

Communications

Labour Sources in the UBC Library's Special Collections Division

by GEORGE BRANDAK

Primary sources relating particularly to the labour movement¹ have been deposited in the Special Collections Division for more than thirteen years. In 1961, one year after the opening of a suitable facility in the south wing of the Main Library, Basil Stuart-Stubbs, the first head of the division, characterized the collection as "general Canadiana, strong in source material for a number of topics: British Columbia, the fur trade, the War of 1812, the Riel Rebellion, the 1837 Rebellion, and Canadian travel and description to 1900."² Emphasizing its Canadian holdings, the division continued to build upon its strength. In addition to printed material, it seemed inevitable that manuscripts, photographs, sound recordings, and cartographic records would be acquired in the future.³

The University of British Columbia (UBC) library did not immediately launch a specific programme to acquire material for the study of the labour movement, but it already held some items useful to labour research. For example, although the papers of Judge Frederic Howay refer mainly to the history of western Canada and the northwest coast of America in general, they include many specific British Columbian items such as the typescript of trials resulting from the Ladysmith riots in 1913, at which Judge Howay presided, dealing with a turbulent period in the coal miners' struggles on Vancouver Island. The papers of Simon Fraser Tolmie, Premier of British

1 Since the labour movement in British Columbia has been composed mainly of two wings—union and political—this paper will concentrate on the acquisition of material relating to these two elements. The cooperative wing has never been as prominent in British Columbia as in other regions.

2 Laurenda Daniells, "The Special Collections of the Library of U.B.C.," *British Columbia Library Quarterly* 4 (Spring 1973): 52.

3 With the expansion and increased use of the holdings, the staff has grown to include five professionals and four library assistants. All manuscript materials created by the university and the papers of its faculty are the responsibility of the University Archivist. Other manuscript materials are handled by the Curator of Manuscripts.

Columbia, 1928-33, contain subject files and newspaper clippings referring to unemployment, 1931-33, correspondence with the Department of Labour, 1930-33, and a file marked, "Aliens," 1918-19, created during his tenure as a Victoria MP, 1917-28.

Collection development in any specialized area requires the drive and interest of enthusiastic individuals, as well as the availability of papers and the cooperation of their owners. In UBC's case, the catalysts were faculty, students, and community members studying political and labour development in British Columbia. In particular, Dr. Walter Young of the Department of Political Science was influential in bringing important material on left-wing political action to the university. He was primarily responsible for getting the Boag Foundation to donate the records of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) to UBC in 1963.

The records which Young and others attracted were extremely rich on the activities of the political left, activities which frequently were related to the aims of the labour movement. Included in these records are minutes, resolutions, incoming and outgoing correspondence with elected members, organizational files, subject files, publications, photographs, and related material of the provincial office⁴ and various constituency offices and CCF clubs, as well as executive and convention reports of the Independent Labour Party, 1925-33, and of the Socialist Party of Canada, British Columbia Section, 1931-35. The personal papers of two prominent politicians, both active in the trade union movement prior to their political careers—Angus MacInnis, Vancouver South MP, 1930-57, and Ernest E. Winch, Burnaby MLA, 1933-57—were also transferred to the division. The papers of both men reflect their interest in working conditions and standards of living among the labouring class. MacInnis and Winch were greatly concerned with the operation of relief camps and the dilemma of the unemployed in the 1930s and applied broad terms of reference to their duties as elected public servants. Angus MacInnis opposed the harsh treatment of the Japanese Canadians by the Federal Government. The files of Ernest Winch reflect his opinions and actions on the issues of prison reform, housing for senior citizens, the trapping of fur-bearing animals as well as other controversial issues. Prior to their transfer from Boag House, the Ernest Winch Papers were used by Dorothy Gretchen Steeves during her research for *The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest E. Winch and His Times*, published in 1960. Her notes and papers gathered on the "Old Brigade" of early socialists such as Ernest Burns and John Burrough were placed in Boag House and were later deposited in the library.

4 Among the records of the provincial office were two files containing the personal correspondence of Arthur J. Turner, Vancouver East MLA, 1941-66, and Arnold Webster, Vancouver East MLA, 1953-56, and Vancouver-Kingsway MP, 1962-65. As much of the material in the subject files for 1953-56 reflects the interests of Arnold Webster, his files may have been intermingled with those of the provincial office.

The records transferred from Boag House were designated the Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection.⁵ With a grant from the Boag Foundation, Walter Young added to the collection such material as the personal correspondence, articles and speeches of Frank McKenzie, CCF Provincial Secretary, 1942-48, and CCF Provincial President, 1954-56.⁶ The papers of Evelyn Grey Smith are particularly helpful in assessing the direction of the party in the area of political education, 1949-51. Typescripts of some one-act dramas performed by workers' theatre groups in Vancouver are included in the papers of Arthur J. Turner, Vancouver East MLA, 1941-66. The titles—"Box Car," "Fish Scales," "The Great Money Trick," "Big Business," and "Oscar Sapp,"—imply that the plays were intended to impart a social message.⁷

An arrangement by Walter Young with Ernest Hall, a former Provincial Secretary of the New Democratic Party (NDP) of British Columbia, that the party's records should be included in the MacInnis Memorial Collection facilitated the deposit of these records, 1960-71, in the division. Some CCF records and CCF/NDP transitional material were included. In 1975, the records of the British Columbia Young New Democrats, 1966-74, were transferred from their New Westminster office to the division. The minutes, financial records, correspondence, subject files, press releases, and printed material fully document the activities of the party youth. For the earlier period, material on the Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement may be found among the CCF records and the Leonard Shephard Papers.

Subsequent acquisitions have augmented the information relating to the CCF movement provided by earlier contributors to the Angus MacInnis

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- 5 Walter Young arranged for the title of the collection, and the University Librarian wrote a letter to Mrs. Grace MacInnis thanking her for consent to use the name. He stated that "It is most appropriate that the name of such a distinguished public servant should be attached to what we hope will become an important resource for the study of the contribution of the left to B.C. and Canadian politics." Basil Stuart-Stubbs to MacInnis, 22 June 1964, Special Collections Division records, Special Collections Division, UBC Library.
 - 6 Although later accessions relating to the CCF movement have been designated as part of the Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection when specified by the donor, they have been accessioned and entered in the *Union List of Manuscripts* as separate holdings rather than incorporated into the material obtained from Boag House. Separate unpublished findings aids have been prepared. The introduction to the unpublished inventory of the Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection contains a list of significant holdings that have contributed to the collection, but are not included in that inventory.
 - 7 Apparently "The Great Money Trick" was well received and played about twenty times in the area. For further information, see the transcript of an aural history interview with Arthur Turner by Marlene Karnouk, No. 251, 2-2, pp. 4-7, Special Collections Division, UBC Library. The original tape is stored in the Aural History Division, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C.

STRIKE BULLETIN

Mass Meeting OF RETAIL CLERKS TUESDAY NEXT

Meeting Place will be Announced Later



Strike Bulletin, No. 12, 19 June 1919, p. 4. This bulletin was published in Vancouver by order of the Central Strike Committee of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Congress during the Winnipeg General Strike to keep workers informed of developments. It is an example of the many labour-related items in the Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection. (Box 36, Folder 12B, Special Collections Division, UBC Library)

Memorial Collection. The papers of Dorothy Gretchen Steeves, Vancouver North MLA, 1934-45, deposited in 1976, contain further information on the Socialist Party of Canada and the CCF. The correspondence and subject files of Leonard Shephard, Delta MLA, 1937-45, refer to many issues raised during his term of office, especially concerning agriculture. Constitution and by-laws of the Industrial Union, Ruskin, B.C., photographs of early socialists, and general correspondence and newspaper clippings reflect the long-standing interest of the Ormond Lee Charlton family in the cooperative and CCF movements. The 1930s speeches of Lyle Telford, Vancouver East MLA, 1937-41, document his advocacy of better conditions for the poor and unemployed as well as his own socialist position.

In addition to the efforts of the early socialists and CCF movements, the Communist Party of British Columbia has attempted to improve the lot of the working class. The donation of the William Bennett Memorial Library in 1966 consisted of an excellent collection of pamphlets on the early socialist, communist, and labour movements in British Columbia. It included the library of the former leader of the B.C. communists, as well as many additional volumes from the libraries of Bert Padgham, Bill Shaw, Ken Gibson, and Alf Padgham, former custodian of the Bennett Library.⁸ In 1972, the division received the papers of Malcolm Bruce, a past president of the B.C. communists, containing minutes, correspondence, notes, addresses, and printed material. Although a small collection, it provides valuable information on various organizations such as the Socialist Workers Party, League for Socialist Action, Canadian Socialist Educational League, Spartacist League, and the Labour Progressive Party.

Despite the preponderance of materials documenting labour-oriented political movements, the university did not ignore the acquisition of union material. An informal committee on labour historical sources played a significant role in this programme. An agenda for a committee meeting shortly after the deposit of material from Boag House mentions forthcoming reports by students on their studies relating to B.C. labour and politics, a report on the contents of the MacInnis Memorial Collection, a discussion of areas needing further research, the technical problems of handling correspondence and transcribing tapes, and a list of contacts which might lead to further acquisitions. Paul Phillips, a group member, solicited the minutes, 1937-47, and correspondence, 1914-30, of the Prince Rupert Trades and Labour Council in 1965, which included the 1922 minutes and cash book of the Prince Rupert Civic Employees Union. Bill Pickett, in cooperation with the British Columbia Federation of Labour, accumulated about forty hours of recorded interviews with

8 "Bill Bennett Library Now Housed at UBC," *Pacific Tribune*, 25 November 1966, p. 11.

members of the union movement.⁹ Walter Young arranged for the transfer of the minute books of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council (VTLC)/Vancouver, New Westminster and District Trades and Labor Council, 1889-1956.¹⁰ The Council also deposited other minute books in its possession: those of the Vancouver Labour Temple, 1909-20; Directors of the *British Columbia Federationist*, 1912-22; Refinery Oil Workers' Union, 1918-21; and Parliamentary Committee of the VTLC, 1925-34. The function of the Parliamentary Committee was to bring before the Provincial Government and municipalities matters of concern to the council such as minimum wages, health insurance, and workmen's compensation. In the minutes of 11 March 1926, for example, the committee recommended recognition for chiropractors in compensation cases, enforcement of the Curfew Law to prevent small children from being on the streets at late hours, and legislation prohibiting boys under the age of sixteen years from selling newspapers on the streets.

The concern of a few members of the faculty and of the community sympathetic toward the preservation of labour records had an important bearing on the acquisition of the records of a major Canadian union—the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (Canada). Owing to the forthcoming takeover by the United Steel Workers of America of the Mine-Mill union, the National Executive Board of the latter body established a Historical Commission to search for a suitable repository to house the union's historical records and to provide facilities for historical research.¹¹ On 12 November 1966, the National Executive Board appointed Emil Bjarnason of the Trade Union Research Bureau, Vancouver, F.E. Devito of Trail, and Lukin Robinson, former Mine-Mill Research Director, to the commission, which finally decided to deposit the union's records with the University of British Columbia on condition that the records would be available to the miners and to students of the labour movement. The locals were advised of the following:

It will not be possible for members of the Commission to visit all locals of the Union. Every local, however, will be in possession of documents and records that

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- 9 Sixteen persons were interviewed: Firemen Percy Trerise and Harry Woodside; Street Railwaymen C.M. Stewart and Jack Harrington, J.M. Campbell, Fred Hoppe, and Jack McVicar of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Alfred Nuttal of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Bob Smeal with single unemployed associations, and Horace Mackie, Harry Neelands, Chris Pritchard, W.A. Pritchard, Bob Skinner, H.H. Stevens, and Arthur Turner.
- 10 Minutes of the regular meetings, 17 December 1897 to 20 March 1902 and 20 January 1916 to 7 August 1919, are missing. The Executive Board minutes, 1907-20, provide information for the gap in documentation. The minutes, with the exception of the missing volumes, are available on microfilm at the Vancouver City Archives.
- 11 William Longridge, Secretary Treasurer of Mine-Mill, to all local unions and auxiliaries, 21 June 1967, Special Collections Division records, Special Collections Division, UBC Library.

are of importance to the history of the labour movement and which should form part of the archives. In particular, agreements, minute books, briefs, significant correspondence, pamphlets, leaflets and other strike materials, pictures, transcripts of important court cases or investigations. In some instances, books of account and . . . audit reports may be of importance. These latter, however, as well as minute books should be retained in the local if they are less than seven years old.¹²

Records from the national office in Toronto arrived in August 1967 and the collection was supplemented in 1968 when B.C. locals from Bralorne, Trail, Britannia, and Kimberley (which includes Riondel and Spillimacheen) and various sub-locals complied with the commission's decision by sending their records to UBC. The records of the B.C. and Western District Union, 1942-67, and of Local 564, Dawson, Yukon Territory, arrived in 1969, followed by material from Local 649, Copper Mountain, Local 901, Nelson-Salmo, the Calgary office, including Alberta and Saskatchewan Locals 800, 807, 864, 865, 881, 895, 909, and 913, and the International Office in Denver including semi-monthly reports of representatives in Canada, 1949-55. After receiving a letter from the President of the Sudbury Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union, Local 598, stating that "I believe the University of British Columbia is the natural repository for our history and I certainly would be glad to do everything I could to add to your collection,"¹³ the local's records began arriving in 1973. From the Kootenays, the records of District Association No. 6, Western Federation of Miners, and, in particular, the records of the Sandon Miners' Union and Rossland Miners' Union, were sent to UBC by Mine-Mill locals.¹⁴

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- 12 Emil Bjarnason, Secretary of the Historical Commission, to all locals, 19 June 1967, Special Collections Division records, Special Collections Division, UBC Library.
- 13 Jim Tester to Robert W. Miner, 15 September 1972, Special Collections Divisions records, Special Collections Division, UBC Library. An unpublished inventory of their records was prepared in 1976 and sent to the Sudbury Local and the Provincial Archives of Ontario which had acquired considerable material from the Sudbury Local in 1968. Aside from the minute books, 1943-63, most of the records at UBC are within the 1958-72 period.
- 14 Correspondence and reports relating to the activities of District No. 6 are among the records of the Sandon Miners' Union as the secretaries of that union were involved in the association's affairs while carrying out their regular duties. Within the records of the Sandon Miners' Union, subgroups were established for the records of the Sandon Miners' Union Hospital and the Socialist Party of Canada, 1906-15. A. Shilland, Secretary of the Union, was the party's candidate in the provincial election of 1912. Information on the One Big Union is available in the records of the Sandon Miners' Union, Metal Miners' Unit of the One Big Union, 1919-33, which consist of Executive Board minutes, financial records, general circulars and other letters sent to the Secretary, T.B. Roberts. The files of the Greenwood Miners' Union, 1909-10, are not the records of the union, but mainly correspondence between officials of the British Columbia Copper Company relating to company actions in labour disputes. Correspondents include Newman Erb, President of B.C. Copper Company, New

Many references to labour's past activities can be found in material acquired for reasons other than labour content. The Japanese Canadian Manuscript Collection includes records of the Camp and Mill Worker's Federal Labour Union, No. 31, Vancouver, 1920-42, and letters, notes, and documents relating to the activities of the Skeena Fisherman's Association, 1929-42. A letterbook of Thomas Ellis Ladner pertaining to his activities as manager of the Wellington Packing Company at Canoe Pass, 1892-96, refers to workers in the fishing industry. Minute books of the B.C. Salmon Cannery Association, 1900-28, include information about labour relations. The financial records of the Anglo-British Columbia Packing Company, 1891-1967, and J.H. Todd and Sons Company, 1910-54, include statistical data on the labour force.¹⁵ Among the records of the Insurer's Advisory Organization—Pacific Region, insurance plans on canneries on the B.C. coast in 1923, illustrate work sites.

A letterbook in the Won Alexander Cumyow papers pertaining to his various business, civic, and personal duties, 1888-1905, provides detailed information about the Chinese labour force. Personal interviews and subject files on the history of logging in B.C. in the research collection of Chauncey D. Orchard refer to camp life, cook houses, wages, and living conditions in the woods.¹⁶ The papers of the poet A.M. Stephen contain issues of the *British Columbia "Job-Seekers" Journal* (1938), *Post Office "Sitdowner's" Gazette* (1938), and the *Victoria Jobless Journal* (1938). The minute books of the Wells Townsite Company, 1949-70, a subsidiary of the Cariboo Gold Quartz Mining Company, relate to housing conditions for workers in a company town.¹⁷ In addition to extensive documentation on various phases of labour negotiations between street railwaymen and management, the records of the British Columbia Electric Railway Company contain files on the company's housing assistance programme to employees. The Western Power of Canada Company records include information on labour disputes between the company and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).¹⁸ The papers of John Wallace

15 Further statistical information on cannery operations can be found in the Henry Doyle Papers and among various cannery ledgers, 1903-40, deposited by the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission.

16 Chauncey D. Orchard compiled a card index and a glossary of logging terms for his research collection. Before using the collection, a researcher should consult Orchard's index as well as the unpublished inventory.

17 Extensive records of the company, 1934-71, are also available at the Vancouver City Archives.

18 The IBEW was a bargaining agent for employees of the Western Power of Canada Company. Files on the 1918-19 labour disputes contain information on the company's labour policy, wages, correspondence with the Employees Association of British Columbia, and issues of the *Vancouver Citizen* ("published without fear or favour by the Citizens League") in 1919. British Columbia Electric Railway records, Box 93, Special Collections Division, UBC Library.

de Buque Farris, lawyer, B.C. Attorney General, and senator, provide correspondence and reports on negotiations for wages and a two-week paid vacation by the Projectionist's Society, Local No. 348, with Famous Players Canadian Corporation, 1941-43. The papers of Frank Buck, UBC Professor of horticulture, refer to the hiring of relief camp workers for landscaping projects on the university grounds.¹⁹

Archival sources in other repositories should be used in relation to collections found in the Special Collections Division. For example, Cominco records, provincial police records, and departmental records in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Mine-Mill (U.S.) records at the University of Colorado, mining records at the Rossland Historical Museum, papers in the Manuscript Division of the Public Archives of Canada and records listed by the Public Records Division of the PAC in *Material Relevant to British Columbia Labour History in RG 27, Canada Department of Labour Records* (1975), contain additional information on the Mine-Mill Union and its predecessor, the Western Federation of Miners, in British Columbia.

Extensive use has been made of the division's labour sources by undergraduate and graduate students, academics, writers, media persons, and individuals with a general interest in labour history. Typical areas of interest are: the history of socialism and communism in B.C., the role of the CCF and NDP in B.C. politics, provincial elections, various aspects of the labour movement, and prominent strikes.²⁰ Theses in progress include: "The Origins and Extent of Western Labour Radicalism," "Social Attitudes of B.C. Trade Unions Prior to 1914," "Left Wing Unionism: A

19 Further information, such as dates, size, and general descriptions of many of the holdings mentioned, can be found in the following: the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories; Major Manuscript Collections Relating to Canadian Studies in the Libraries of Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia, and University of Victoria* (1975); and R.G. Hann et al., *Primary Sources in Working Class History, 1860-1930* (Kitchener, 1973).

Canadian Newspapers in the UBC Library (Reference Guide 52, 1974) lists ethnic newspapers and mining newspapers published during the Kootenay mining boom of the 1890s and early 1900s not listed in *Primary Sources . . . , 1860-1930*. Since the reference guide included only newspapers with complete runs or many issues, ten mining newspapers, including the *Lardo Reporter* (1893), *Sandon and Cody Paystreak* (1897-1902), *Silvertonian* and various Kaslo newspapers were not listed. For similar reasons, other newspapers such as the *Vancouver Citizen* (1919), *Critic* (1919), and a relief camp newspaper, *Otter Pointer* (1933-35), were not noted.

20 For example, a student in the Institute of Industrial Relations used various sources in developing a model for the Rossland Strike of 1901 from the union's point of view. Various interpretations of the event were discovered among the records of the Rossland and Sandon Miners' Union, the Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, and an interview with Harry Woodside, brother of Frank Woodside, Secretary of the Rossland Miners' Union during that period.

Comparison of Washington and British Columbia," "Company Towns in British Columbia," "A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1928-1933," "Organizing the Unemployed in the 1930s," and "The Chinese Labour Force in British Columbia."²¹ Publications have varied from general studies such as *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia* (1967) to specific subjects such as the One Big Union and B.C. locals of the Western Federation of Miners.²² Several film documentaries and slide kits on the history of the labour movement have been prepared for use in the schools of the province.

Union members have used the material for research purposes and general interest. The Women's Auxiliary of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union combed the holdings for material on women in the trade union movement for a book to be published in the near future. One union's officials checked files for arbitration board evidence relevant to a present case. Another union analysed the raiding practices of the United Steelworkers of America using the Mine-Mill records.

One of the major results of the acquisition of labour records and papers is the development of a very broad and varied collection policy because labour encompasses so many activities, ideas, individuals, and organizations. It is also an area in which it is extremely difficult to acquire source material. Most archivists would echo the sentiments of Dorothy Gretchen Steeves when she wrote:

During the course of my researches I discovered that a great many valuable records of B.C.'s early labor and socialist history are no longer available or difficult to locate. I appeal to all who possess letters, papers or documents of any kind which may pertain to social or political history not to destroy them in backyard bonfires, but to give them to an appropriate library or collection of archives where they can be examined and preserved for posterity.²³

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- 21 This selected list of thesis topics was compiled from permission forms signed by persons requesting permission to use the manuscript collections, 1968-76. See also Frances Woodward, *Theses on British Columbia History and Related Subjects*, Reference Publication, No. 35 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Library, 1971), of which an up-date is being prepared. A list of theses completed in 1974 has been published in *BC Studies* 28 (Winter 1975-76), and those completed in 1975 will be published in *BC Studies* 33 (Spring, 1977).
- 22 For a recent article that has made excellent use of the Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, see Walter Young, "Ideology, Personality and the Origin of the CCF in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 32 (Winter 1976-77): 139-162.
- 23 Dorothy Gretchen Steeves, *The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest E. Winch and His Times* (Vancouver, 1960), p. ix.