintain their influence without much opposition because they have provided the kind of leadership which the members desire. But this conclusion must be qualified. It cannot be taken to imply that the majority of members in the UFAWU desire communist leadership, per se, or that they necessarily support the policies of the Communist Party. The attitude of most members is, rather, one of tolerant indifference toward the political affiliations of their leaders. Reduced to its simplest terms, this is expressed in a personalized form. "Sure Homer Stevens is a communist; but that don't bother us. He's a good man for the union, and that's what counts."⁷¹ Or as it was more colourfully put by a fishermen in Nova Scotia: "They say in this country you have a right to be what you want to be - well, if Homer Stevens is a Communist that's Homer Stevens' business. As long as he don't tell me what church to go to, that's okay."⁷²

It is interesting to examine the limits of this tolerance. No member of the UFAWU is unaware that support of leftist leadership has placed their union outside the house of labour, and has earned their union an unfavourable image in the public eye. This consequence has

⁷¹ Field notes, Port Renfrew, August 6, 1971.

⁷² Quoted in Cameron, op.cit. p. 40.

been willingly accepted because the members have been basically satisfied with their leaders' handling of their immediate economic interests.

It remains to be seen why the members of a union as democratic as the UFAWU have been willing to have their union support policies of the Communist Party, even when such policies have been opposed by an overwhelming majority of Canadian workers.

f. Communist Influence on Policies of the UFAWU

i. Soviet invasion of Hungary - 1956

The policy adopted by the UFAWU in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 provides an outstanding example of a major split between the Fishermen's Union and the mainstream labour movement. Just days after the Hungarian rebellion had been crushed by the Soviet army, the issue was debated at a convention of the B.C. Federation of Labour (B.C. Fed.). The resolution presented to that convention condemned the Soviet action in no uncertain terms:⁷³

"Whereas (there has been) the outright and ruthless use of armed force on the part of the Soviet Union to crush with appalling boldness the armed people's movement of Hungary seeking a measure of self-determination and freedom in the establishment of government by consent of the governed;

Therefore be it resolved that (we record our) sympathy with the oppressed people of Hungary and (our) condemnation of the brutal Soviet murder of the Hungarian freedom movement with invading armoured forces."

73 Summary of Proceedings, First Annual Convention, B.C. Federation of Labour (hereafter cited as B.C. Fed.), November 15-18, 1956. p. 111.

The resolution went on to urge the Canadian government to "take action to ensure aid to the distressed people of Hungary, and sanctuary for the thousands of refugees". The vote on this resolution was recorded as unanimous, with the added note that all the visitors in the gallery, at the invitation of the chairman, stood with the delegates in a gesture of solidarity with the freedom fighters.⁷⁴

The UFAWU, at its annual convention in March, 1957, took a stand on the Hungarian issue which was diametrically opposed to that taken by the B.C. Fed. The UFAWU resolution, under the title, "Hungarian Immigrants", read in part:⁷⁵

"Whereas in recent months the Canadian Government has seen fit to accept into Canada many thousands of immigrants under terms which can only be described as rankly discriminatory to nationals of other countries who seek to live in Canada . . .

"Whereas fine sounding phrases about freedom fighters, etc. to excuse and explain spending of the taxpayers money on Hungarian immigrants do not strike a responsive chord among responsible Canadians . . .

"Therefore be it resolved this Annual Convention of the UFAWU call upon the Canadian Government to immediately apply standard immigration practice to Hungarians as to other national groups."

Given that just four months previous, the representatives of the great majority of trade unionists in British Columbia had unanimously condemned the Soviet invasion of Hungary and had called on the Canadian government to aid the refugees, it is impossible to believe that the majority of

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 114. The Hungarian question was never debated in a convention of the Canadian Labour Congress since the 1956 Convention was held in April, before the invasion, and the next convention was not held until 1958. But the sentiment expressed by the B.C. Fed. left no doubt about the position of the mainstream labour movement on this issue.

⁷⁵ Resolutions and Summary of Proceedings, Thirteenth Annual Convention, UFAWU, March 24-30, 1957. p. 86.

fishermen in the province were in accord with the sentiments expressed in the UFAWU resolution. On the other hand, given the democratic provisions in the UFAWU constitution, including the provision that a secret ballot vote is required on any question, if so requested by any delegate, it is equally impossible to believe that this resolution could have been forced on the members against their will.

In the absence of any record of debate within the UFAWU on the Hungarian question, it is impossible to explain authoritatively how the communist leaders of the union gained general assent for the resolution. But it seems that acceptance by the members of this and other controversial policies which might be identified as "the Communist Party line" stems more from a lack of opposition on their part rather than from their positive support of the policies. The apathy of the rank and file in any organization on issues that are not of immediate concern is a widely recognized phenomenon. It seems that the leaders of the UFAWU are able to secure assent for policies in the international sphere, even when such policies are probably contrary to the prevailing sentiment of the members, because the issues at stake have no direct bearing on immediate economic concerns, and are, therefore, of only marginal interest to the members. Since the leaders command considerable loyalty and respect within the union by virtue of their satisfactory handling of the immediate problems, the members are willing to defer to the leaders' judgement and wishes on these marginal international questions.

This is not meant to imply that the communist leaders retain control of the Fishermen's Union simply because of the apathy of the members. Nor is it meant to imply that all policies of the UFAWU which deviate from those of the mainstream labour movement are conceived by the communist leadership and accepted blindly by an apathetic membership. Many of the controversial or "radical" policies of the UFAWU clearly reflect the immediate interests of the members and therefore have strong rank and file support.

ii. Foreign trade and recognition of Communist China

One of the most obvious instances of rank and file support for "radical" policies is to be found in the late 1940's and early 1950's, when the Fishermen's Union adopted a series of policies related to the question of foreign trade which were considered sinister and subversive by the mainstream labour movement. In 1949 the UFAWU forwarded to the Trades and Labour Congress for endorsement, a resolution favouring the lifting of currency restrictions on trade with Commonwealth countries and advocating barter trade between Canada and those Commonwealth countries that had inadequate dollar reserves.⁷⁶ This resolution and a number of others along similar lines from other unions were all rejected by the resolutions committee, which reported to the convention that they "were inspired by a central source (the Communist Party) and intended to unjustly poison the minds of the delegates".⁷⁷ When the Fishermen's Union submitted

⁷⁶ Resolutions and Summary of Proceedings, Fifth Annual Convention, UFAWU, March 21-25, 1949. p. 166; p. 172.

⁷⁷ Report of the Proceedings of the Sixty-Fifth Annual Convention, The Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (hereafter cited as TLC), September 11-16, 1950. p. 347.

a resolution to the TLC the next year, advocating diplomatic recognition^a of and trade with the People's Republic of China, as well as the general liberalization of trade between Canada and communist countries, it was rejected on the same grounds.⁷⁸

Despite the rebuff from the TLC, the Fishermen's Union reaffirmed its stand on these issues year after year until eventually they became incorporated into the platform of the whole labour movement. The advocacy of recognition of and trade with Communist China remained a contentious issue in the Canadian labour movement until 1958 when it was finally adopted by the Canadian Labour Congress.⁷⁹ Meanwhile the policy favouring barter trade with Commonwealth countries ceased to be an issue when the foreign trade picture for Canada improved in 1953 and 1954.

To fully appreciate the seriousness of advocating policies which could be branded "communist" during and immediately following the Korean War, one must have some idea of the extreme enmity which mainstream labour movement of the day held for "communists and fellow travellers", who were believed to be subverting the movement, the nation and democracy itself on behalf of the Soviet Union.⁸⁰ Each convention of the TLC from 1949 to 1954 was marred by bitter debates as the Congress slowly, but

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 347. For the text of the UFAWU resolution see Resolutions and Summary of Proceedings, Sixth Annual Convention, UFAWU, March 20-24, 1950.

⁷⁹ See Report of Proceedings, Second Convention, Canadian Labour Congress (hereafter cited as CLC), April 21-25, 1958. p. 61.

⁸⁰ For a concise analysis of the purge of Communists from the Canadian Labour Movement, see Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1968.

effectively purged all the known communists from its affiliated unions, or failing that, expelled the "red" tainted unions from its own ranks. The sweeping nature of the purge is best summed up in a constitutional amendment which was adopted at the 1950 Convention of the TLC:⁸¹

"No organization officered or controlled by Communists of members of the Labour Progressive Party, or any person espousing Communism or advocating the violent overthrow of our institutions shall be allowed representation or recognition in this Congress or any organization chartered by it."

It is likely that the UFAWU's stand on foreign trade and on recognition of Red China were not merely products of the union's left-wing leadership, but that they were widely supported by the members, despite the fact that the policies were unacceptable to most people in the labour movement. In the early 1950's the fishing industry in British Columbia was seriously depressed because of ^{the loss of} important traditional markets. Britain and other Commonwealth countries had been major importers of canned B.C. salmon, but trade with these countries was sharply reduced as Canada tried to move from the pound sterling to the dollar trading bloc. China had been a major market for smoked and salted herring and smoked salmon, and this market was lost as a result of Canada's refusal to recognize or trade with the new regime. Therefore policy changes in these areas were very much in the immediate interest of members of the UFAWU.

⁸¹ Report of Proceedings of the Sixty-Fifth Annual Convention, TLC,
1950. p. 403

iii. NATO

There are a number of other policy areas in which the UFAWU has differed from the mainstream labour movement. A few notable examples should serve to illustrate this point. As early as 1946, the UFAWU opposed the formation of NATO, branding it an anti-Soviet alliance that would needlessly divide the United Nations into opposing blocs.⁸² In the first few years following World War II, the major labour centres took no specific stand on NATO; but in light of the strong anti-Soviet and anti-communist bias of the overwhelming majority in the Canadian labour movement, NATO presumably had their unequivocal support. The first specific endorsement of NATO appeared in a TLC resolution on "World Peace" in 1952:⁸³

"Whereas workers in Canada like workers throughout the world have a genuine desire for World Peace;

"And whereas there is a world organization set up by the nations of the World for that purpose;

"And whereas Canada is a participant in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization whose aim it is to build up our defences against oppression;

"Therefore be it resolved that the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada urge the Government of Canada to work through the United Nations Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization toward World Peace."

It is interesting to note that this resolution as adopted by the TLC was a substitute for one submitted by the UFAWU which demanded, in part, that Canada limit defence expenditures to the amount necessary to defend Canadian soil, a demand which was indirectly calling for Canadian withdrawal from NATO.⁸⁴

⁸² Resolutions and Summary of Proceedings, Second Annual Convention, UFAWU, March 18-22, 1946. p. 156.

⁸³ Report of the Proceedings of the Sixty-Seventh Annual Convention, TLC, August 18-23, 1952. p. 364.

⁸⁴ For the full text of the UFAWU resolution, see Resolutions and Summary of Proceedings, Eighth Annual Convention, UFAWU, March 24-29, 1952. p. 227.

The mainstream labour movement continued to support Canadian participation in NATO until 1968, when the International Affairs Committee of the CLC recommended that "there should be discussions, preparatory to an orderly and phased withdrawal, at least a substantial reduction, of our military establishment in Europe".⁸⁵ In the same year the International Committee of the B.C. Fed., made a more forthright statement:⁸⁶

"The existence of NATO is no longer justified. Canada must withdraw its support of this anachronistic shield force and return the Canadian NATO contingent to its home base. NATO has ceased to function and no longer serves any useful purpose as a guarantor of peace in Europe."

However, it was not until 1969 that the Federation passed a resolution specifically calling for Canadian withdrawal from NATO.⁸⁷ In contrast, the UFAWU has been on record since 1961 as unequivocally demanding that "the Canadian Government . . . withdraw from NATO and NORAD, and . . . declare Canada a neutral power".⁸⁸

iv. Unemployment insurance

The unemployment insurance program, as the name implies, is designed to provide individuals with financial security against the hazard of being stricken by unemployment. It is a social security program

⁸⁵ Report of Proceedings, Seventh Constitutional Convention, CLC, May, 6-10, 1968. p. 45.

⁸⁶ Summary of Proceedings, Thirteenth Annual Convention, B.C. Fed., November 4-8, 1968. Report of the International Affairs Committee. p. 3.

⁸⁷ Summary of Proceedings, Fourteenth Annual Convention, B.C. Fed., November 3-7, 1969. "Resolutions adopted on International Relations," p. 2.

⁸⁸ Resolutions and Summary of Proceedings, Seventeenth Annual Convention, UFAWU, March 18-25, 1961. p. 87.

administered by the government; but it is based on individual insurance policies in much the same way as any privately-administered insurance scheme. The main distinction is that insurance policies in privately-run schemes are usually available on a voluntary basis to anyone who is prepared to pay premiums, while, generally speaking, an unemployment insurance policy is either compulsory ^{or} prohibited to the individual citizen according to his occupation. Each person who holds an unemployment insurance policy pays a percentage of his regular earnings into the U.I. Fund and this contribution is matched by his employer. If the policy holder becomes unemployed, he is entitled to receive benefits for a limited period of time. The amount of the benefit is determined by the size of the contribution, and the duration of the benefit is determined by the length of time he has been contributing. The U.I. Fund is financed directly from the policy holders' contributions and is administered independently from the budget of the federal government. The key aspect of this financing arrangement is that the Fund must remain actuarially sound. In the long term, the expenditure on benefits must not exceed the income from contributions. The government bears the administrative cost of the program through a grant to the U.I. Fund. This grant amounts to 20% of the total contributions from employers and employees.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ This description of the unemployment insurance program does not take into consideration the major amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act which came into effect in June, 1971. These changes include a departure from the actuarial principles upon which the program was formerly based. Under the present Act the federal government replenishes the Fund out of general tax revenues when the national unemployment rate exceeds four percent. However, the basic principle of individual insurance policies financed through the contributions of all policy holders remains unchanged.

On the question of unemployment insurance, which is an immediate and vital concern of virtually every labour organization in the country, one finds another instance where the policy espoused by the UFAWU differs fundamentally from that of most other unions. To a certain extent this is to be expected since fishermen, because of the seasonal nature of their occupation, are treated differently from workers in most other industries under the Unemployment Insurance Act. But occupational differences alone are not sufficient to account for the unique approach toward unemployment insurance taken by the UFAWU. The briefs submitted by the UFAWU and various other labour organizations to the Committee of Inquiry into the Unemployment Insurance Act provide the clearest indication of the fundamental differences in their policies on this subject.

Most of the individual unions that submitted briefs outlined the specific shortcomings in the U.I. Act as applied to persons in the occupations where they held jurisdiction. A detailed recitation of the specific grievances and recommendations is immaterial to the present analysis. It is sufficient to note that these briefs advocated limited and piece-meal amendments while completely accepting the principles upon which the U.I. Act in Canada was founded.

The Canadian Labour Congress, in keeping with its function as the central spokesman for organized labour in the country, adopted a more sweeping approach, recommending general changes in the interest of all workers, while at the same time making specific representations

on behalf of its affiliates.⁹⁰ But like its various affiliates that , submitted briefs, the CLC asked for no change in the basic approach to unemployment insurance. Rather, the mainstream labour movement asked for increased benefits for unemployed workers while accepting the fundamental principle that the program should be financed by contributions from insured workers and their employers.⁹¹

The only briefs which challenged this fundamental principle that workers should contribute directly, in the form of premiums, to the U.I. Fund came from the Communist Party of Canada, the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) and the UFAWU. The Communist Party argued that:⁹²

"Unemployment is a direct responsibility of corporate interests and should therefore be a charge on corporate profits.

"Bearing this in mind our Party believes it would be only just that the cost of the Fund be borne in the main by corporate interests and by the government. The present division of contributions places an equal burden on employees and employers, as if employees were responsible for unemployment and therefore ought to be made to pay for it.

". . . Our view is that unemployment insurance should be non-contributory. We hold to the principle that corporate interests and the government should bear the entire cost of the Fund as the most just way of handling the problem."

In keeping with its long-established opposition to Canadian expenditures

⁹⁰ For a summary of the CLC recommendations, see CLC "Submission to the Committee of Inquiry into the Unemployment Insurance Act," Ottawa, October 14, 1961. pp. 73-74.

⁹¹ It should be noted that the CLC acknowledged the need for a more far-reaching income for security program than that offered by unemployment insurance. However, the Congress suggested that this should be provided through additional but separate programs rather than through an all-encompassing unemployment insurance scheme. See *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁹² Communist Party of Canada, "Brief Submitted to the Committee of Inquiry

on armaments, the Communist Party suggested that the government's contribution to the U.I. Fund could easily be met by reducing defence expenditures. In addition to calling for non-contributory unemployment insurance, the Party demanded that all persons of working age who are seeking employment should be eligible whether or not they have been previously employed.⁹³ The brief from the UE, while less polemical, advocated virtually the same policies.⁹⁴

The UFAWU also demanded a universal, non-contributory program; however, the analysis and arguments presented in support of this demand were unique to the Fishermen's Union. The brief commenced by challenging the whole concept of providing individual insurance against the hazard of unemployment, stating:⁹⁵

"Unemployment is not a fact of nature but a fault in the structure of a society (and) of the policies it pursues. . . . Unemployment benefits, payments, assistance or whatever term one may wish to use, are in the nature of penalties payable by a society that permits the social malady of unemployment in its midst This penalty, being social in origin must be shared by all constituent members of the society in which unemployment occurs."

The union is demanding that the present pattern of individual insurance policies, financed through individual contributions, be scrapped

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, "Brief Submitted to the Committee of Inquiry into the Unemployment Insurance Act," October 12, 1961.

⁹⁵ UFAWU, "Submission to the Committee of Inquiry into the Unemployment Insurance Act," October, 1961. pp. 6-7.

in favour of a universal program of benefits automatically available to every member of the labour force, for as long as he is unemployed, regardless of his occupation or past contribution record. It is also demanding that the present U.I. Fund be abolished, and the program be financed through general tax revenues. This would force the government to take direct financial responsibility for its unemployment policies, since the money for benefits would have to be found in the general budget. Under these circumstances, if the government pursued a deliberate policy of allowing high unemployment to curb inflation, it would have to raise taxes to finance assistance to the jobless. Presumably, such a tax increase would be resisted by all taxpayers, and this would force the government to revise its economic policies to generate more jobs.

It seems that the UFAWU proposal would be more likely to produce an integrated and responsive employment policy than the policy suggested by the Communist Party, which would place the primary burden for unemployment insurance on the "corporate interests". Under the free enterprise system the "corporate interests" would probably write off the increase in premiums in their calculation of production costs and pass it on to consumers in the form of higher prices. Thus prices would tend to rise co-incident with increases in the rate of unemployment. The benefit of a non-contributory scheme would therefore be dissipated and the public would be unable to force a change through the democratic process. In light of this, it is interesting to surmise whether the policy of the UFAWU may not be more "socialist" than that of the Communist Party.

g. Conclusions

In the opening chapter of this study it was suggested that the discontent and conflict resulting from the poor economic performance of the fishing industry would produce an atmosphere conducive to the growth of radical ideologies and the emergence of radical leaders in the fishermen's unions. While no attempt has been made to demonstrate a direct link between industrial unrest and radical unionism, the evidence which has been set forth in this chapter indicates that conditions in the fishing industry have been favourable to the development of radical leadership and policies in fishermen's unions. It is doubtful whether ^{is} there/any causal relationship between industrial unrest and trade union radicalism. However, in the case of the B.C. fishing industry, where economic conditions have produced a high level of union militancy, it is clear that the fishermen have favoured the radical and aggressive leadership of Communists over the more conservative type of leadership which is characteristic of most Canadian unions. The fact that radical leaders and policies have flourished in fishermen's unions simply confirms the initial suggestion that conditions in the fishing industry are ripe for the growth of radical unionism.

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C. PERSONAL ENQUIRY

A. Interviews

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North, George. former editor, The Fisherman. August 23, 1971; August 15, 1972.

Stavenes, Steve. former president, UFAWU. November 20, 1971; December 8, 1971.

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B. Field Notes

Port Renfrew, August 6, 1971.