

of organizing in southern Ontario that was symbolized by struggles such as Texpack, Artistic, Puretex, and Parent's work in NAC, are but examples of this political knowledge transfer. Some of Madeleine's and Kent's protégés, like Laurel Ritchie and John Lang, went into important work in the CAW; others, such as Rick Salutin, carved out artistic careers as critics of the status quo. There were those who walked picket lines with Madeleine and Kent who went on to make significant left-wing contributions to Canadian intellectual life, becoming, like Mel Watkins, salutary academic activists. And many more infused labour, community, and left circles with energy and ideas for years to come. When I wrote this piece, I looked over some of the documents from the archives involving the Texpack and Artistic strikes, and the arrest lists of those arraigned by the courts during these strikes caught my eye; they include many people who remained active in labour, women's, peace, and left causes for decades. To have nurtured and taught a legion of activists was one of Madeleine Parent's most important legacies. It is difficult indeed to categorize easily where Parent's bequest to subsequent generations in this area starts and ends. She was involved in such a range of causes and campaigns over the course of her life that her influence must be recognized as exceptionally broad, encompassing not only the labour-focused struggles I have been primarily concerned with here, but also First Nations women, racialized and immigrant women, international solidarity, and anti-imperialist struggles. For those of us reared in the socialist-feminist politics of the 1970s, however, Parent's work in the labour movement remains centrally important in her varied inspirations. It reminds us that we should question the easy path of mainstream consensus for labour, always keeping the vision of an anti-capitalist future somewhere within our political hopes and work.

Keynote Address, 18 May 2002, 50th Anniversary of Paul Robeson's Concert at the Peace Arch, Blaine, Washington/Douglas, British Columbia

Madeleine Parent

I stand here today under great stress because I dare, as you do – all of you, to fight for peace and for a decent life for all men, women, and children.

Paul Robeson, 18 May 1952

I'VE BEEN MANDATED TO BRING fraternal greetings to you from the Falconbridge Miners and Smelter Workers of Sudbury, Ontario. They are the survivors of the Mine-Mill Union tradition on the continent. In 1993 they voted to join the Canadian Auto Workers and are now called the "Sudbury

Mine-Mill and Smelter Worker's Union Local 598 CAW." I am proud to be a lifetime member of their Retirees' Chapter.

I had the privilege of hearing Paul Robeson in Montréal during wartime when he sang there and of meeting him at two private receptions. Half a century ago today, when Paul Robeson sang here, he did so in solidarity with the Mine-Mill and Smelter Workers' Union, which the mining bosses had decided to destroy.

In 1952 the Cold War was at its height in the USA and spilled over into Canada, distracting many people from their dream of peace and of building a freer and more humane social order. Sir Winston Churchill had gone to Fulton, Missouri USA where, in a dramatic speech, he accused a wartime ally, the Soviet Union, of drawing "An Iron Curtain" across the middle of Europe and threatening our own freedoms across the Atlantic. Churchill's speech shocked thousands of people and launched the Cold War that was to serve as a justification for re-armament in place of social policies and progressive programs.

In the US, Senator Joseph McCarthy launched a witch-hunt by the Committee on Un-American Activities against those who worked to build a more humane society. McCarthy ordered individuals to appear and turned the spotlight on each of them. Unless persons responded as strong anti-communists and gave damaging information on friends, relatives and acquaintances, they were under suspicion and in jeopardy. The FBI obliged by tracking down men such as the great scientist Albert Einstein, [who] had joined Paul Robeson in efforts to stop the lynching of Black men.

Paul was devoted to the struggle for justice of his own people and he extended his solidarity to all others who suffered injustice. He would join their struggle wherever he could. Robeson had developed an articulate English diction and played masterfully the title role in the Shakespearean tragedy, *Othello*. And as we have all heard, he also acquired a magnificent bass singing voice, which he used to get his message across.

If he were alive today, Paul Robeson would commit his persuasive speaking and singing in the cause of peace and oppose George W. Bush's call for continuing wars against those he says are "terrorists." He would denounce Bush's growing list of enemies in his war against the so-called "Axis of Evil." From Afghanistan, Bush threatens again oil-rich Iraq and Libya, also Iran, North Korea, Syria and Somalia and it can be expected that he will add more to the list.

Today, Robeson would plead for peace for the Palestinian people and denounce Ariel Sharon's aggression with weapons supplied by the USA. He would appeal for help from industrial countries to poor nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, further impoverished by policies of the globalization of commerce, by the World Bank, and other financial institutions.

I congratulate you in BC for standing up against the Campbell government's attacks on the *Labour Code* that would put working people still more at the



Madeleine Parent
at the inauguration
of the *Maison*
Parent-Roback,
1988

mercy of ruthless employers. Congratulations also in your protests against the privatization of hospitals, protests against allowing bosses greater freedom to contract out work, and protests against changes that threaten pay equity and job security. I hope you can build greater unity between public-sector and private-sector workers, knowing as we do, that when a government takes away previous gains from one sector it is only a matter of time before it evokes the precedent to take away comparable gains made by another sector.

Labour unity is further enhanced by solidarity with organizations in the community of women, seniors, minorities, of young people, concerned about the environment and their future.

As the federal government abandons more and more of our country's independence to Washington's strategy of joint US-Canada military command, leading to greater military control over Canada, we must support those organizations dedicated to protecting our population against further US control. Such policies are no help to us and they are no help to the American people. They only lead to more control over all of us by the hawks.

We must defend the right of all people to clean air and drinking water, as primary rights to life itself. We must strengthen solidarities with the Native peoples, still and always threatened with betrayal of their rights. We must work more closely from province to province to defend our democratic rights and statutory freedoms. If the issues are explained well, more people from Québec would cross the Ottawa River to join you in protest on Parliament Hill.

I want to express solidarity with those Americans who stand for peace and the priority of social and human rights policies over the hawkish plans of the Bush administration.

Un salut chaleureux à mes cousins et cousines de langue française.

Je souhaite que la direction de Radio-Canada enlève bientôt le bâillon sur la bouche de nos travailleurs culturels du Québec et de l'Acadie afin qu'on puisse s'entendre parler d'un but à l'autre du Canada que les autorités se vantent d'être bilingue.