

# RESEARCH REPORTS / NOTES DE RECHERCHE

## Inspiration for insurrection or harmless humour? Class and Politics in the Editorial Cartoons of Three Toronto Newspapers During the Early 1930s

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HISTORIANS ARE WELL ACCUSTOMED to interpreting the whole range of written records, statistics, and to a certain extent, oral recollections, but few employ illustrative sources as a means of examining past events and ideas, or the popular perceptions of historical process. Hesitant to recognize editorial cartoons as legitimate historical sources, historians have often relegated the comic image to an aside of social history. This is truly unfortunate, as cartoons not only depict the personalities and the customs of the past<sup>1</sup>, but reveal subtle, not so subtle, and even subversive, visualized commentaries on the events and ideas of a given period.

<sup>1</sup>Cartoons depict social history via costumes, songs, colloquialisms, slang, slogans, banners, fashions in food and drink, street scenes, folklore, etc.

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This study seeks to deconstruct the popular: to employ the cartoons' metaphorical and symbolic meanings, or "metalanguage for discourse,"<sup>2</sup> in order to examine the social order of Toronto during the depths of the Great Depression.<sup>3</sup> Amid the socio-economic and political tension resulting from the extreme levels of unemployment and poverty, no Canadian city represented the clash of classes, ethnic groups, and ideologies as well as Toronto during the period 1929-1933. The economic, social, and political crises of the Depression were clearly evident in the city's newspapers and within them, their editorial cartoons. An analysis of the metaphors and symbols present in the cartoons allows for the discovery of some of the unintended meanings masked during the production and transmission processes as well as providing an analysis of the more obvious contemporary cartoon code. The intense ideological and class conflict of the period is especially exemplified in the city's *Evening Telegram*, *Toronto Star*, and *The Worker*. Examined in their historical context the cartoons' ideological, political, economic, racial, regional, gendered, and uniquely urban Toronto elements are exposed as part of an ideologically-based manipulation of images designed to convey a desired message to a selected audience. Thus, this overture of cultural history seeks to establish the link between popular culture (superstructure) and the socio-economic and political (base) systems supported or challenged by a seemingly harmless example of this culture: editorial cartoons.

This essay bolsters the argument for a wider, more inclusive, more democratic and, therefore, more accurate employment of particular historical sources and general cultural analysis. Popular culture represents a "dialectic of cultural struggle"<sup>4</sup> because it:

Constitute(s) the terrain on which dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural values and ideologies meet and intermingle, in different mixes and permutations, vying with one another in their attempts to secure the spaces within which they can become influential in framing and organizing popular experience and consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

Images such as those found in the editorial cartoon have always been employed and manipulated by those who hope to maintain, as well as those who want to usurp,

<sup>2</sup>Ray Morris, "Cultural Analysis through Semiotics: Len Norris' Cartoons on Official Bilingualism," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 28 (May 1991), 227-31.

<sup>3</sup>As Warren Susman demonstrates, during the 1930s "there was in the discovery of the idea of culture and its wide-scale application a critical tool that could shape a critical ideal, especially as it was directed repeatedly against the failures and meaninglessness of an urban-industrial civilization." Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York 1984), 164.

<sup>4</sup>Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London 1981), 233.

<sup>5</sup>Stuart Hall, "Popular Culture and the State," *Popular Culture and Social Relations* (Philadelphia 1986), 19.

power within a society. The graphic models and stereotypes contained in editorial cartoons are powerful reference points in the evaluations and social transactions of popular life as they act as “repositories of cultural meaning”<sup>6</sup> that provide the historian with an “unofficial” look into the past.

Editorial cartoons are invaluable to the cultural historian because they share a common code or lexicon that “consists both of signs and of rules or conventions that determine how and in what context these signs are used and how they can be combined to form more complex messages.”<sup>7</sup> This code is determined by the social conventions supporting communication, which include the prevailing historical, moral, socio-economic and political conditions that shape this set of rules.

### *Cartoonology*

Editorial cartoons are a reduction of an idea, a conclusion without an argument, effective because of succinctness, poignancy, and topicality. Complex ideas that would require a lengthy written explanation can be compressed into a single metaphor contained in an individual image. The main processes that the cartoonist employs to achieve this effect are *condensation* and *domestication*. Condensation uses stereotypes and symbolic metaphors in order to reduce complex phenomena or specific events to their apparent shared core via a single image. Domestication converts difficult and unfamiliar ideas into something close and concrete by “highlighting mutual elements and masking unique ones and by focusing on repetitive patterns to minimize novelty and mental adjustment.”<sup>8</sup> These two processes are based on a premise that the majority of the audience has neither the proper set of experiences nor the information necessary to fully understand the issue or events addressed in the cartoon.

The political cartoonist creates representational situations through the use of a “satirical armoury”, a cartoon code, which includes: hardened metaphors of political jargon, “universal” metaphors, static symbols, allegory, animalistic metamorphosis, contrast of scale, “tabs” of identity, legends and speech balloons, and the use of expressive shapes and colours.<sup>9</sup> Caricaturists continually create, maintain, and revise iconographic stock characters, types, and physiognomic conventions.

<sup>6</sup> Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (New York 1981), 4.

<sup>7</sup> John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (London 1990), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Ray Morris, “Visual Rhetoric in Political Cartoons: A Structuralist Approach,” *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 8, 3 (1993), 200-1.

<sup>9</sup> Examples of universal metaphors include such wide-spread signs as light for good and dark for evil, static symbols comprise items such as flags and maps, while examples of “tabs” of identity have included Hitler’s moustache and Prime Minister Bennett’s top hat and corpulent belly, to name just a few. Consult John Geipel, *The Cartoon: A Short History of Graphic Comedy and Satire* (London 1972), and E.H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and other essays on the Theory of Art* (London 1963), 130-142, for the other stylistic devices.

Thus, cartoonists present their ideas through one or more of these processes as well as *specific encoding systems*. Cartoonists employ exaggerations, incongruities, distortions, allegory, and humour, as well as the gross and sublime to mock the intended target or to communicate the desired message. They establish imagery in their cartoons through the choice of setting, characters, costumes, and situations that they portray. Stylistically cartoonists have their own combination of consistency, simplicity, vagueness/clarity, shadows, outlines, contrast, attention to details, the use of action, value of props, optical illusions, and the overall composition of the cartoon.<sup>10</sup>

Cartoons can contain two types of encoding systems: *mimetic*, based upon facial features and drawn from beliefs about what faces betray about the character and intelligence of the subject, and *analogic*, when the artist turns the subject's body into something very different based upon the editorial perception of that person.<sup>11</sup> Thus, personal caricature is often more than an assault on an individual's appearance: it is often a physiognomic attempt by the cartoonist to convey the subject's supposed mental and moral attributes graphically. Since physiognomic illustrations and other types of caricature evolve according to what is popular and accepted, they skillfully reflect the values, stereotypes, and social mores prevalent in a society at any given time.

#### *Toronto Newspapers*

Canadian newspapers clearly identified themselves with either the cause(s) of conservatism, liberalism, or a new possibility, radicalism, throughout the 1930s. *The Worker*, *Star*, and *Telegram* were all decidedly partisan and often campaigned openly for federal and provincial parties, municipal candidates, and specific political policies. They aimed to influence a voting public and secure, as much as they could, particular decisions in the public arena.<sup>12</sup> The *Telegram's* cartoons can be used to trace the development of conservatism and Conservative policies in City Hall, Queen's Park, and Ottawa while the *Star* echoed the development of small-l liberalism on the social front, and the Liberal party on the federal, provincial, and

<sup>10</sup>For an excellent examination of the use and evolution of, the techniques and stylistic devices of cartooning see: Roy Paul Nelson, *Humorous Illustration and Cartooning: A Guide for Editors, Advertisers, and Artists* (Englewood Cliffs 1984).

<sup>11</sup>Alette Hill, "The Carter Campaign in Retrospect: Decoding the Cartoons," *Semiotica*, 23, 3/4 (1978), 309.

<sup>12</sup>The *Star* and *Telegram's* lengthy feud was legendary and their editors ended up as targets for the opposition cartoonist's pen. This rivalry involved oppositional editorial positions on most political issues, supporting rival candidates in all three levels of elections, personal attacks on opposing staff members, and sometimes even ended in libel suits. Robertson and Atkinson were both said to be men of "inflexible wills" who fought hard for their "sense of sovereignty, and did not intend to relinquish it." Ron Poulton, *The Paper Tyrant: John Ross Robertson of the Toronto Telegram* (Toronto 1971), 212-14.

municipal level. Meanwhile, the *Worker* denounced other papers as commercial rags and referred to itself as the only true representative of the Canadian working-class. The *Worker* mirrored the zealous, sectarian, ultra-left, often 'undergroundist' policies put forth by the Comintern during its Third Period. Thus, the cartoons found in these three Toronto newspapers provide ample evidence of the survival of partisanship throughout the early 1930s.<sup>13</sup> More importantly perhaps, the mainstream papers' editorial cartoons confirmed The *Worker's* view that there was no real difference between liberalism and conservatism.

The *Worker's* main cartoonist was Avrom Yanovsky (1911-1979), a Ukrainian-Canadian who briefly attended several art schools and worked for various labour-union newspapers before joining the Party. He helped form the CPC dominated Progressive Arts Club (PAC) in 1931 as well as an artists' union with locals in several different cities by the late 1930s.<sup>14</sup> George Shields (1872-1952), was a loyal employee of the *Telegram* for 62 years who also sat as a Conservative member of City Council from 1923 and in the Ontario legislature from 1926.<sup>15</sup> Since no biographical information exists for the *Star's* D. Hawkes, one can assume it was a pseudonym for either one of the staff members or a commercial artist. Regardless, his cartoons were stylistically consistent, and like those of his two counterparts, they never broke from the political stance of his paper during the period. ...

#### *Data Analysis*

Since this essay employs both a quantitative and qualitative analysis, databases of content will be combined with detailed examinations of individual cartoons grouped around subject matter. Both the content and style of the cartoons are examined to analyze the individual meanings and the overall cultural codes in operation in the three Toronto newspapers during the early 1930s. This form of

<sup>13</sup>John Ross Robertson and his successors at the *Telegram* were true Tories who expressed complete loyalty to the British Empire, British traditions, Conservative politics and their manifestations in Canada. The *Star*, in contrast, was imbued "with the liberal philosophy...[that] contained a strong infusion of social welfare thinking" consistent with Joseph Atkinson and Harry C. Hindmarsh's (City editor) concern for the "underprivileged, the handicapped, and the victims of injustice." Robertson and his Orange-Conservative successors detested the liberal "Holy Joe" Atkinson and all that the *Star* stood for, while the editorial staff at the *Worker* dismissed both and most others as the "imperialistic capitalist fascist boss press": W.H. Kesterton, *A History of Journalism in Canada* (Toronto 1967), 87. As the organ of the Communist Party of Canada, the *Worker* "educated the workers on the need to achieve socialism and was an ideological and political weapon of the working class in its struggle against the bourgeoisie." Communist Party of Canada, *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976* (Toronto 1982), 22.

<sup>14</sup>Sean Purdy, *Radicals and Revolutionaries: The History of Canadian Communism From the Robert S. Kenny Collection* (Toronto 1998), 46-7.

<sup>15</sup>Peter Desbarats and Terry Mosher, *The Hecklers: A History of Canadian Political Cartooning and a Cartoonists History of Canada* (Toronto 1979), 227 and 250.

analysis places the political, economic, racial, regional, gendered, and specifically urban Toronto elements of the cartoons in their appropriate historical context. It examines the overall nature of all cartoons appearing from mid-1929 to the end of 1933, focusing on issues directly involving class as well as those associated with traditional class demarcations. As such, it provides a clear example of class struggle, which reveals that the battle over legitimation between competing groups is intensely politicized and class-based.

Some preliminary explanations of the data are in order before progressing any further. In order to utilize the information presented in the cartoons a detailed spreadsheet was constructed for each year that categorised every cartoon according to the topic(s)<sup>16</sup> represented. The 2402 cartoons ranged from 1 July 1929, chosen to provide a reasonable sample before the stock market crash, to the end of the worst part of the Depression, 31 December 1933. There is an unavoidably wide range in the total number of cartoons supplied by each paper due to the frequency of the paper's appearance and inconsistency in quantity of cartoon production.<sup>17</sup> The data is organized in order to show the tendencies of each newspaper. Due to differences between the papers in the quantity of cartoons all comparisons are done in terms of percentages in relation to the totals of each individual paper for this period. Second, since the cartoon subjects are usually complex and multidimensional, rather than simplified and overtly single-issue oriented, individual cartoons are often grouped in numerous categories at the same time.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the overall averages are not done in relation to the total, but are a simple mean of the three papers' specific annual averages. This method of calculation offsets the numerical imbalance between the three papers, so that a comparative picture of each paper's representation of issues could be conducted.

#### *Depression Toronto as a Case Study*

There is neither the space nor need for a detailed examination of the Depression within this paper. Nevertheless, a brief explanation of why Toronto is a good sample of the larger Canadian experience during this period seems necessary before proceeding further. Local workers who had lost their jobs combined with the unemployed from other regions who came there looking for work to give Toronto the largest number of jobless (in relation to its total population) in the country. Since

<sup>16</sup>The 52 categories were as follows: 18 politicians, 3 socio-economic classes, 2 occupational, 1 for women and minorities respectively, 9 municipal and 8 national/provincial issues, and 10 general classifications, (International, economic, etc.).

<sup>17</sup>The *Star's* Hawkes took an annual three month summer vacation, Shields of the *Telegram* did not produce anything during the first four and a half months of 1930, and the *Worker* was a poorly funded, erratically produced weekly, which might well not feature a cartoon in any given issue.

<sup>18</sup>The sum total of the overall averages is often greater than 100 per cent, demonstrating that many of the cartoons simultaneously represented more than one category.

the city had almost 30 per cent of its workforce in the manufacturing sector there were large numbers of workers laid off because of a lack of international orders.<sup>19</sup> The 1931 Census states that Ontario had the highest percentage of unemployed workers (37.57 per cent), while Toronto alone had 219,881 men and women over 20 years of age out of work.<sup>20</sup> As a result, during the early 1930s "Toronto the Good" was becoming a little less "good" as pre-existent social divisions, obviously exacerbated by tough times, flared to new heights of antagonism.

The predominance of class among these augmented social divisions most clearly distinguished the radical *Worker* from its two mainstream counterparts. Class and class issues were at best ambiguously defined in the cartoons of the *Star* and *Telegram*, whereas the *Worker* very clearly and frequently dealt with class and explicitly class-based issues.

TABLE 1

<i>Paper</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Working-Class</i>	<i>AVG</i>	<i>Middle-Class</i>	<i>AVG</i>	<i>Capitalists</i>	<i>AVG</i>
<b>Worker</b>							
1929	12	9	75.00%	0	0.00%	4	33.33%
1930	22	15	68.13%	3	13.64%	12	54.55%
1931	27	19	70.37%	3	11.11%	10	37.04%
1932	32	26	81.25%	0	0.00%	23	71.88%
1933	47	30	63.83%	1	2.13%	16	34.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>70.71%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5.00%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>46.43%</b>
<b>Star</b>							
1929	91	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
1930	235	2	0.85%	0	0.00%	3	1.28%
1931	221	4	1.81%	2	0.90%	6	2.71%
1932	228	3	1.32%	0	0.00%	8	3.51%
1933	233	5	2.15%	1	0.43%	13	5.58%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1008</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1.39%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.30%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2.98%</b>
<b>Telegram</b>							
1929	153	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	6	3.92%
1930	186	2	1.08%	0	0.00%	4	2.15%
1931	306	3	0.98%	2	0.65%	5	1.63%
1932	305	3	0.98%	4	1.31%	16	5.25%
1933	304	6	1.97%	2	0.66%	4	1.32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1254</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1.12%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0.64%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2.79%</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2402</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>24.41%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1.98%</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>17.40%</b>

<sup>19</sup>James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto 1985), 59.

<sup>20</sup>Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Seventh Census of Canada 1931. Volume IV.* (Ottawa 1936), pp.2-3, 1268-70. 17 per cent of the city's workers were unemployed, by 1933 this number climbed to 30 per cent, while in certain neighbourhoods like East York, it was as

Remarkably, the *Worker* represented the working-class about thirty-five times, and the capitalist-class about eight times, as often as the *Star* and the *Telegram* combined. Both the *Star* and the *Telegram* skirted class issues and generally only dealt with class when they caricatured specific greedy or corrupt industrialists or personified groups such as the "Montréal power barons." The middle-class bourgeois elements were only depicted in a small fraction of the cartoons in all of the surveyed papers. The fundamental difference between the *Worker* and its rivals was not only in the obvious frequency of class representation, but in the manner in which the cartoonists portrayed these different classes. Notably, here as in other topical areas as well, there was basically no quantitative difference between the *Evening Telegram* and the *Toronto Star*. This disparity in content and style also manifested itself in more direct political expressions of class-consciousness.

Since this essay employs a Thompsonian view of class formation,<sup>21</sup> the subtle and not so subtle ways cartoonists communicate messages about members of certain classes are examined as an important aspect of the social relations of the Great Depression. How workers were depicted as opposed to their bosses, for example, illuminates the sympathies of the artists as well as the stance of their newspapers, scaffolded in a coded conception of class conflict. This sense of class relations stretched beyond mere caricatures of leading public figures; it incorporated many other socio-economic and political issues that were divided along class lines. The cartoons in the *Star* and *Telegram* professed a distant sympathy or a sense of 'fair play' in their depictions of the unfortunate unemployed or the particular industrialist who acted *too* greedily. This idea of temperance did not apply to the communist cartoons, however, as they portrayed all capitalists as parasites, and all workers as exploited, yet heroic, producers.

Unlike Hawkes and Shields, the communist Yanovsky aimed to do more than benevolently mock the elite classes; he hoped to cajole the working class to revolt by drumming up hatred for the "boss class." Yanovsky developed a polemic in his depictions of class conflict in ways quite similar to those of American radical artists: "The enemy was portrayed as criminal, savage, and grotesque. Corpulent and bald, his body suggested waste, impotence, and emasculation.... The worker on the other hand, possessed the saintly qualities of heroism and self-sacrifice...."<sup>22</sup> The first

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high as 45 per cent of those men whom were able to work: James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918* (Toronto 1985), 59.

<sup>21</sup>"Class-consciousness is the way in which these (class) experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms." E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London 1965), 10.

<sup>22</sup>Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle. Women, Men and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-45* (Chapel Hill 1991), 82; Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York 1975), 143-45; and Richard Fitzgerald, *Art and Politics: Cartoonists of the Masses and Liberator* (Wesport 1973) all agree on this point. Moreover, the radical artist "must inspire hate and envy by showing that leaders are moral degenerates who are undeserving of what



Cartoon (20 June 1931) is an example of this contrast between the noble qualities and aesthetic beauty of the persecuted working-class with the evil brutality of the ugly, overlord capitalist class. The wage-cutting capitalist is *mimetically* depicted as maniacally demonic as exemplified by Sir Joseph Flavelle who is tyrannising a struggling worker with the demand that "wages must come down." In comparison the worker is portrayed as noble and strong, bearing his oppression to the best of his abilities. Yet, Yanovsky always presented such images in order to incite his audience into action as represented in this example by the caption. Indeed, during this period the *Worker* became known for fervent slogans such as "FIGHT OR STARVE" and "ORGANIZE AGAINST HUNGER."



Hawkes shared a similar, though definitely milder distaste for self-interested industrialists, which reflected the liberal stance of his editor, Joseph Atkinson. The wealthy and powerful were often depicted as selfish fools who cushioned their already posh existence by stealing from ordinary citizens. In Cartoon #2 (30 October 1933) the "Privileged Big Business Chiseler" is *analogically* transformed into a skunk that is raiding the "Canadian Consumers' Interests Coop." Noting the similarities between that type of man in both America and Canada, Mr. Canadian Public Opinion is coming to shoot the bothersome varmint in the upcoming federal by-elections just as President Roosevelt did in the US. Hawkes sometimes employed *analogic* figures, symbolized by the burglarizing skunk, to construct a type of moralistic contrast between "good" and "evil." By 1933 negative caricatures of

they receive from the system... The subversive cartoonist is also required to attack all of the norms of the system," adds Charles Press, *The Political Cartoon* (East Brunswick 1981), 133.

businessmen and politicians and populist appraisals of farmers and workers were quite common in the liberal press. The *Star* and its pious Methodist editor, Joseph Atkinson, were especially concerned about the growing inequities between Torontonians, calling upon the wealthy to do their Christian duty and help those less fortunate than themselves.



Canadian Pub. Opinion: Roosevelt's not the only man that's troubled with those varmints.

Shields and the *Telegram* were far less critical than their rivals, and very few cartoons even hint of class. Though supposedly a "friend of the laborer," the *Telegram* never supported labour candidates, increases in relief rates, nor any other mechanism for aiding the unemployed that may have increased the taxes or diminished the power of the Toronto élite. The working-class was portrayed as an unsophisticated, uneducated mass totally dependent upon the ruling class. Cartoon #3 (25 April 1932) represents the kind-hearted nature of this paternalism as Shields expresses concern for the workers or the common good as symbolized by the progress of the train. CNR President Sir Henry Thornton is *analogically* turned into a luxurious and unnecessary passenger car that is slowing the progress of the entire train. Canadian everyman, Jack Canuck, suggests to the engineer that he should cut the "Thornton car" instead of the "workers" cars in the back in order to make it up the "Depression Grade" hill. However, this is not as altruistic as it first appears since Thornton was constantly being attacked for his excessive salary and general incompetence during a period when the railway's debt kept increasing. Although the *Telegram* stopped far short of suggesting a realignment of the power of production, it was quite critical of those corporate heads that arrogantly dismissed their workers' suffering while receiving record salaries. Nevertheless, this populist disavowal was only directed at those politically opposite to the *Telegram*. The *Telegram's* populist criticisms of corrupt politicians was an innocuous attempt to redirect the attention of the Canadian public away from the structural problems with their country's economic and political systems.

As the Depression wore on Canadians began to lose faith in their economic and political systems, clinging desperately to anything or anyone who offered a solution to the crisis. As Mackenzie King found out, maintaining the *status quo* was not an option that Canadians would tolerate. Promising to "blast a way into world markets"<sup>23</sup> by raising tariffs, R.B. Bennett and the Conservatives won impressive inroads into the Liberal strongholds of Québec and the Prairies and defeated King and the Liberals in July 1930.

The newly elected Conservative government moved quickly, calling a Special Session of Parliament just five weeks after the election, as Bennett hoped to make good on his ostentatious campaign promises. The government's first move was an across-the-board tariff hike, the second was the passage of a Relief Act that was to provide \$20 million for jointly funded relief projects. However, by increasing its tariffs Canada entered into a self-defeating economic war with the United States, Britain, and the rest of Europe since it cut off the markets for its key exports.<sup>24</sup> The Relief Act was equally damaging because it brought no change in stated jurisdic-

<sup>23</sup>Thompson and Seager, *Canada 1922-1939*, 202.

<sup>24</sup>In fact, Michiel Horn states that federal monetary policies were almost totally non-existent as Ottawa preferred to wage a type of economic war with the United States, Britain, and other industrialized countries: Michiel Horn, ed., "Introduction," *The Depression in Canada: Responses to Economic Crisis* (Toronto 1988), 5.

### THE HEAVY END



ENGINEER—"We can't make it; we must cut off a lot of those cars in the rear."

JACK CANUCK—"Why not cut off that private car in the front?"

tion; cash-strapped municipalities were to put up the majority of the cost of these projects. Since there was no major change in the Relief Acts of 1931-33,<sup>25</sup> most

<sup>25</sup>Struthers states that the 1930 Relief Act divided the costs of projects 50 per cent municipal, 25 per cent provincial, and 25 per cent federal. Although the main purpose of the 1931 Relief Act was to provide food and fuel for drought-stricken Southern Saskatchewan, it also included farm placement programs for single men, and committed the Federal government to put up 50¢ of every dollar spent, the rest to be split equally between the Province and the Municipality. The 1932 Relief Act began the "back to the land" projects for families in the cities. The Department of Immigration and Colonization along with the railways had helped 7406 families who had adequate capital to begin farming get established between 1930-1931. In May 1932, W.A. Gordon, Minister of Immigration and Colonization as well as Labour,

Canadian cities had to borrow money and sell bonds by 1931, and by 1932 many of these same cities were declaring bankruptcy.

Toronto was no exception to this downward trend as there was a marked decline in tax revenue throughout the 1930s. Assessments were lowered as the amount of arrears, defaults, and the total cost of relief kept increasing annually, but this did little to alleviate the worsening situation. In 1930 Toronto spent \$1.2 million on relief projects and a little less than \$400,000 on direct relief.<sup>26</sup> This predicament only compounded itself since the cost of relief rose annually while tax revenues and aid from the federal government kept declining, forcing municipalities to cut back on employees and their services, which worsened the problem still. As a result, almost every municipality in the metropolitan Toronto area fell into financial insolvency between 1932-34.<sup>27</sup>

Relief, however, was not the concern of all Torontonians as those in the professional and clerical occupations had the lowest levels of unemployment and despite suffering pay cuts they were often better off than before the Depression.<sup>28</sup> As a result many members of the upper classes seemed to be more concerned about how their tax dollars were being wasted on useless relief projects or, worse yet, stolen by fraudulent recipients of direct relief.<sup>29</sup> Depression issues and experiences were related to class divisions in society and were, in representational ways, actual surrogates for class and the tensions surrounding it in a capitalist order in crisis. Obviously, the most important and prevalent issues in the discourse of the day were

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initiated a scheme that gave \$600 to families wishing to get off relief by attempting to set up a farm: *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto 1983), 69.

<sup>26</sup>Roger E. Riendeau, "A Clash of Interests: Dependency and the Municipal Problem in the Great Depression," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 14 (Spring 1979), 51.

<sup>27</sup>Toronto, Forest Hill, and Swansea were the only exceptions: Roger E. Riendeau, "A Clash of Interests," 50.

<sup>28</sup>"Materially, at least, life was good to that minority who had the incomes that allowed them to take advantages of deflated prices and the glut of sellers in the labour market ... governments continued to rely mainly on time-tried indirect taxes which weighed more heavily on the poor than on the well-to-do or the comfortable middle-class." Michiel Horn, "The Great Depression: Past and Present," *The Depression in Canada*, 275. For unemployment by occupation group see: *Seventh Census of Canada, 1931* Table 87, 1304.

<sup>29</sup>Such concerns were reflected in official government policy as exemplified by the composition of, and suggestions made by the Henry government's Advisory Committee on Direct Relief as well as the federal government's Whitton Report in the Spring of 1932. These reports called for "standardized relief investigation and voucher forms, standardized residency requirements, and a 'planned policy' towards transients to eliminate the 'begging', 'panhandling', and 'anxiety caused by the presence of unknown and unattached men in the community.'" However, they did not establish any minimums of relief and even maximum ceilings were found by the Ontario Medical Association to be inadequate: James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970* (Toronto 1994), 84-88.

how to handle the massive levels of unemployment and the resultant demand for relief. This obvious class-based division of interests was reflected by the coverage of these issues in the editorial cartoons of the three Toronto newspapers:

TABLE 2

Paper	Totals	Unemployment	AVG	Relief	AVG	Crime	AVG
<b>Worker</b>							
1929	12	1	8.33%	0	0.00%	2	16.67%
1930	22	6	27.27%	3	13.64%	2	9.09%
1931	27	11	40.74%	4	14.81%	1	3.70%
1932	32	11	34.38%	10	31.25%	8	25.00%
1933	47	17	36.17%	15	31.91%	9	19.15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>32.86%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>22.86%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>15.71%</b>
<b>Star</b>							
1929	91	1	1.10%	0	0.00%	1	1.10%
1930	235	9	3.83%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
1931	221	24	10.86%	4	1.81%	3	1.36%
1932	228	12	5.26%	7	3.07%	6	2.63%
1933	223	7	3.00%	6	2.58%	4	1.72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1008</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>5.26%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.69%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1.40%</b>
<b>Telegram</b>							
1929	153	2	1.31%	2	1.31%	1	0.60%
1930	186	13	6.99%	8	4.30%	0	0.00%
1931	306	13	4.25%	12	3.92%	2	0.66%
1932	305	8	2.62%	4	1.31%	3	0.98%
1933	304	13	4.28%	11	3.62%	6	1.97%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1254</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>3.91%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2.95%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0.96%</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2402</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>14.01%</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>9.16%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>6.02%</b>

The Communists portrayed unemployment and relief in about a third of their cartoons since the party believed that they were signs of the coming collapse of bourgeois capitalism. The CPC also continually called on the federal government to establish a minimum standard of living across the country and organized as many people as it could to help generate support for this belief.<sup>30</sup> Few of the *Telegram's*

<sup>30</sup>The CPC, through its Workers' Unity League, continually demanded a non-contributory unemployment insurance policy, access to free health insurance and education, and a minimum wage for Canadian workers throughout the early 1930s. Its Farmers Unity League campaigned for insurance and rehabilitation to farmers ruined by the drought on the prairies as well as an assistance program for young farmers: CPC, *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976* (Toronto 1982), 68. The WUL was aided by many non-Party workers who were organized into the many Unemployed Councils

cartoons addressed unemployment, and when they did the majority were either critical of the King administration (1929-30) or were an endorsement of the efforts taken by the Conservative governments in Parliament, Queen's Park, and City Hall. Meanwhile, with the exception of 1931, when he spent a lot of time criticizing the Bennett government, the *Star's* Hawkes ignored the actual issues of unemployment and relief until 1932. This change, which also occurred in the other papers, coincided with an increase in unemployment, a cut in proposed relief expenditures,<sup>31</sup> a move from relief work to direct relief, infighting between the three levels of government, and a deeper sense of anger and despair on behalf of the Canadian public.<sup>32</sup> Yet, once again there is only the slightest of differences in the representation of issues in the *Evening Telegram* and the *Toronto Star* as both papers really only disagreed with each other on surface-level, partisan-based issues.

The cartoons of the two mainstream papers did not mention any of the rallies against unemployment, nor any of the organizations, such as the East York Workers Association,<sup>33</sup> which were the direct result of this situation. However, beginning in 1932, the *Star* did join the *Worker* in reflecting the concern of Harry Cassidy and the Unemployed Research Committee that relief provisions were not adequate for either meeting families' expenses or even providing a healthy diet.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, since many of the unemployed now had nothing except relief, an already demonstrated inadequate source of sustenance, many of them began to be evicted from their

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across Canada which were under the auspices of the National Unemployed Workers Association set up in July 1931: Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto 1975), 75.

<sup>31</sup>The 1931 Federal Relief Act only delivered \$28.2 instead of the \$50 million promised due to bureaucratic bungling and the federal government's financial concerns: Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 54-55.

<sup>32</sup>Although inexact, a reading of Barry Broadfoot's collection of recollections *Ten Lost Years 1929-1939. Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Depression* (Markham 1975) and the letters found in L.M. Grayson and Michael Bliss, ed., *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R.B. Bennett 1930-1935* (Toronto 1971), reveal that people were losing patience with the existing state of affairs.

<sup>33</sup>Founded during June 1931 the East York Workers' Association included study and discussion groups, deputations to city council, collective struggle for food, shelter and clothing. It also organized a Relief Strike from 5 November to 18 December 1935 but was defeated due to relief cuts. Patricia V. Schulz, *The East York Workers Association: A Response to the Great Depression* (Toronto 1975).

<sup>34</sup>"The food allowances for families were in many places not large enough to guarantee the maintenance of the members in health and efficiency. In no city that was studied did direct relief meet the full costs of maintenance of dependent families on an adequate minimum scale....," Harry Cassidy, *Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929-1932* (Toronto 1932), 213. Cassidy's report challenged Bennett's belief that unemployment could be solved by emergency measures and suggested the need for more substantial relief.

homes. As a result, most unemployed lost their relief, and fell on the mercy of their families or took to the road in search of work.

Politicians feared the large roving bands of single men, and believed them to be a source of disorder with a potential for revolutionary activity.<sup>35</sup> This fear of transients first prompted the development of provincial highway construction camps and later the federal relief camp system in order to remove these men from the cities and place them in the hinterland where they could harm nobody but themselves.<sup>36</sup> With the establishment of the relief camp system, "Conservative unemployment policy was now reduced to three essentials: maintaining law and order, forcing as many unemployed as possible out of the cities and back to the land, and preserving the country's credit rating."<sup>37</sup> Astonishingly, the *Worker* was the only paper of the three to include any cartoons on the relief camps during this period.

Perhaps nothing is more symbolic of the Great Depression than the ravaging unemployment and the various mechanisms of relief developed to combat the scourge of joblessness. Yet as we have seen, neither issue was particularly well addressed by the mainstream papers, as social issues such as the degradation of unemployment and relief, wage cuts, and evictions were almost solely the domain of the cartoons found in leftist papers.<sup>38</sup> In fact, even when Shields drew a cartoon about unemployment it was almost always either a politically partisan attack upon, or an appraisal of, a specific politician and/or his (in)action in combating the problem. Shields used *combination* and *mimetic* devices to show the heroic, strong,

<sup>35</sup>For instance, one of the many members of the RCMP assigned to spying on Communist and radical activity reported that although: "Communism among ex-soldiers remains confined to the Workers' Ex-Service Men's League... [it would be a big mistake] to analyse the strength of the revolutionary movement on the basis of the membership of the Communist Party, which, in my opinion, would be very unwise as the majority of the sympathisers are members of affiliated organizations who are continuously carrying on revolutionary propaganda." "Appendix # 1: Communism Among Ex-Soldiers," Québec Commander, *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-34*, Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds. (St. John's 1993), 46-47.

<sup>36</sup>The 1931 Unemployment and Farm Relief Act allowed for the employment of over 40,000 men in extending the Trans-Canada highway across Northern Ontario. However, as with many of the relief projects undertaken in the cities, the federal government often had to loan money to the provinces so that they could construct these camps even though they refused to take any direct responsibility over the situation. As a result these camps were absorbed into the Department of National Defence's system established in November 1932, Laurel Sefton MacDowell, "Relief Camp Workers in Ontario during the Great Depression of the 1930s," *Canadian Historical Review*, 76, (1995), 206.

<sup>37</sup>Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 95.

<sup>38</sup>This hints towards a national consensus as it concurs with the conclusions reached by Bettina Bradbury and Yolanda Kinsmill, "Poverty, Politics and the Press: A Cartoon History of the Depression Years in British Columbia." Unpublished paper, Vancouver, 1977.





and robust Bennett, Henry, and Stewart fighting off “politics” or the “unemployment dragon” or to depict the dumpy Prime Minister King irritating Jack Canuck by ignoring the problem by “looking at” the American situation.

The *Telegram*’s cartoons were never critical of the capitalist system. In Cartoon #4 (9 July 1931), the personified world is ridiculed for wandering off by itself and falling into the valley of “Depression” like an errant child. The suggested solution is that “capital”, “labor”, “pulpit”, “press”, “governing bodies”, and “an everybody” pitch in and pull the world back to the comfortable plane of “normalcy.” The *Telegram* expressed the view that the Depression was a normal, temporary correction in the global economic system but seemingly contradicted itself in its constant appeals for positive thought and collective effort. The ideal situation among the various segments of society was also a persistent theme of the *Telegram*: Shields never illustrated a single conflict between labour and capital in any of his cartoons

between 1929-1933. Shields and the *Telegram* remained staunchly pro-business, displaying little sympathy for the plight of the unemployed worker or those on relief. Such cartoons spoke volumes about the class character of the paper's audience.<sup>39</sup> The *Telegram* diffused relief and other controversial issues by urging understanding on behalf of Toronto's wealthy citizenry and to displace the antagonism generated by relief onto a few immoral politicians who selfishly took advantage of the situation.

The *Star* was almost equally partisan in its approach to unemployment as the very few cartoons on the subject during King's tenure hint that it was merely the normal seasonal pattern repeating itself. During Bennett's reign a far more critical stance was adopted, as the *Star* now believed unemployment was a significant problem that required more effective government intervention than the Conservatives were providing. The *Star* mocked the tariff raising policies of the Federal Tories as outdated and ineffective, maintaining a persistent call for more rational government intervention in order to stimulate the economy and create jobs. The neglect of Canadian veterans as seen in Cartoon #5 (29 Sept 1932), was a persistent theme of Hawkes since it was a powerful reminder of the failures of a government that could not even provide for the men from whom it asked so much. There is an overtly moralistic message in the contrast between the statue soldier at his most gallantly heroic moment and the wounded, unemployed veteran neglected not only by the government but by the Canadian public as well.<sup>40</sup>

The *Worker's* cartoons on unemployment were far more critical of the established political order and of the capitalist system in general. Unemployment was a systematic failure that represented yet another manifestation of the injustices of the capitalist socio-economic hierarchy and the class war it perpetuated. Since labour was also a commodity whose price declined with supply, unemployment was seen as a great benefit to the capitalist class. Paradoxically unemployment was seen as a sign of the collapse of the capitalist system and simultaneously as a catalyst for organizing the working class. This apparent contradiction is dealt with in Cartoon #6 (22 March 1930), which condenses capitalism and suggests that organizing the workers is the first step in the eventual revolution against the capitalist regime and the evils it produces. For Yanovsky and the CPC the choice was clear: if a worker followed the rules of the current order the best he could do was slavery, jail, or

<sup>39</sup>They also reflected actions taken by the government such as "Canadian Prosperity Week" during which cinemas showed a brief Bennett propaganda piece and allowed businessmen to go on stage between features to give inspirational speeches: Thompson and Seager, *Canada 1922-1939*, 209.

<sup>40</sup>Veterans conveyed a great deal of sympathy as well as fear as exemplified by a special fund-raising dinner held on 27 March 1930 that launched a campaign to raise \$50 000 for unemployed veterans in Toronto. Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Little Band: The Clashes between the Communists and the political and legal establishment in Canada, 1928-1932* (Ottawa 1982), 106.

**FLOWERS FOR THE DEAD, NEGLECT FOR THE LIVING**



Living Veteran: The lucky guy.

## EMPLOYING THE UNEMPLOYED :



death whereas if he helped organize his peers they could achieve a noble new order together. The CPC, through its WUL and NUWA, hoped that it could organize both the employed and unemployed workers in common cause against the state and the capitalist class it represented. Cartoons such as this one were part of a sustained drive that also included the organization of unions, unemployed councils, and a National Day of Protest against Unemployment.<sup>41</sup>

An ideological device employed in many of the *Worker's* cartoons was the faceless crowd, a common stylistic device of radical artists used to suggest the unity of purpose and natural solidarity of the working class. Very similar themes and stylistic devices were employed in the cartoons on relief because, to the communists, this issue was inseparable from unemployment. Perhaps more than any other issue, relief represented to the *Worker's* staff and audience the inequity of the capitalist system. Blame was accordingly apportioned to the ape-like, demi-human

<sup>41</sup>The National Day of protest occurred on 23 February 1931. The overall effects of the WUL are disputable since as one author states, "The major strikes during the early 1930's were nearly all in these industries (logging and sawmilling, coal and metal mining, textile manufacturing, shipping and longshoring) and, in most cases, under Communist leadership." Stuart Marshall Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66* (Ottawa 1968), 216. A more critical colleague suggests that, "The only lasting achievement of the WUL was the isolation of thousands of left-wing labor militants from the mainstream of Canadian labor." Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montréal 1981), 274.



capitalist who dishes out “slops” from a garbage bucket to the bread-line masses, while the state relief effort is sketched as an eye-dropper dangled, carrot-like, before an obviously malnourished family (8 July 1933). Cartoon #7 communicates the sense of desperateness of those collecting relief at the time, laying the accent on the relegation of relief’s cruel paucity. It is reflective of the popular CPC slogan “Fight or Starve” that often punctuated the pages of the *Worker* as the *analogic* “big hand” of government is finely outfitted in a suit and cufflinks as opposed to the thin, poorly clothed, malnourished working-class family.

The crime and the justice system category was highly politicized as it mostly dealt with the political “crimes” which fell under, and the debate around the administration of, Section 98 of the Criminal Code of Canada. Surprisingly, there were no cartoons on ordinary criminal activity. Perhaps this was because “the ‘crime wave’ predicted from the drifters never happened; like the rest of the economy, crime went into a slump in the 1930s.”<sup>42</sup> A few cartoons dealt with the Kingston Penitentiary riots and prison reform, as well as the preferential treatment of certain classes of inmates. However, the vast majority of cartoons dealt with the battle around the infamous Section 98 of the Criminal Code. Section 98 became entangled in an animated and sometimes bitter debate over the right to free speech:

<sup>42</sup>Thompson and Seager, *Canada 1922-1939*, 267.

Any association, organization, society or corporation, whose professed purpose or one of whose purposes is to bring about any governmental, industrial, or economic change within Canada by use of force, violence or physical injury ... or which shall by any means prosecute or pursue such purpose or professed purpose, or shall so teach, advocate, advise or defend, shall be an unlawful association.<sup>43</sup>

Anyone attending a meeting of, speaking about, distributing, printing, or selling the literature of, or even renting a room to, any organization suspected of committing such offences would also be guilty of the same criminal activity. Not only could such dissenters be arrested, but they could have all of their possessions seized by the Crown as well.

Throughout the early 1930s the free speech issue was of such tremendous importance in Toronto that it pitted the newspapers against one another and divided the city into two hostile camps. On the right, defending Section 98 and representing law and order, were Chief Draper and the Police Commission, Attorney-General W.H. Price, the Canadian Christian Crusade, Orange Lodge, Canadian Legion, *Globe, Mail and Empire*, and the *Telegram*. The left-liberal opposition consisted of the Toronto Trades and Labour Council, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, CCF, CPC, United Church's *New Outlook*, the *Canadian Forum*, the *Star*, and to some degree, *Saturday Night*.<sup>44</sup> The frequent source of editorials, letters to the editor, and even a petition from University of Toronto professors, the battle over Section 98 was quite intense for a while.<sup>45</sup> The editorial cartoons of the three papers reflected this intensity and communicated a great deal about the ideological stance of each. Most remarkably, however, only around one per cent of the cartoons found within the *Star* and the *Telegram* dealt with free speech and Section 98, as compared to 15 per cent of the *Worker's* cartoons.<sup>46</sup> From 1929-1931 Police Chief Draper

<sup>43</sup>John E. Crankshaw, *Crankshaw's Criminal Code of Canada* (Toronto 1935), 103-5.

<sup>44</sup>Both James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918*, 58. and Horn, "Free Speech Within the Law": the Letter of the Sixty-Eight Toronto Professors, 1931," *Ontario History*, 72 (March 1980), 28, concur on this basic division. The repercussions of this political polarisation were significant. Frank Scott and Eugene Forsey helped form the League for Social Reconstruction during the fall of 1931 and draft the manifesto of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in late 1932. See Michiel Horn, *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942* (Toronto 1980).

<sup>45</sup>The U of T petition concluded: "The attitude which the Toronto Police Commission has assumed towards the public discussion on social and political problems makes it clear that the right of free speech and free assembly is in danger of suppression in this city.... We wish to affirm our belief in the free public expression of opinions, however unpopular or erroneous." From *The Evening Telegram*, 15 January 1931, 1. This letter made the front page of every Toronto daily, and the debate around the issue continued to dominate the local news and editorial sections of these papers for several months.

<sup>46</sup>The enforcement of Section 98 threatened the very existence of the *Worker* and the CPC. A brief chronology of important events: Winter 1928-29 CPC refused halls — forced to campaign in the streets. January 1929 Ban on meetings held in a foreign language by Police

and his Red Squad's arrests of communists and other free-speech advocates in the public parks of Toronto were the subject of most of these cartoons.

For the CPC and the staff at the *Worker*, Section 98 represented the capitalist state's reactionary challenge to the right of all workers to organize as well as its panicked overkill assault against the communist challenge. In reality, its main effect was to force the party underground because Third Period dictates prohibited alliances with other "social fascistic" free speech advocates.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, after 1929 the communists supposedly could no longer organize demonstrations against Section 98, so they sought to challenge it in the court of public opinion via the *Worker*. These appeals became more frequent after the party was declared illegal, its headquarters and the offices of the *Worker* raided, and nine of its leaders arrested on 11 August 1931 on charges of conspiracy and sedition.<sup>48</sup> Their convictions, the attempt on Buck's life during a riot in Kingston Penitentiary, and the acquittal of A.E. Smith of the Canadian Labour Defense League generated enough public sympathy to ensure the release of Buck and the others and to eventually overturn Section 98 as well.<sup>49</sup> Cartoons in the *Worker* reflected both the sectarian substance of the Third Period and its militant appreciation of the politics of "class against class."<sup>50</sup> In fact, the *Worker* made great political capital out of the situation,

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Commission. 22 January 1929 CPC meeting busted up after Max Shur attempted to give speech in Yiddish. 22 February meeting busted up: CPC decided to step up confrontation during the spring. 1 August 1929 large demonstration for Peace at Queen's Park, Buck arrested before he could speak. Meetings on 13 and 27 of August also broken up by Toronto police before they could start. Betcherman, *The Little Band*, 14-68.

<sup>47</sup>Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks*, 264.

<sup>48</sup>After December 1929 when Aaro Vaara and *Vapaus* were found guilty of sedition CPC membership began to increase to around 1400 by mid 1931. On 23 February 1931 Minister of Justice Hugh Guthrie, Commissioner of the RCMP Colonel Starnes, Ontario Attorney-General Price, and Chief Draper met to make plans to destroy the CPC. 11 August 1931 raids on the HQ, WUL, *Worker*, arrest of members in Toronto (Boychuk, Buck, Hill, McEwen, Popovic, Cacic), Cochrane (Tom Hill), Calgary (Malcolm Bruce), and Vancouver (Sam Carr). 2 November 1931 Trial began: Buck called it "An Object Lesson in Bourgeois Justice", star witness was RCMP Spy Sergeant Leopold. 14 November 1931: all eight found guilty and sentenced to 5 years, except Cacic who received two years plus deportation: all CPC property seized was now forfeited. Betcherman, *The Little Band*, 69-171, and Andrew Parnaby and Gregory S. Kealey, "How the 'Reds' Got Their Man: The Communist Party Unmasks an RCMP Spy," *Labour/Le Travail* 40 (Fall 1997), 253-67.

<sup>49</sup>Included among its activities was a very militant petition signed by 196,356 workers and delivered to Prime Minister Bennett demanding not only "the release of Tim Buck and his seven comrades and of all class war prisoners" and an end to mass deportations, but "the resignation of your government, Mr. Bennett" as well. *Submission of the CLDL to the Dominion Government from the Bennett Papers*, in Michiel Horn, ed., *The Dirty Thirties: Canadians in the Great Depression* (Toronto 1972), 470-73.

<sup>50</sup>In late 1930 Stalin stated that Socialist parties were the "last reserve of the capitalist order" and "the moderate wing of fascism," a statement that symbolized the divisive Third Period

*Giving Them Their Orders!*

presenting the CPC as a martyr in a just cause in its editorials as well as its editorial cartoons.<sup>51</sup> This was partly due to the need to defend its leader and other Party stalwarts, but also out of financial concerns since "direct prosecutions for seditious libel and blasphemy proved not only ineffectual but positively boosted the sales of radical papers."<sup>52</sup>

An example of this manipulation of the party as a victim occurs in the customary characterisation of the capitalist in Cartoon #8 "Giving Them Their Orders" (26 April 1930), enhanced by *mimetic* portraits of the police caricatured with apish facial features and mechanized body movements.<sup>53</sup> The police seem particularly reprehensible because of their blind subservience to the evil capitalist, prompting them to ruthlessly flog the demonstrators whose only demand is "work or wages". As a result, the Communists typically referred to the police as "Bulls", "Cossacks", or worse, while the *Worker*, as the organ of the CPC, equated the shortcomings of the Canadian legal system with the injustices

of capitalism. Here as elsewhere the message was clear: organize and fight against the capitalists, but in doing so trust nobody except the true representative of the

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of the Comintern and the CPC. See both Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks*, 260-65 and Avakumovic, *The Communist Party of Canada*, 55-64.

<sup>51</sup>The *Worker* even ignored legal victories when they occurred. Betcherman, *The Little Band*, 69-85.

<sup>52</sup>James Curran, "The Press as an Agency of Social Control: An Historical Perspective," *Newspaper History from the seventeenth century to the present day* (London 1978), 61.

<sup>53</sup>The use of apes or ape-men is by no means exceptional as it was not only used to depict the Irish during Victorian times but, "Men have used apes and monkeys for seemly and unseemly comparisons with themselves since time immemorial..." L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington 1997), xxxiv. Indeed, the founder of 19th century criminal anthropology Lombroso argued "that criminals could be recognized by their morphological resemblance to apes." Leslie A. Zebrowitz, "Physical Appearance as a Basis of Stereotyping," *Stereotypes and Stereotyping* (New York 1996), 97 and 105. Thus, in an interesting turn of the tables The *Worker* portrayed the police as criminals, in the moral sense of the term if not legal.



Canadian worker, the Communist Party of Canada. This warning even applied to the communist comrades themselves as new recruits and organizers were given a pamphlet entitled "Rules for Party Work" that exhorted them to be careful and above all else, "Don't betray Party Work or Party Workers under any circumstances."<sup>54</sup>

The *Star* was cautiously supportive of organized labour but was even more in favour of the rule of law and in maintaining the *status quo*. It lamented the manner in which Chief Draper and the Police Commission were trampling on the rights of the citizens of Toronto: "The police are not an army of occupation governed by authorities who have no responsibility to the 'inhabitants'. The police administration is, or should be, the servant of the public,"<sup>55</sup> and constantly asserted the value of free speech in a democratic society.<sup>56</sup> The *Star* disliked Draper's conservative supporters as well as his suppression of public demonstrations and his interference with local candidates in the 1930 federal election.<sup>57</sup> The *Star* was the most vocal supporter of the protest letter of the 68 University of Toronto professors and the only daily paper in the city to support the communists' right to free speech.

Hawkes used some classic cartoon symbols in Cartoon #9 (18 September 1929) to demonstrate that the *Globe* and other voices of reaction were responding with undue repression, as the communists were really nothing to worry about. Political fear is gendered as the "hysteria" of the old woman Grandma Anderson of the *Globe*, while Canadian everyman, the embodiment of masculine virtue and fair-play, Jonnie Cannuck, looks on with disdain. The childlike challenge of an infantile leftism is condensed by being presented as a soapbox opposition too ineffectual to bother a seriously strong democratic order. As Joseph Atkinson editorialized: "The Reds we have in Toronto are few in number and small in consequence. They would amount to nothing if ignored."<sup>58</sup> Thus, the *Star* supported the principles of free

<sup>54</sup> Among the nine other rules were warnings not to keep names, addresses, incriminating literature, to not avoid yet do not take unnecessary risks during Party work, not to let spies follow you to meetings, and other suggestions on how to avoid the police. Purdy, *Radicals and Revolutionaries*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> "The Police and the Public", Editorial from the *Star*, 30 June 1930, 6.

<sup>56</sup> "...The right to free speech and the right of free assembly cost so much to get and have been of so great a value to the race that those who know anything about it cannot consent to have them thrown away." "The Professors Protest," Editorial from the *Star*, 16 January 1931, 6.

<sup>57</sup> "The *Star* waged an unending campaign against his roughshod methods. And since it was at the same time declaring that even a communist is entitled to the protection of the law... it was accused by panicky people of being an admirer of communism and of Russia." Harkness, *J.E. Atkinson of the Star*, 291.

<sup>58</sup> Atkinson continued, "They have been advertised all around the world by the policy of the Chief of Police and Commissioner Coatsworth. By calling out almost the entire police force of the city to prevent Tim Buck making a speech in Queen's Park... the impression was created... that Toronto was seething with Communism..." "The Professors Protest," Editorial from the *Star*, 16 January 1931, 6.

AN HYSTERICAL OLD LADY



Grandma Globe: "Dar' tae lay a han' on ma freen Jonnie Canuck, young mon, an' I'll set th' military on ye as weel as the polis."

speech and the rule of law but wavered in this support when the CPC was deemed an illegal organization in the fall of 1931. Again, the *Star* demonstrated that there was no real difference between itself and its supposedly ideological opposite, the *Evening Telegram*.

The *Telegram* was one of those frenzied groups that perceived and opposed Hawkes and the *Star* as open supporters of Bolshevism. The *Telegram* was ahead of its time in regards to the Canadian "Red Scare" as it frequently exaggerated the number of communists active in Canada, dramatized the horrors of the Soviet Union, and called anyone who opposed Section 98 a communist. It gave total support to Prime Minister Bennett's "iron heel" policy, it attacked the University of Toronto professors who petitioned against Section 98, it referred to the *Star* as the 'Daily Pravda' and 'Joe Stalin's Mouthpiece', and even suggested that the United Church was a Bolshevik-influenced organization.<sup>59</sup> Believing that communists were evil, unchristian, foreign agitators whose sole purpose was to destroy all sense of order and morality in Canada, the *Telegram* was a precursor of the Cold War. It was capable of tarring any liberal with the brush of communism and, in the early 1930s, targeted Joseph Atkinson of the *Star* and other political figures with considerable relish.

In Cartoon #10, "BIG BROTHER OF LITTLE RED" (15 August 1929) Shields depicts the communists as child-like, and therefore, insignificant. Symbolically, the libertine Atkinson has come down from his lofty new building to personally support the tyrannical reds. Communists were also represented as ugly, hairy, foreign barbarians who angrily scream out their "seditious" and "blasphemous" doctrines from their "soap boxes." Despite the fact that most of the CPC leadership originated from the British Isles, anti-Communist cartoons almost always depicted them as foreigners, usually Slavic, with foreign dress and rough facial features.<sup>60</sup> *Telegram* editorials added that the "Communists Should Not Be Assisted to Become Martyrs in Cause of Free Speech" and clarified that:

But if the reference of the educationists is to incidents which took place in Queen's Park in connection with gatherings of avowed Communists, the issue of free speech is not involved.

<sup>59</sup>Ron Poulton, *The Paper Tyrant: John Ross Robertson of the Toronto Telegram* (Toronto 1971), 198.

<sup>60</sup>The membership of the CPC was, however, mostly composed of "foreigners". Indeed, in the early 1930s Finns, Ukrainians, and Jews constituted between 80-90 per cent of the membership, a fact that was fortified over time since "The Depression contributed to the radicalization of East Europeans who had fewer savings and less well-developed technical skills [and less chance at getting relief] than Canadians of Anglo-Saxon extraction." Avakumovic, *The Communist Party of Canada*, 35 and 67. Moreover, "Since most Communists were known to be foreigners, it was erroneously assumed that most foreigners were Communists: in the case of both groups, prejudice and antipathy were compounded." Betcherman, *The Little Band*, 7.

The police are supported by a majority of the citizens in prohibiting, in a public place, a gathering which might lead to a breach of the peace.<sup>61</sup>

To the *Telegram* the “Reds” represented a foreign menace on Canadian soil, the only solution for which was to “send them back to where they came from.”<sup>62</sup>



Daily Star—"These Are My Jewels."

<sup>61</sup>Editorials from the 16 and 17 of January 1931 respectively, *Evening Telegram*, 6.

<sup>62</sup>Since its amendment in 1910 and popularization in 1919, Section 41 of the Immigration Act had been a favourite tool of the governing powers because deportation "served an important economic function for the state...[as it] helped to relieve employers, municipalities, and the state from the burdens of poverty, unemployment, and political unrest [since it]...got rid of workers when they became useless, surplus, or obstreperous." Although no precise tally was kept, Roberts suggests that several hundred, including CPC notables Tomo Cacic, Arvo Vaara, Martin Pohjansalo, and Dan Holmes, were deported from Canada during the 1930s when even naturalization was no defense against deportation. Barbara Roberts, "Shovelling Out the "Mutinous:" Political Deportation from Canada Before 1936," *Labour/Le Travail*, 18 (Fall 1986), 79 and 93.

### Conclusion

This brief comparison of the various class-based issues covered by the three papers reveals that there was no real difference between the *Star* and the *Telegram* in either the number of cartoons on a subject nor in the way each subject was treated within these same cartoons.<sup>63</sup> George Shields of the *Telegram* invested most of his efforts in depicting populist governmental policies such as tariffs and taxation and spent little time on other more social issues. D. Hawkes of the *Star* had a similar division of interests, the only difference being that he presented the Liberal Party view of these issues as opposed to the Conservative Party stress in the *Telegram*'s cartoons. The mainstream press surprisingly snubbed unemployment and relief as the need for positive spin on the Depression as well as a general reluctance to criticize the existing capitalist order prohibited such cartoons. The tenuous tone of Hawkes' cartoons and Shield's even more passive depiction of the unemployment and relief crises, combined with their condemnations of radicalism to offer support to the existing *status quo* within Canada. The *Worker* was the only paper to focus on social issues that highlighted class-conflict such as strikes, unemployment, relief, and housing. Yanovsky's cartoons represented the radical challenge to the established socio-economic and political order in Canada during the early 1930s, as well as socialist artistic conventions and approaches to class issues.

The antagonistic competition between the three papers' cartoonists was part of a larger struggle for legitimation or "the dialectic of cultural struggle" within Toronto during a period of intensified social, regional and cultural divisions as well as class and ethnic confrontations. Hawkes, Shields, and Yanovsky illustrated messages that competed with each other for the attention of Torontonians during the Depression. The three cartoonists worked to directly and subtly shape public opinion by setting the agenda, conferring status, manipulating mood, creating and reinforcing stereotypes, and mobilizing their audience into some sort of common action. This included depicting issues involving class as well as those associated with traditional class demarcations. Although not necessarily political, most of the cartoons reflected the social tensions, political partisanship, personal rivalries, and class struggle evident in Toronto and Canada as a whole during the early 1930s.

<sup>63</sup> Indeed, a review of the 52 different categories reveals the percentage of cartoons on various issues in the *Star* and *Telegram* are remarkably similar: socio-economic classes [+/- 0.12 per cent], depression relief [+/- 1.01 per cent], women and minorities [+/- 3.5 per cent], municipal [+/- 1.45 per cent] and [+/- 3.3 per cent] national/provincial issues, and general classifications such as "International, Economic, etc." [+/- 2.5 per cent]. Moreover, the only significant divergence occurs in the politician categories as the partisan nature of each mainstream paper affected whether it favoured a certain politician, and therefore illustrated him less than his rival.

*Suggestions for Further Research*

The majority of the work on editorial cartoons is of the more popular, *aficionado* sort with few thematic or analytical considerations, and is of generally questionable worth to the historian. Editorial cartoons are one of the least explored areas of cultural history. Most of the academic studies of the subject during the same period are devoted to British and American artists, with only very general overview texts available for Canadian cartoons. Moreover, none of the existing studies discuss class or schematic approaches to class or class-based issues. Whether or not there is any real difference in the cartoons of liberal and conservative papers has yet to be determined for this period or most others. The cartoons of newspapers with other political persuasions such as those of the fascist or neo-conservative press or those of various ethnic groups have also yet to be examined in the Canadian context.

Another area worth inquiring into is the public reaction to these popular images. Although difficult to locate, especially for earlier periods, communal or individual responses to certain editorial cartoons would reveal a lot about the social mores and collective mentality of a specific era. There seems to be ample evidence to suggest that a political polemic like that examined herein also existed during other times of crisis such as both world wars, but what about periods of relative peace and prosperity? The hypothesis that cartoons evolved stylistically and came to the fore during times of trouble appears to be an untested one. A final suggestion would be an examination of caricature stereotypes over long periods of time to see what they reveal about the common perceptions of various ethnic, professional and social groups.