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Confronting the Cold War: The 1950 Vancouver Convention of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation



Abstract: The 1950 Vancouver convention of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) opened against the backdrop of the Korean War and tense Cold War debates within Canada's social democratic party. Providing a window into this moment of ideological tension, the gathering demonstrates how leftists sought to forge domestic and foreign policies amenable to the narrow public opinion of the McCarthy era. The convention also illuminates the complex character of British Columbia's postwar left and the broader intellectual and political milieu of the early Cold War years in Canada – debates over the prohibition of atomic weapons and the relationship between markets and the state that would culminate in the CCF's Winnipeg Declaration of Principles later in the 1950s. Finally, the Vancouver convention highlights the role of Trotskyists within the CCF, a strategy of 'entryism' that has been explored only peripherally in the historiography of social democracy in Canada. The ideological confrontation at Vancouver left the CCF squarely in the hands of 'moderates,' shaping CCF strategy and policy for its final decade of political activity, while muting the Canadian left's independent voice in domestic and international affairs.

Keywords: Cold War, social democracy, Canadian politics, Trotskyism, labour

Résumé : En 1950, le congrès de la Fédération du commonwealth coopératif (CCF) a eu lieu à Vancouver, avec pour toile de fond la guerre de Corée et les débats tendus de la guerre froide au sein du parti socialiste démocratique social du Canada. Ce rassemblement ouvre une fenêtre sur ce moment de tension idéologique et démontre comment les gauchistes ont cherché à forger des politiques intérieures et étrangères qui sauraient rallier l'opinion publique plus marginale de l'époque du Maccarthisme. Le congrès offre aussi un nouvel éclairage sur le caractère complexe de l'après-guerre en Colombie-Britannique et le milieu intellectuel et politique plus vaste des premières années de la guerre froide au Canada – débats sur l'interdiction des armes atomiques et sur la relation entre les marchés et l'État qui allaient culminer durant les années 1950 avec la Déclaration de principes de Winnipeg. Enfin, le congrès de Vancouver souligne le rôle des trotskistes au sein de la CCF, une stratégie d'entrisme qui n'a été explorée qu'en périphérie dans l'historiographie de la social-démocratie au Canada. La confrontation idéologique à

Vancouver a laissé le CCF aux mains des 'modérés', qui façonnèrent sa stratégie et ses politiques de la CCF durant la dernière décennie de son activité politique, tout en tempérant la voix indépendante de l'aile gauche canadienne dans les affaires intérieures et internationales.

Mots clés : guerre froide, social-démocratie, politiques canadiennes, trotskisme, travail

At the end of July 1950, two hundred Canadian socialists converged on the Hotel Vancouver for a political meeting. The Korean War had erupted a month earlier, imbuing the gathering with a sense of urgency, as the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the country as a whole debated whether to join the United Nations' military action against the communist North. The Cold War was in full swing and CCF leaders sought to move party policy in line with public opinion, a move vigorously opposed by leftists who controlled the British Columbia section. 'The 1950 CCF convention was important in CCF history,' Party Secretary David Lewis recalls in his memoirs.¹ On topics ranging from Korea to the banning of atomic weapons to the role of private enterprise in postwar Canada, leftists and 'moderates' clashed. Unbeknownst to most delegates at the Hotel Vancouver, there was a third force in their ranks, a handful of Trotskyists belonging to the Revolutionary Workers' Party (RWP), a small but organized element in Canadian working-class politics and an affiliate of the Fourth International. Pursuing a strategy of 'entryism' in social democracy, the Trotskyists made common cause with left wing CCFers, 'a tactical maneuver designed to overcome the general isolation that the revolutionary vanguard finds itself in today.'² The product of this unique encounter at Vancouver was a deepening of ideological polarization in the CCF, which left the party firmly in the hands of 'moderates' and aligned its policy with the West's economic and military imperatives in the global Cold War.

The shades of left-wing thought in postwar Canada ran the gamut from self-described 'Marxists' in the CCF aiming to eradicate capitalism

1 David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs, 1909–1958* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981), 376.

2 R. Dowson to Rosslund (A. Burton), 25 Sept. 1950, file 9-2 'Trail, BC, 1949–1950,' vol. 2, Canadian Trotskyist Movement (CTM) fonds, series IV-II, MG28, Library and Archives Canada (LAC); also Ross Dowson, 'Trotskyism and the NDP,' *Labor Challenge* (Toronto), 5 June 1972, file 31-16, vol. 31, Dowson fonds, LAC; *Revolutionary Trotskyist Bulletin No. 3: Trotskyism and the CCF/NDP – Documents from 1938 to 1973* (Toronto, 1978), cited in Bryan D. Palmer, 'Maurice Spector, James P. Cannon, and the Origins of Canadian Trotskyism,' *Labour / Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 139n75.

through electoral methods; to reformed liberal ‘moderates’ and ‘social democrats’ advocating a more humane form of capitalism; to avowed ‘revolutionaries’ committed, at least in theory, to a working-class revolution led by a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party. The Cold War exacerbated ideological fault lines, creating little space for a left politics independent of the NATO and Soviet camps. Historian Ian McKay has examined the response of Canada’s left to the ‘matrix-event’ of the Cold War, but his broad-brush approach sidesteps the 1950 CCF convention.³ While the literature on the CCF-NDP is vast, there is a notable balkanization between national and provincial studies and between the inner workings of the movement and the broader world.⁴ David Lewis offers a more thorough treatment, highlighting debates over Korea and the Regina Manifesto while conceding

- 3 Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada’s Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 95, 133–44; see also McKay, ‘For a New Kind of History: A Reconnaissance of 100 Years of Canadian Socialism,’ *Labour / Le Travail* 46 (Fall 2000), 109; McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and Peoples’ Enlightenment in Canada, 1890–1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008).
- 4 National studies by Young, Horowitz, Penner, and Avakumovic offer scant treatment of the 1950 convention and the Cold War. Provincial studies, such as Lipset’s important work on Saskatchewan and studies of the BC party by Steeves, Wickerson, Bernard, Roberts, and Nichol fail to locate inner-party debates in a wider context. See Walter D. Young, *Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932–1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 126–7, 281; Gad Horowitz, *Canadian Labour in Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968); Norman Penner, *From Protest to Power: Social Democracy in Canada, 1900–Present* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1992); Ivan Avakumovic, *Socialism in Canada: A Study of the CCF-NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978).

See also Elaine Bernard, ‘The Rod Young Affair in the British Columbia Co-operative Commonwealth Federation’ (master’s thesis, University of British Columbia, 1979); Seymour Martin Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan – A Study in Political Sociology*, updated ed. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1968); Dean E. McHenry, *The Third Force in Canada: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, 1932–1948* (Toronto, Berkeley, and Los Angeles: University of Toronto Press and University of California Press, 1950); Christine J. Nichol, ‘In Pursuit of the Voter: The British Columbia CCF, 1945–1950,’ in *Building the Co-operative Commonwealth*, ed. J. William Brennan, 123–40 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1984); Dorothy J. Roberts, ‘Doctrine and Disunity in the British Columbia Section of the CCF, 1932–1956’ (master’s thesis, University of Victoria, 1972); Dorothy G. Steeves, *The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest Winch and the Growth of Socialism in Western Canada* (Vancouver: Boag Foundation, 1977); Allan Whitehorn, ed., *Canadian Socialism: Essays on the CCF-NDP* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992); Gordon Stanley Wickerson, ‘Conflict in the British Columbia Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and the “Connell Affair”’ (master’s thesis, University of British Columbia, 1970).

that 'economic prosperity and cold-war hysteria generated a sense of social and political conservatism in the late forties and most of the fifties.'⁵ Political scientist Martin Robin concurs, suggesting that Cold War anti-communism 'induced a retreat from socialism,' bolstering centrists at the expense of the left.⁶ Inner-party dynamics are further illuminated in Leo Zakuta's study of 'institutionalization' in the Ontario CCF and in general works by Maurice Duverger and Roberto Michels, while Mark Leier illuminates the operation of bureaucracy during an earlier period in BC's labour history. A critical eye-witness perspective is provided by BC party dissident Eve Smith, who identifies the 1950 conflict as part of the transition from socialism to social democracy. The Cold War itself is explored by Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse and others, while John Price interrogates the origins of Canada's role in Korea, which cemented 'the foundations for Canada's Cold War alliance with the United States.'⁷ Engaging diverse sub-

Also Dan Azoulay, *Keeping the Dream Alive: The Survival of the Ontario CCF/NDP, 1950–1963* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); Daisy Webster, *Growth of the NDP in BC 1900–1970: 81 Political Biographies* (Vancouver: BC NDP, 1970); Gerald Caplan, *The Dilemma of Canadian Socialism: The CCF in Ontario* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973); Nelson Wiseman, *Social Democracy in Manitoba: A History of the CCF-NDP* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983); Leo Zakuta, *A Protest Movement Becalmed: A Study of Change in the CCF* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964).

5 Lewis, *Good Fight*, 376–88.

6 Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province, 1934–1972* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 104.

7 John Price, 'The "Cat's Paw": Canada and the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea 1950,' *Canadian Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (June 2004): 300.

Also Arthur Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith, 1904–1988* (Blyth, ON: Drumdravy Books, 1997), 127; Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, 3rd ed., trans. Barbara and Robert North, foreword by D.W. Brogan (London: Methuen, 1964); Mark Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom: Nationality, Culture, and State Security in Canada, 1940–1960* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2003); Mark Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape: The Making of a Labour Bureaucracy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Laurel Sefton MacDowell, 'Paul Robeson in Canada: A Border Story,' *Labour / Le Travail* 51 (Spring 2003): 177–221; Roberto Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, intro. Seymour Martin Lipset (1915; New York: Free Press, 1962), 365; Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945–1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Leo Zakuta, *A Protest Movement Becalmed: A Study of Change in the CCF* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964).

See also Tim Buck, *30 Years, 1922–1952: The Story of the Communist Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1952); Maurice Rush, *We Have a Glowing Dream: Recollections of Working-Class and People's Struggles in BC from 1935 to 1996* (Vancouver: Centre for Socialist Education, 1996); Len Scher, *The Un-Canadians: True Stories of the Blacklist Era* (Toronto: Lester, 1992).

fields of history, the following study examines the impact of the Cold War on the CCF through the lens of the 1950 Vancouver convention, highlighting debates over domestic and foreign policies and the role of a stubborn substratum on the Canadian left: the Trotskyists.

ORIGINS

Born in the Great Depression, the CCF was strained in the postwar era by electoral stagnation, economic growth, and the perceived threat of an expanding communist bloc. Some CCFers continued to advocate for the wholesale socialization of the economy, but others gravitated toward a reformed liberal view, whereby social programs and Keynesian fiscal controls would smooth capitalism's roughest edges. These debates were particularly pronounced on Canada's West Coast, where 'Reds' were influential in the labour movement, and the CCF vied for government.⁸ Left-wing electoral strength had been extended and consolidated in British Columbia as the twentieth century unfolded, sinking roots in industrial strongholds where the extraction and processing of natural resources dominated economic life. From the lead-zinc smelter at Trail to the coal mines of Nanaimo to the sawmills of urban Vancouver, working-class people developed a political culture that was independent of the old-line 'bosses parties' and collectivist in orientation. This politics found organizational expression in the Socialist Party of Canada, based in Vancouver, which elected several MLAs to the provincial legislature in the early twentieth century and imbued the CCF with a class-conscious, Marxist strain.⁹

In the 1940s, the levers of power in the BC CCF were squarely in the hands of the Marxian left wing, embodied in the father-son team of

8 'The Red Threat to Our Pacific Gateway,' *Financial Post* (Toronto), 12 Dec. 1953.

9 Gerald Friesen, 'Yours in Revolt: Regionalism, Socialism, and the Western Canadian Labour Movement,' *Labour / Le Travailleur* 1 (1976): 141–57; Ronald Grantham, 'Some Aspects of the Socialist Movement in British Columbia' (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1942); Ross Alfred Johnson, 'No Compromise – No Political Trading: The Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1975); A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899–1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 150–4.

In one corner of the province, the southeast, the coal economy gave rise to persistent class loyalties and BC's lone Labour MLA: Tom Uphill of Fernie, who served forty unbroken years in the legislature. See British Columbia, *Statement of Votes, 1916–1960*; Tom Langford and Chris Frazer, 'The Cold War and Working-Class Politics in the Coal Mining Communities of the Crowsnest Pass, 1945–1958,' *Labour / Le Travail* 49 (Spring 2002): 43–81; 'Mayor Uphill to

Ernest and Harold Winch. Ernest Edward Winch was a bricklayer by trade, former president of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council during the 'Ginger Goodwin' General Strike of August 1918 and leader of the loggers' unit of the postwar One Big Union. At the Regina Convention where the ccf's founding statement of principles was adopted in 1933, Winch provoked the ire of party leaders by lambasting the document as 'a bourgeois tract composed by cloistered and effete intellectuals.'¹⁰ Along with son Harold, an electrician, Ernest Winch won election to the bc legislature in November 1933, as the seven-member ccf caucus formed the Official Opposition. These militants viewed themselves as standing to the left of the Communist Party, owing to the class collaborationism of communists beginning with the Popular Front era. Factional fights in the bc ccf in the 1930s strengthened the control of the Winches, as 'moderates' defected into a short-lived bc Constructive party.¹¹ After the war, the chair of the ccf Women's

Peace Congress,' *Fernie Free Press*, 11 Dec. 1952; Robert McDonald, "'Just a Working Man": Tom Uphill,' in *A World Apart: The Crownsnest Communities of Alberta and British Columbia*, ed. Wayne Norton and Tom Langford, 99–112 (Kamloops: Plateau, 2000); 'Uphill Has Represented Fernie in Legislature for 36 Years,' *Pacific Tribune*, 10 Feb. 1956.

10 Lewis, *Good Fight*, 380.

11 See Bernard, 'Rod Young Affair,' 85; Peter Campbell, *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 147; Dorothy G. Steeves, *The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest Winch and the Growth of Socialism in Western Canada* (Vancouver: Boag Foundation, 1977); Walter D. Young, 'Ideology, Personality and the Origin of the ccf in British Columbia,' *bc Studies* 32 (Winter 1976–7), 139.

Ernest Winch was secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada when it became the founding section of the bc ccf in 1932. In 1936, conflict erupted with ccf House Leader Rev. Robert Connell, a Victoria botanist, who condemned Winch's pro-communist leanings. The ccf membership refused, in a convention vote, to follow Connell's lead, and he defected from the ccf to found the bc Constructive Party, joined by MP J.S. Taylor and old socialists Vic Midgley (his executive secretary) and Bill Pritchard (editor of the *Commonwealth* newspaper), rivals of Winch since the One Big Union days. In the subsequent election, the bc Constructive Party contested fourteen seats, none of which it won, and garnered 2 per cent of the popular vote, before disappearing from the political scene. See Wickerson, 'Conflict in the British Columbia Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.'

Conflict with Port Alberni socialist A.M. Stephen, who advocated a united front with communists, is discussed in Patrick George Hill, 'A Failure of Unity: Communist Party–ccf Relations in British Columbia, 1935–1939' (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 1977). In the 1937 general election, Stephen shunned the provincial leadership and ran as the ccf candidate in Alberni-Nanaimo, capturing 3129 votes to 3616 for the Liberal victor. British Columbia, *Statement of Votes*, 1937. For Communist strategy in the 1930s, see Anne Burger, 'The Communist Party of Canada during the Great Depression: Organizing and Class Consciousness' (master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2004).

Committee described 'the presence of an aristocracy of old Socialists,' who created a hostile climate for those uneducated in the tenets of Marxism.¹²

The dominance of the left distinguished the BC CCF from the national party and other provincial sections. Angus MacInnis, a former street railway worker and Vancouver South MP (1930-57), and Grace MacInnis, Vancouver-Burrard MLA (1941-5), MP (1965-74), and daughter of J.S. Woodsworth, frequently found themselves at odds with the BC section. In 1940, Angus had resigned from the CCF National Council, citing a lack of support from CCF leaders in BC. He wrote to National Secretary David Lewis, expressing concern with the otherworldly character of the BC party: 'I believe the CCF has at this time the greatest opportunity we have ever had if we know how to take advantage of it. The country is ripe for a lead that it will not get from either of the old parties ... We must, however, go out for a program that will have a close relation to reality, that will accept conditions as they are with all the imperfections and, if you like, contradictions which meet us on every hand. Out of this mess we must point the way which will take us step by step to the new social order.'¹³

CCF MLA Laura Jamieson echoed this view, urging a departure from the party's radical roots: 'That early influence has persisted apparently to a great extent ... I think, however, the CCF in BC can and should take a more constructive action.'¹⁴ The gap between the party and the

12 Muriel to G. MacInnis, 19 Apr. 1946, file 4-4, Grace MacInnis Collection (GMC), University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBCSC). Muriel explained this point to MacInnis: 'Since I joined the Movement four years ago I have worked very actively from the first month, tried to keep up with current CCF literature & thought, also with current events and then tried to study Socialism and make up for not having been born in a Socialist background. When I heard all the phrases used at the Convention, I wondered if I would ever catch up. Yet I can't help thinking that I am a good Socialist & CCFer. We cannot raise a whole race of Socialists in time to do something now. We must convert & use people that are in the world now.'

13 A. MacInnis to D. Lewis, 17 Jan. 1941, file 72-14, Angus MacInnis Collection (AMC), UBCSC. In another letter, MacInnis articulated a socialist argument in support of the war effort: 'The purpose of the Lend-Lease Bill is not to solve any of the problems of capitalism. Its purpose is to enable Great Britain to win the war ... Socialism may, of course, be the solution to all our difficulties but there is no such thing as a clear jump from capitalism to socialism and if Hitler wins, the opportunity which we have had of attempting to build a new society to our heart's desire, will disappear.' A. MacInnis to A. Webster, 20 Mar. 1941, file 72-14, AMC, UBCSC. For MacInnis's resignation in 1940, see James Naylor, 'Pacifism or Anti-Imperialism: The CCF Response to the Outbreak of World War II,' *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 6 (1997): 234.

14 Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 28 July 1940, file 4-4, GMC, UBCSC.

world, identified by Zakuta, took longer to narrow in BC than in other provinces.¹⁵

Throughout its history, foreign policy and cooperation with communists were persistent sources of conflict in the BC CCF. Pitting elements in the provincial party against national leaders such as M.J. Coldwell, a socialist perspective on foreign affairs surfaced on a range of issues: Canadian participation in the Second World War, the independence of India from Britain, cooperation with the Soviet Union, support for the United Nations, Canadian participation in NATO, the banning of atomic weapons, recognition of Red China, the Korean War, and Canadian and German re-armament.¹⁶ Factions were drawn along the lines of 'left' and 'moderate,' but there was overlap and inconsistency in the stances of members and leaders. Many members shunned the factional fray. Predictably, the party newspapers – the *Federationist* and, after 1943, *CCF News* – were major battlegrounds, as were executive elections and policy debates at provincial and national conventions. By the end of the decade, the 'moderate' faction was increasingly successful at curbing the power of the left, aided by the national leadership and the Cold War.

The ideological shift in the CCF, nationally and provincially, was uneven and protracted. In January 1948, Vancouver CCFers joined communists and trade unionists to picket the SS *Colima*, 'which is being prepared to carry arms to the reactionary forces of Kuomintang China.' While the CCF provincial executive ordered an end to picketing, the Victoria–Oak Bay CCF constituency association deplored 'the action of the federal government in sending arms to either side in the civil war in China.'¹⁷ In May 1948, the BC CCF provincial convention went on record opposing the North Atlantic Treaty and elected leftist Dorothy Steeves as provincial president. That month, outspoken leftist Rodney Young was elected CCF MP for Vancouver-Centre, a development that inflamed moderates. In August, delegates at the

15 Zakuta, *Protest Movement Becalmed*, 141–52.

16 James Naylor argues that the BC CCF left wing's approach to foreign policy derived from a socialist, rather than a pacifist, critique of war and imperialism, a working-class internationalism tracing its origins to the SPc. In 1939, Woodsworth's famous stand against Canadian participation in the Second World War received wide support among the BC leadership and rank-and-file. See CCF Chiefs Repudiate Attack on War Loan,' *Vancouver Sun*, 28 Feb. 1941; 'Maitland Dislikes CCF's War Stand,' *Victoria Daily Times*, 3 Nov. 1939; Naylor, 'Pacifism or Anti-Imperialism,' 213–37 (especially nn107–11); Dorothy Steeves interview, with Marlene Karnouk, 4 Apr. 1973, T0182:0001, BC Archives; Young, *Anatomy of a Party*, 192.

17 'Colima Picketing,' *CCF News*, 1 Jan. 1948; 'Victoria News,' *CCF News*, 8 Jan. 1948.

National CCF Convention defeated a resolution from the National Council opposing nationalization of the banks. The same convention, however, overwhelmingly endorsed the European Recovery Plan (Marshall Plan), despite a Manitoba CCF resolution opposing the plan on grounds that it provided 'military aid to reactionary regimes to use against attempts to establish socialism in Europe.' Rod Young was among those delegates attempting to bring federal policy in line with the Manitoba resolution.¹⁸

The growing distance between the BC section and national CCF leaders was evident when Steeves, BC CCF president and a former North Vancouver MLA, was prevented from providing a full report to the national convention. Widely acknowledged as the party's foreign policy expert, Steeves authored the weekly *CCF News* column 'A Socialist View of World Affairs,' which declared in July 1948, 'A few years ago, it was easy for socialists to call for the liberation of colonial peoples. Today, in a two-bloc world, the problem is not so simple. The elimination of one imperialism may open the way for the introduction of a new brand of the same kind.'¹⁹ Despite this ostensibly balanced

18 'CCF divides in debate on ERP' and 'CCF meets in convention,' *Pacific Tribune*, 27 Aug. 1948; 'Strengthening the CCF,' *Pacific Tribune*, 16 July 1948.

Convention Chair Stanley Knowles called the question after an hour of debate, and delegates voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Marshall Plan, with only two votes opposed.

See also 'CCF Urged to Plan Program for BC,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 28 May 1948; 'CCF Research for Election Victory,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 29 May 1948; 'Nationalized Brew is CCF Proposal,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 31 May 1948; 'Convention Footnotes,' *CCF News*, 3 June 1948.

Also A. Burton (a.k.a. Steve Rosslund), 'Whether the CCF?' ca. Sept. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC; 'North Atlantic Pact,' *CCF News*, 2 Feb. 1949; Susan Walsh, 'The Peacock and Guinea Hen: Political Profiles of Dorothy Gretchen Steeves and Grace MacInnis,' in *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women*, ed. Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag, 73-89 (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1992).

Rod Young won a 8 June 1948 by-election, with 9518 votes to 7348 votes for the Liberal and 4965 votes for the Progressive Conservative. The LLP did not contest the by-election. During the campaign, Young attracted controversy for sharing a May Day platform with Harold Pritchett, communist leader of the IWA. National CCF leader M.J. Coldwell wired Colin Cameron, then provincial secretary, accusing Young of violating a National Council policy prohibiting cooperation with Communists, and threatening to cancel a Vancouver speaking tour. Cameron condemned the 'dictatorial and preemptory tone' of Coldwell's telegram. Cameron to A. MacInnis, 13 May 1948; A. MacInnis to Cameron, 13 May 1948; A. MacInnis to Cameron, 14 May 1948; Cameron to M.J. Coldwell, 15 May 1948; file 73-1 'Correspondence, 1948,' AMC, UBCSC; *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, 1948; 'The CCF Convention,' *Pacific Tribune*, 10 Sept. 1948.

19 'A Socialist View of World Affairs,' *CCF News*, 1 July 1948.

stance, Angus MacInnis complained in a confidential letter to David Lewis that Steeves's columns were 'getting worse ... putting equal blame on the Western Powers and the Soviet Union,' indeed, 'the chief blame on the United States.' MacInnis asked that Lewis raise the matter with Coldwell and Party Chairman Frank Scott, as the world situation was 'too critical' for the CCF 'to be confused or frustrated or to be suspicious of the leaders in the movement.' Lewis responded, lamenting the 'anti-Americanism' in Steeves's column and her opposition to rearmament and NATO, but his tone was more conciliatory. He proposed entering into a private correspondence with Steeves 'to bring the national point of view a little more clearly before her.'²⁰

Ideological conflict in the CCF was influenced by the party's relations with the Communist Party, which was publicly called the Labor-Progressive Party (LPP) from 1943 to 1958 and sought links with the CCF. According to Angus MacInnis, 'the hangover from our old pacifism and our hope of the Russian Revolution as a forerunner of socialism are muddling our thinking in the present international situation,' creating a following for leftists.²¹ 'Unity to elect a CCF government,' the LPP slogan unveiled in 1948, elicited a mixed response in the CCF. John Price, an old labour militant from the Kootenay mining town of Silverton, traced a continuum between Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, the Soviet Constitution, and the CCF's Regina Manifesto: 'The CCF has done good work in exposing the pretences of the old line parties, its prospects for the future depend on unity with Communist and non-Communist workers against a common enemy ... It cannot do the job alone.'²²

Such views were anathema to CCF leaders, as Cold War anti-communism laid an indiscriminate brush over all segments of progressive opinion, aggravating prewar tensions with the Communist Party. Outspoken leftist Colin Cameron – BC CCF past-president, former Comox MLA (1941–5), and future Nanaimo MP (1953–8, 1962–8) – wrote that it was 'the authoritarian structure of the communist parties

20 A. MacInnis to D. Lewis, 18 Oct. 1948, D. Lewis to A. MacInnis, 25 Oct. 1948; file 73-1, AMC, UBCSC. Lewis added, 'I still have very great respect for her intellectual capacity, and I have a strong feeling that it is her isolation from the studies and research and discussion which go on at this end, which is responsible for a great deal of the gap between us.'

21 A. MacInnis to Coldwell, 27 Oct. 1950, file 73-3, AMC, UBCSC. Anti-communism in the CCF is explored in Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, 268–284; Young, *Anatomy of a Party*, 282–4. For attempts at unity in the 1930s, see Hill, 'Failure of Unity.'

22 'ccf and unity,' *Pacific Tribune*, 9 Apr. 1948; also 'Right and Wrong,' *CCF News*, 10 June 1948.

which constitutes the gulf between socialists and communists today.' George Weaver, the CCF's self-avowed Marxist theoretician, provided a scathing attack on the Soviet brand of communism, which 'appropriated to itself the name Communist' and thus 'deluded the workers of all countries, and has, moreover, put into the hands of the bourgeoisie a whip.' Some CCFers, however, objected to Weaver's attack. 'You know common people don't like to be talked down to, as though they were not intelligent,' Mrs J.H. Hodges of New Westminster wrote in the *CCF News*. 'We like the CCF paper and will vote CCF, but we think Weaver and his ilk are a detriment instead of a help.' Anticipating the phenomenon that would later be called McCarthyism, the *CCF News* issued a warning: 'The fact that we condemn communism should not divert us from the realization that the democratic liberties which constitute the only worthwhile heritage of nineteenth century capitalism are now in danger of being destroyed in order to perpetuate the power of a ruling class.'²³ Even avowed anti-communist Angus MacInnis recognized the danger inherent in the Cold War's ideological assault; in April 1948, he spoke out in the House of Commons against proposed amendments to the Criminal Code that would have outlawed the Communist Party 'not because they have committed illegal acts, but because they have ideas which we do not like.'²⁴

The 'Red Wars' in British Columbia's labour movement contributed to this ideological tension, peaking in the late 1940s when a CCF-aligned 'White Bloc' won control of the BC Federation of Labour, Vancouver Labour Council (CCL), and International Woodworkers of America, BC's largest union representing more than thirty thousand workers. Communists, meanwhile, retained control of BC's second-, third-, and fourth-largest unions: the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelterworkers (Mine-Mill), United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union, and Vancouver Marine Workers and Boilermakers Union. 'British Columbia today is one of Canadian Communism's most fertile spawning grounds, a bastion in the over-all Canadian Communist disruptive strategy,' the *Financial Post* warned.²⁵ In 1950,

23 'The Red Witch-Hunts,' *CCF News*, 12 Aug. 1948; 'The Difference between Communism and Socialism,' *CCF News*, 5 Feb. 1948; "'The Spectre of Communism': 1848 to 1948,' *CCF News*, 26 Feb. 1948; 'Writers Digest,' *CCF News*, 4 Mar. 1948.

24 'M'Innis Opposes Bill to Outlaw Comm'st Party,' *CCF News*, 29 Apr. 1948.

25 'The Red Threat to Our Pacific Gateway,' *Financial Post* (Toronto), 12 Dec. 1953; 'Labour Review April 1962,' file 'Trade Unions: Comm. Penetration Canada,' vol. 2213, series A, RCMP Security Service, CSIS records, LAC. See also Irving Martin Abella, 'Communism and Anti-Communism in the British Columbia Labour Movement, 1940-1948,' in *Western Perspectives 1: Papers of the Western Canadian Studies Conference*, 1973, ed. David Jay Bercuson, 88-100 (Toronto:

the 'White Bloc' launched a renewed offensive on a bastion of LLP strength, Mine-Mill Local 480 at the Consolidated Mining & Smelting Company in Trail. Under communist leadership, the Trail smelter-workers had secured among the highest wages in North America during a 1946 strike, but the anti-communist United Steelworkers of America launched a raid for the Trail certification. In the midst of the dispute, CCF MLA Leo Nimsick, a charter member of Local 480, sided with the local's communist leaders.²⁶

Members of the 'moderate' CCF faction were no less committed to improving the condition of BC's working class, but they objected to the strident statements and radical resolutions of the left wing, which they considered harmful to the CCF's electoral objectives. At the time, BC was ruled by a coalition government, a union of Liberals and Conservatives formed during the war (when the CCF took a plurality of votes) and sustained into the 1950s. Between 1945 and 1949, the BC CCF won only one of six provincial by-elections. Two federal by-election victories, including the defeat of W.A.C. Bennett, failed to stem the perception that a change in policy was needed. The drop in CCF support in provincial and federal elections in June 1949, and the loss of seats, appeared to confirm that BC voters were not ready for socialism. 'Modern' policies were needed, moderates argued, reflecting buoyant postwar economic conditions rather than the anti-capitalist mood of the Depression. In the 15 June 1949 provincial election, the CCF's share of the popular vote dipped from 37 per cent to 35 per cent, and its representation fell from eleven seats to seven. After the election, Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas wrote Grace MacInnis, lamenting 'the reduction in numbers and the loss of some

Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974); Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 111-38; Jerry Lembcke and William M. Tattam, *One Union in Wood: A Political History of the International Woodworkers of America* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour/International Publishers, 1984), 135-54; Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, 287-90, 351-3.

- 26 MacNeil to G. MacInnis, 6 Mar. 1951, file 4-10 'Personal Subject Files - Trial of Tom Alsbury for "Character Assassination of Colin Cameron," 1950-1957,' GMC, UBSC; 'We're Staying with CIO-CCL,' *Trail-Times*, 9 Feb. 1950; 'Ousted Mine Union Men Assail CIO-CCL,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 20 Feb. 1950; 'Labor Board Queried,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 1 Aug. 1950; Mike Solski and John Smaller, *Mine Mill: The History of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in Canada since 1895* (Ottawa: Steel Rail, 1984), 33-53; Al King with Kate Braid, *Red Bait! Struggles of a Mine Mill Local* (Vancouver: Kingbird, 1998), 34-51.

former members.²⁷ Two weeks later, voters returned to the polls for a federal election. CCF support in BC increased from 29 per cent to 31 per cent, but the party was reduced from six BC seats to three, as the coalition strategy of running either a Liberal or Conservative candidate was extended to several federal ridings. Nationally, the CCF fell from thirty-two seats to thirteen.²⁸

In a post-mortem, Lorne Ingle, national research secretary, could not 'escape the feeling that some events in British Columbia contributed more to our losses than any other thing we did.' He cited opposition to NATO and 'the disruptive work of the Communists in Trade Unions that should have been overwhelmingly on our side.' Ingle was losing tolerance 'for views divergent to the majority opinion in our party.'²⁹ Eugene Forsey, CCL research director, expressed similar views in a letter to Grace MacInnis, regretting her defeat in Vancouver South: 'It must be sickening to have a seat where you really have reason to hope, and then to miss out, partly because of some of the peculiar "problems" of the BC CCF.' Angus MacInnis conceded this point: 'The CCF did not build itself up in the minds of the people as an alternative – opposition, even. I regret to say that responsibility for that must in large measure be assumed by the movement in British Columbia ... We did everything we possibly could to lose both elections.'³⁰

Following the 1949 defeats, the campaign began in earnest to unseat left-wing influence in the BC CCF. Applying tactics that had effectively curbed LLP power in the provincial labour movement, CCF

27 T.C. Douglas to Grace MacInnis, 26 Sept. 1949, file 4-5, GMC, UBCSC; also George M. Abbott, 'Duff Pattullo and the Coalition Controversy of 1941,' *BC Studies* 102 (Summer 1994): 30–53; Abbott, 'The Formation of the Liberal-Conservative Coalition in 1941' (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 1978); British Columbia, *Statement of Votes, 1945–1949*; *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, 1948 and 1949; Barbara Horsfield, 'The Social Credit Movement in British Columbia' (BA essay, University of British Columbia, 1953); 'Social Credit Double-Talk,' *CCF News*, 25 Mar. 1948.

28 *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, 1950.

29 Ingle to A. MacInnis, 30 June 1949, file 73-2, AMC, UBCSC. Ingle outlined the factors he believed contributed to the loss: '(a) The North Atlantic Pact business; (b) the Nova Scotia and British Columbia set backs [provincial elections]; (c) the disruptive work of the Communists in Trade Unions that should have been overwhelmingly on our side; (d) prosperity.' The 'North Atlantic Pact business' referred to the refusal of the 1949 BC CCF convention, held in Vancouver, to endorse National CCF caucus support for the North Atlantic Pact. See Burton, 'Whether the CCF?'; 'North Atlantic Pact,' *CCF News*, 2 Feb. 1949.

30 A. MacInnis to D. Lewis, 6 July 1949; Forsey to G. MacInnis, 20 July 1949; also D. Lewis to A. MacInnis, 4 July 1949, file 73-2, AMC, UBCSC.

leaders turned against dissidents in their own ranks. This effort was imbued with a sense of urgency, as the party's biennial national convention was scheduled to take place in Vancouver in July 1950. At a National Council meeting in Winnipeg in January 1950, BC delegates were ridiculed for proposing changes to the national constitution that played into the hands of the leftists, who were anxious 'to drive a wedge between British Columbia and the rest of Canada.' At a provincial council meeting the next month, the left maintained the upper hand, accusing the MacInnises of being 'secretly engaged in a strong rightist sabotage thrust at the ccf's vitals.' Gladys Webster, a moderate, commented, 'I can only learn how to meet these tactical moves in the hard school of experience. Colin, Rod, and cohorts watch carefully and make their moves skilfully. Things happened for them at the beginning and end when the attendance was scanty.' Reflecting ideological distance between the factions, Cameron extolled the theory of the 'state withering away,' while Webster believed he was 'living a hundred years in advance of the times.'³¹ In the Burrard constituency, the 'moderates' were more successful, easily outnumbering leftists in proposing of a slate of officers for the upcoming provincial convention at Penticton.

These preparations paid off. Bruce Woodsworth described the proceedings in a letter to his sister and brother-in-law: 'In a nutshell the convention from our standpoint was a great success because we won – the Cameron pseudo-revolutionaries were routed.' Controversy over the Steelworkers raid on Mine-Mill Local 480 at Trail, which had threatened to erupt at the convention, was averted when two Trail ccf Club delegates were prevented from speaking. Woodsworth attributed 'the moderates' success largely to the spadework which [the MacInnises] did during the past year, plus the carrying out of

31 G. Webster to G. MacInnis, 1 Mar. 1950; B. Woodsworth to G. and A. MacInnis, 10 Apr. 1950, file 4-5, GMC, UBCSC. Webster expressed concern about Steeves and Cameron 'because they are out of character in becoming armchair philosophers.' She was unable to believe they 'sincerely support the narrow, doctrinaire view of socialism,' and felt they had taken a stand – "a sort of refuge" – and would go to any length to justify that stand. Steeves discussed the class struggle and conflict between 'trade unions and owners.' See also G. MacInnis to D. Lewis, 13 July 1950, file 4-5, GMC, UBCSC. For collaboration between the National ccf leadership and BC's moderate faction, see D. Lewis to A. MacInnis, 10 July 1949 (telegram); A. MacInnis to D. Lewis, 17 July 1949, file 73-2, AMC, UBCSC. MacInnis confided to Lewis that he was unsure of how to respond to Cameron's charges in a ccf *News* article, 'not because Colin's slanderous and irresponsible statements are hard to answer, but because one had to keep in mind what effect an appropriate reply would have on the movement.'

carefully laid plans by a large number of clubs both at the Coast and in the Interior.³² The 'moderates' took all but two executive positions (Rod Young as second vice-president and Dorothy Steeves as National Council rep); however, late one evening, following a debate on NATO and disarmament, the left succeeded in passing a resolution that placed the BC CCF on record 'opposing any further expenditures on arms and urges the CCF members of the House of Commons to voice this opposition to arms expenditures.' Delegates voted to forward this resolution to the upcoming national convention 'for favourable consideration by that body.' Upon learning of the resolution, Angus MacInnis regretted not having attended the Penticton convention, and felt that 'delegates are to be criticized for not attending the evening session in larger numbers. They should know by this time that the disrupters in the movement will take advantage of occasions such as this to get resolutions through that they could not get through if there were a full attendance of delegates.' He stressed the importance of electing sympathetic delegates to the National Convention, to prevent a reversal of the progress that had been made 'in eliminating obstructors.'³³

- 32 Woodsworth cited a trip by Gladys Webster and Don Capon to Kelowna and Vernon, to coordinate the activities of the CCYM. For details of a February 1950 meeting in the Burrard constituency, where the 'moderates' were dominant, see G. Webster to G. MacInnis, 1 Mar. 1950; B. Woodsworth to G. and A. MacInnis, 10 Apr. 1950, file 4-5, GMC, UBCSC. Former CCF MLA Bert Gargrave had been instrumental in the Steelworkers' raid at Trail. Prior to the convention, Trotskyist Aubrey Burton of Trail observed, 'The rank and file CCF are disgusted and angered by the role assumed by these leaders and there is little doubt that things may pop up at the coming BC CCF convention.' See Burton to Dowson, 8 Mar. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC; also King, *Red Bait*, 74.
- 33 A. MacInnis to B. Woodsworth, 21 Apr. 1950, file 4-5, GMC, UBCSC. In elections for convention chairperson, Tom Alsbury defeated Cameron by a margin of nearly two to one: 'It proved to be an accurate portent (at least partially) of future voting strength.' In presidential elections, MacNeil defeated Cameron 76-32 votes; Jamieson defeated Cameron for first vice-president 66-46; however, in voting for second vice-president, Rod Young defeated Jim Bury on a narrow 56-55 vote. For other executive positions, only one 'pseudo-revolutionary' (as moderates pejoratively described the left), Dave Stupich, was elected. However, one of two National Council seats went to Steeves on the left, who defeated Grace MacInnis, Jamieson, Mackenzie, and others. In a ballot for the second seat, Young nearly defeated Arthur Turner. B. Woodsworth to G. and A. MacInnis, 10 Apr. 1950, file 4-5, GMC, UBCSC. Woodsworth suggested the disarmament resolution carried 'when there probably wasn't quorum.' (It was 11:30 pm on a Saturday, with roughly sixty delegates in attendance.) An explanation of Rod Young's election is provided in Burton to Dowson, 4 May 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

As the national convention approached, Grace MacInnis wrote to David Lewis, informing him that 'the Steeves-Young axis' had been working hard, and had 'more than 50% of the BC delegates on their side.' Nonetheless, they were 'losing fast and they know it.' Grace advised caution among national party leaders, suggesting an outburst from Coldwell or other officers 'would be absolutely fatal to our hopes of making the split come where it should – in the BC delegation.' In light of the disarmament resolution, conflict was inevitable. 'National Office pressure would be the worst thing,' she warned.³⁴ The left, for its part, was confident: 'I think we can keep Gracie in order, even if we have to raise the ashes of her father to do it,' Steeves confided to Cameron, as a special convention edition of *CCF NEWS* went to press highlighting J.S. Woodsworth's 'proletarian apprenticeship' on the docks of Vancouver.³⁵ In the midst of this manoeuvring, the Langford CCF Club laid charges against the Sooke Club, which had adopted a resolution urging CCF affiliation to the Trotskyist Fourth International.³⁶

CANADIAN TROTSKYISTS

The power struggle between left-wing and 'moderate' CCFers was influenced by an unlikely force on the Canadian left – the small Trotskyist current, which in the late 1940s and early 1950s found organizational expression as the Revolutionary Workers' Party, an affiliate of the Fourth International. The contours of Canadian Trotskyism are blurred by a historiographic emphasis on the mainstream, rather than the margins, of working-class politics. Studies by Bryan Palmer, Ian McKay, and Ian Angus illuminate this strain of

34 G. MacInnis to D. Lewis, 13 July 1950, file 4-5, GMC, UBCSC. In delegate selection meetings in the constituencies, Vancouver East 'chose a man with a fellow-travelling record and a loud voice'; Rod Young was selected in Vancouver Centre and leftist Bill Mandale won in Vancouver South. The 'moderates' were successful in electing Arnold Webster in Burrard and Tom Alsbury in Burnaby-Richmond. In Comox, Colin Cameron persevered by two votes over former MLA Joe Corsbie. MacInnis concluded that, 'taking it over the province, the other crowd will probably have the majority numerically – although we shall have the better debating strength.'

35 'The Birth of a Socialist,' *CCF NEWS*, 26 July 1950; Steeves to Cameron, 11 July 1950, file 1-1, CCC, UBCSC.

36 Burton to Dowson, 4 May 1950; Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 28 May 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. On the eve of the national convention, Sooke CCF Club Secretary B.P. Johnson formally protested CCF support for American military action in Korea. 'Protest on Korea,' *CCF NEWS*, 19 July 1950.

Canadian socialism, while Elaine Bernard and Heather McLeod provide a unique window into Trotskyism in postwar BC.³⁷ During the Second World War, Trotskyists focused their efforts on labour and anti-war work, striking a position distinct from that of the CCF (which had critically endorsed Canada's war effort in 1939) and of the Communist Party (which moved from opposition to a whole-hearted embrace after Hitler invaded Russia). The central figure in the post-war Canadian Trotskyist movement was Ross Dowson, who had garnered a fifth of the vote for Toronto's mayoralty in 1949 and worked as the RWP's full-time secretary and editor of its newspaper, *Labor Challenge*. Though based in Toronto, Dowson developed a cadre of militants on the West Coast and in the BC Interior, confiding in 1948 that the maintenance of *Labor Challenge* and the national office 'depends almost entirely on the Vancouver branch.'³⁸ Dowson spear-headed the effort to forge a brand of revolutionary socialism distinct from the LLP's 'Stalinism' and CCF's 'reformism' – 'a revolutionary tendency untainted by the crimes of Stalinism.'³⁹

Trotskyist activism in postwar Canada was most evident in the strategy of 'entryism' in social democracy, which wreaked havoc in the CCF and later the New Democratic Party (NDP). 'The French turn as it is called in our movement is a tactical maneuver designed to overcome the general isolation that the revolutionary vanguard finds itself in today,' Dowson explained to a BC comrade, revealing the strategy's origins in the pre-war French workers' movement.⁴⁰

37 Bryan D. Palmer, 'Maurice Spector, James P. Cannon, and the Origins of Canadian Trotskyism,' *Labour / Le Travail* 56 (Fall 2005): 91–148; Ian McKay, 'Revolution Deferred: Maurice Spector's Political Odyssey, 1928–1941,' paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Halifax, May 2003; Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard, 1981); Elaine Bernard, 'A History of BC Trotskyism as Seen through *Labor Challenge* and *Workers Vanguard*, 1945–1961,' http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/History/Bernard-BC_Trot.htm#8; Heather McLeod, 'Not Another God-Dam Housewife: Ruth Bullock, the "Woman Question" and Canadian Trotskyism' (master's thesis: Simon Fraser University, 1993); also Ross Dowson, 'Maurice Spector, 1898–1968,' *Workers Vanguard*, 26 Aug. 1968; Gary O'Brien, 'Maurice Spector and the Origin of Canadian Trotskyism' (master's thesis, Carleton University, 1974).

38 Dowson to Vancouver Executive, 5 May 1948, file 10-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

39 This description is provided in Dowson to Burton, 25 Apr. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

40 Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 25 Sept. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC; also Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929–1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Ross Dowson, 'Our Orientation to the NDP – as a strategy and its tactical application' (1970),

Dorothy Gretchen Steeves, CCF MLA for North Vancouver (1934–45), suggested the most vocal opponents of a United Front with communists in the 1930s had belonged to ‘an extreme leftist group and were accused of being “Trotskyites”’; one-time MP Rod Young was suspended from the CCF for associating with this group.⁴¹ Trotskyists adopted a long-range view of relations with the CCF, as Dowson explained to a Trail worker: ‘In 1937 the Canadian Trotskyists made an entry into the CCF, which appeared to offer great opportunities of work inside its ranks. We would have preferred to affiliate to it but this was denied us and so we entered to form a fraction around which we hoped to gather the militants. During the war we remained in the CCF advancing our ideas as best we could. In 1945 we concluded that there were greater opportunities to spread our ideas outside the CCF free from the censorious pressure of the bureaucracy and organized the independent party in 1946.’⁴²

This new party, the Revolutionary Workers’ Party, formed after a failed attempt by Lloyd Whelan, a Vancouver shipyard worker and chairperson of the BC CCF Trade Union Committee, to bring a revolutionary program to the floor of the 1946 CCF National Convention. Whelan, Reg Bullock, Tom Bradley (a former CCF organizer), Ruth Bullock (a CCF provincial council member), and Elaine MacDonald defected to form the Labor Challenge Club. In October 1946, the RWP was founded at a Toronto convention and affiliated to the Fourth International. The new party opened a Vancouver headquarters on Cordova Street and attracted militants from the CCF, such as William White of the Britannia Beach Mine-Mill local and William and Lillian Whitney of New Westminster. In December 1946, three members of the LPP’s Ginger Goodwin Youth Club defected to the RWP.⁴³

Socialist History Project, <http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/CCF-NDP/Orientation-Dowson-1970.htm>; Dowson, ‘Trotskyism and the NDP,’ *Labor Challenge* (Toronto), file 31-16, vol. 31, Dowson fonds, IAC; *Revolutionary Trotskyist Bulletin No. 3: Trotskyism and the CCF/NDP: Documents from 1938 to 1973* (Toronto 1978), cited in Palmer, ‘Maurice Spector, James P. Cannon, and the Origins of Canadian Trotskyism,’ 1175.

41 Steeves, *The Compassionate Rebel*, 114–15.

42 Dowson to Burton, 8 Jan. 1949, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, IAC.

43 ‘CCF Delegate from BC Issues Call for Revolutionary Program,’ *Labor Challenge*, mid-Aug. 1946; ‘Former CCF Members Form Labor Challenge Group,’ *Labor Challenge*, mid-Sept. 1946; ‘National Convention Launches the Revolutionary Workers Party,’ *Labor Challenge*, mid-Oct. 1946; and ‘Three BC LLP Members Break; Support RWP,’ *Labor Challenge*, Dec. 1946, as cited in Bernard, ‘History of BC Trotskyism’; Lembcke and Tattam, *One Union in Wood*, 205n83.

The RWP brought Dowson into contact with Trail civic worker Aubrey Burton in 1949. Letters between Dowson and Burton provide a unique window into class relations and working-class politics in the early Cold War years. Forging a revolutionary leadership in Trail, in the CCF and smelterworkers' union, was the object of Dowson's correspondence with Burton. The RWP sought 'a clarification' in a political environment crowded by the 'Stalinist' LPP and 'right-wing' CCF: 'Yes it is unfortunate that there is not greater unity in the left. But the responsibility for its present state of disintegration lies in large part at the door of the Kremlin oligarchy and their stooges across the globe whose criminal policies have brought defeat after defeat and disoriented a whole generation of revolutionaries. A new upsurge will see a clarification and a unification of all worthwhile elements – the hopelessly sectarian and muddleheads will be left by the wayside.'⁴⁴

Burton began distributing copies of *Labor Challenge* and building an oppositional presence in the Trail CCF Club and LPP-controlled Mine-Mill Local 480. In September 1949, Dowson commended Burton for a *Pacific Tribune* letter attacking 'the Stalinist Labor Progressive Party from a Marxist point of view. In this day of the cold war and the witch hunt this is a breath of fresh air.'⁴⁵

In February 1950, Burton observed first-hand the Steelworkers' raid on Mine-Mill Local 480, as the left and 'moderate' wings of the CCF clashed. 'On Feb 11 the Mosher-Millard bureaucracy launched their union-raiding campaign against the Stalinist dominated IUMM & SW,' Burton reported.⁴⁶ He attended the April 1950 BC CCF Convention in Penticton, aided by travel funds from Local 480, despite 'behind-the-scenes attempts to prevent my getting there on the parts of Bert

44 Dowson to Burton, 8 Jan. 1949, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. The RWP's orientation was outlined in a May 1950 'seven-point program' for Burton's political work in the year ahead: '(1) Clarification and organization of the BC Left CCF; (2) Formation of the Trail CCF Left into a club; (3) Defeat of the Right-Steelworkers raid; (4) Increased circulation of the L.C. as an educational and propaganda organ; (5) Exposure of the right-wing CCF through educational efforts; (6) Exposure of the Stalinists role in the Labor Movement; (7) Recruitment of membership.' Burton to Dowson, 4 May 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

45 Kane (Dowson) to Burton, 29 Sept. 1949, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. Dowson often wrote under the pseudonym Paul Kane.

46 Burton to Dowson, 8 Mar. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. Charlie Millard was Canadian director of the United Steelworkers of America. Mosher and Millard were influential in curbing communist influence in Canadian unions.

Gargrave, J. Quinn, the former MLA for this Riding.⁴⁷ Burton and a Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement (CCYM) delegate were the only RWP members in attendance. Burton described political polarization in the Trail CCF: 'There exists today within the local CCF movement here two distinct wings neither of which will have the least bit to do with the other. In short there exists in Trail now that for which we are working to bring about provincially, a clear clarification between the right and left within the CCF. The catch being that the "left" here is gravitating rapidly towards the Stalinists.'⁴⁸ Burton responded by organizing a public meeting in May 1950 'to establish a fighting socialist club by fighting Union men and women,' a CCF club free from LLP and 'moderate' influence.⁴⁹ He was elected president of Civic Workers Local 343 in Trail. At Reg Bullock and Dowson's suggestion, Burton adopted the pseudonym Steve Rosslund to protect his work in the CCF, as controversy arose over the circulation of *Labor Challenge* to a CCF mailing list.⁵⁰

In the early 1950s, the line between RWP entryism and broader left criticism in the CCF became blurred: moderates attacked the left as 'Trotskyite,' while the RWP's presence lent credence to allegations of a 'party within a party.' As Dowson admitted in April 1950, 'Our first loyalty is of course to our ideas and our party, but we have an orientation to the CCF so our second loyalty is to the CCF.' He discussed the implications of 'total entry': 'What would happen to *Labor Challenge*? Well if we made a total entry it would fold up but we would within

47 Burton to Dowson, 18 Apr. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. According to Dowson, the Penticton convention proved 'there is a very broad leftist tendency in BC which the left despite all its weaknesses managed to tap.' After the convention, Dowson received a 'red hot letter' from CCF leftist Eve Smith alleging that the *Labor Challenge* coverage of the convention had threatened to sink the left at Penticton and urged the RWP to 'try to develop a little political sense.' Dowson to Burton, 25 Apr. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

48 Burton to Dowson, Apr. 1950; Dowson to Burton, 25 Apr. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

49 Burton to Dowson, Apr. 1950; Dowson to Burton 25 Apr. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC; Burton to Dowson, n.d., ca. May 1950; 'To All CCF Leftists in Trail,' n.d., ca. May 1950.

50 Dowson to Burton, 28 May 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC; 'Unity through Democratic Discipline,' *CCF News*, 26 Apr. 1950. Dowson wrote, 'Comrade Bullock in his last letter suggested that you should take on a pseudonym for party correspondence etc. I think it would be advisable since you are working in the CCF. Take your choice if the above is suitable alright.' Burton worked for the municipality of Tadanac, a sister community to Trail. Dowson to Burton, 28 May 1950; Rosslund (Burton) to Dowson, 2 Nov. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

the shortest time possible publish some kind of legal CCF fraction organ to take its place . . . I am inclined to believe that the Vancouver branch should carry out some fraction work in the BC section before attempting to carry out an entry.'⁵¹

Burton obtained delegate credentials from the Trail CCF Club to attend the national convention in Vancouver. He brought along a volume of mimeographed materials from *Socialist Outlook*, bulletin of the British Labour Party's left wing, and organized a pre-convention caucus with BC 'left oppositionists' including Rod Young, Dorothy Steeves, Colin Cameron, Eve Smith, and Cranbrook MLA Leo Nimsick. However, a resolution Burton proposed opposing 'American armed forces in the Korean civil war' was rejected by Young and Steeves, who feared it would alienate the left. 'Colin Cameron and Eve Smith were the only two leading oppositionists that supported me at all,' Burton reported. While on the West Coast, he met with other RWP comrades in Vancouver and Seattle, gaining 'an awareness of the Party as a force, not just as semi-isolated individuals.'⁵²

CONVENTION

The Eleventh National Convention of the CCF opened in the Hotel Vancouver on Wednesday, 26 July 1950. The Korean War had broken out a month earlier, and the National Council, meeting prior to the convention, endorsed the UN action and called for the deployment of Canadian troops – a stance Coldwell confirmed in a speech on the eve of the convention: 'The action taken . . . has given assurances to other nations threatened with Communist aggression that the democratic world will fulfill its obligations under the United Nations charter,' Coldwell declared, as Canada's federal Liberal Cabinet debated whether

- 51 Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 28 May 1950; Dowson to Burton, 25 Apr. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. In August 1950, Young described Burton as 'a Trotskyist provocateur, which I suppose in a way I was.' Rosslund (Burton) to Dowson, 5 Aug. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC; also 'Trotskyists and the CCF,' *Labour Challenge*, mid-April 1951, qtd. in Bernard, 'History of BC Trotskyism'; S.P. Lewis, *Grace: The Life of Grace MacInnis* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour, 1993), 213–14.
- 52 Rosslund (Burton) to Dowson, 1 Aug. 1950; file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC; Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 21 July 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. Dowson noted that 'CCFers are tremendously influenced by the BLP and developments within it.'

to deploy troops.⁵³ This pre-emptive strike by the national leadership inflamed the left. But BC delegates and other dissidents were in the minority.

During the convention's opening session, BC leftist Colin Cameron clashed with MP Angus MacInnis on the convention floor during a debate on the CCF's public works program. Cameron urged consideration of 'broad social planning' rather than the minutiae of proposals such as flood control on the Saskatchewan River and an underwater tunnel to Prince Edward Island. Reflecting the inner-party conflict, MacInnis quickly interjected that the former provincial party president lacked the 'proper attitude for the convention.' While delegates supported an amendment from Cameron proposing the creation of a Fraser Valley Authority (akin to the New Deal-era Tennessee Valley Authority), the *Vancouver Daily Sun* noted that many delegates opposed the motion not because of its substance but 'because it had been proposed by Mr Cameron.' Following the debate, Winnipeg delegate A.N. Robertson urged BC delegates to 'keep their petty disputes out of here so we can get down to national business.'⁵⁴

On the convention's second day, debate centred on international affairs, notably CCF policy on Korea. Delegates considered the National Council's resolution supporting Canadian military participation in Korea, and after two and a half hours of debate, endorsed the policy by a margin of more than four to one, with 115 votes in favour and only 25 opposed. An amendment from former MP Rod Young, proposing UN mediation rather than military action (through a commission headed by Indian Prime Minister Nehru) was soundly defeated. Other BC leftists, including former MLAs Colin Cameron and Dorothy Steeves, and Nanaimo carpenter Bob Strachan (a future MLA and provincial leader), had supported Young's motion. The *Vancouver Sun* triumphantly described the debate as 'the left-wing's last stand.' However, the *Canadian Forum* magazine offered a more nuanced perspective: 'Because of the way in which the battle was joined, those who could not accept Mr Young's position, and yet who wanted a foreign

53 'Loan to Aid Youth Urged by CCF Body,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 25 July 1950; 'Socialist Leaders Gather for Parley,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 25 July 1950; 'CCF Chiefs to Ask Canada Aid Korea,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 26 July 1950; 'No Compromise on Korean Aggression' and 'CCYM Delegates Support Western Action,' *CCF News*, 26 July 1950; 'UN Stand in Korea May Avert New World War - Coldwell,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 26 July 1950; 'CCF Supports UN on Korea,' *Vancouver Daily Province*, 28 July 1950; Young, *Anatomy of a Party*, 233.

54 'CCF Parley Cool to BC Radicals,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 27 July 1950.

policy slightly more socialist than that of the Liberal government, found it impossible to make their opinions felt.⁵⁵

Another major issue decided in favour of the 'moderates' was a resolution instructing the National Council to prepare an appendix to the Regina Manifesto, 'a statement of democratic socialist principles as applied to Canada and the world today.' This development signalled a move away from the overtly anti-capitalist language of the Regina Manifesto, which committed the CCF to eradicate capitalism. In his address to delegates, Coldwell said that the concept of the class struggle was outdated and praised a similar policy review at the International Socialist Conference in Copenhagen in June 1950, which resulted in the Frankfurt Declaration. Coldwell insisted that CCF policy must evolve as conditions changed: 'The war brought the democratic world and its economy into new relationships. Our complex economic and social relationships have upset capitalistic theory and practice and, at the same time, have compelled Socialists in the democratic countries to reconsider their theories in the light of new conditions and, in several instances, of actual administration.'⁵⁶ However, prominent BC leftists such as Ernest Winch opposed the initiative, declaring that 'as long as the Regina Manifesto stands as an expression of the principles of the CCF we are safe.' Colin Cameron went further, accusing national leaders of doing 'irreparable damage to the socialist movement in BC,' and asserting that 'the class war is here and it won't be over until exploitation of the human race is over.'⁵⁷

55 'CCF Parley Backs Canadian Military Action in Korean War,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 29 July 1950; 'The CCF Convention,' *Canadian Forum* 30, no. 356 (Sept. 1950): 124; also 'The CCF Failure in Foreign Policy,' *Canadian Forum* 30, no. 356 (Sept. 1950): 127-8.

56 'Coldwell Wants CCF "Charter" Revised,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 27 July 1950; 'Socialism Diluted,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 28 July 1950; 'CCF Parley Orders Appendix for Basic Regina Manifesto,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 29 July 1950; 'National Council Instructed to Modernize Regina Manifesto,' *CCF News*, 2 Aug. 1950; 'The CCF Convention,' *Canadian Forum* 30, no. 356 (Sept. 1950): 124; S.P. Lewis, *Grace*, 210-11; Alan Whitehorn, *Canadian Socialism: Essays on the CCF-NDP* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992): 3-50; Young, *Anatomy of a Party*, 126-30, 170-4.

The CCF national caucus had endorsed an 'innocuous' resolution on 22 July 1950 empowering the National Council to begin drafting a new statement of principles, according to Walter Young. The Frankfurt Declaration was adopted at the first congress of the Socialist International in July 1951 and stated that 'socialist planning ... is compatible with the existence of private ownership in important fields.'

57 'CCF Parley Orders Appendix for Basic Regina Manifesto,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 29 July 1950.

As Aubrey Burton, the Trotskyist trade unionist from Trail, wrote after the convention, 'In return for lavish praise from the capitalist press they attempt to eradicate not the last vestiges of capitalism but rather the last remaining vestiges of socialist thought and principles within the CCF and reduce this once proud creation of the militant working-class under the defiant leadership of J.S. Woodsworth, to a petty imitation of the Liberal party.' Coldwell 'red-baited with every sentence he uttered and when he wasn't doing that he was slandering either the left wing of his own party or the Soviet Union.'⁵⁸ In a final blow for the left, the convention approved constitutional amendments empowering the National Executive (NE) 'to assume the powers of discipline of the Provincial sections' if the Provincial Executive (PE) failed to act. In Burton's estimation, 'it means now that the NE can compel the PE to take any action that the Coldwell gang wishes.'⁵⁹ The *Canadian Forum* lamented that 'delegates were inclined to pin the label of "Trotskyite," "Marxist," or "reactionary" on anything – or anybody – they didn't like, instead of considering the specific proposals on their own merits.'⁶⁰

The tensions animating the CCF's 1950 convention were graphically revealed when party organizers summoned the Hotel Vancouver's security patrol to expel petition-wielding members of the Vancouver Peace Council. The campaigners had jammed the corridor outside the hotel's Mayfair Room on the evening of Thursday, 27 July, imploring CCF delegates to sign the Stockholm 'Ban-the-Bomb' petition on their way into the convention banquet. According to the *Vancouver Daily Province*, 'The petitioners left the hotel without protest.'⁶¹ The following morning, in the convention's closing session, delegates passed a resolution rejecting the Stockholm 'Ban-the-Bomb' petition, which demanded 'the unconditional banning by all countries of the atomic weapons.' BC MLAS Ernest Winch, Leo Nimsick, and Arthur Turner had signed the petition, which was circulated by the Canadian Peace Congress, but the moderates viewed the Congress as an LPP front and would have nothing to do with it. Earlier, the Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement, the party's youth wing, had rejected

58 Burton to Dowson, 18 Apr. 1950; Burton to Dowson, 1 Aug. 1950; 'Comrades of the CCF,' 5 Aug. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. Prior to the 1950 CCF Convention, Burton reported that the CCF left and MLAS including Leo Nimsick and Randolph Harding believed 'the CCF can yet be rescued and returned to the principles of the Regina Manifesto.'

59 Rosslund (Burton) to Dowson, 5 Aug. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

60 'The CCF Convention,' *Canadian Forum* 30, no. 356 (Sept. 1950): 124.

61 'CCF Counter Attacks "Stockholm Appeal,"' *Province*, 29 July 1950.

the Stockholm petition, which the Vancouver press described as ‘a mischievous and evil thing’ that only ‘idealists, idiots and traitors’ would support.⁶²

The greatest controversy of the convention, however, happened off the convention floor, in the bizarre ‘literature incident.’ This episode centred on the appearance of a pamphlet entitled *Is the Labour Party the Way to Socialism?* on the literature table of the BC section’s Political Education Committee in the corridor outside the Mayfair Room. Eve Smith, an avowed leftist with no connection to the Trotskyist RWP, was chair of the committee and displayed the offensive pamphlet, which had been published along with several others by the Socialist Labour Party of Great Britain. According to Smith’s account, a man named Eggleston from Trail, who was not a delegate, violently threw the offending pamphlet on the floor, referring to it as ‘god-damned Trotskyist stuff.’ David Lewis and Tommy Douglas, who was attending the convention as a delegate and guest speaker, joined Eggleston in demanding the pamphlet be removed. When Smith refused, Lewis charged to a microphone, attacking ‘this woman’ for ‘criticizing our sister party in Great Britain.’ Despite the pleas of speakers including BC leader Harold Winch, a majority of delegates voted with Lewis to remove the pamphlet. Smith then seized the microphone from Thérèse Casgrain, who was chairing the session, attempting to explain her position; shouting ensued between the rival factions, leading Douglas to appeal for unity. In the aftermath, the BC executive voted to condemn Smith for her action and dismiss her as chair of the Political Education Committee. Smith viewed the incident as ‘a

62 ‘Peace Appeal Ridiculed by Youth in ccf,’ *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 27 July 1950; ‘Don’t Be a Blind Signer,’ *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 28 July 1950; ‘Idealists, Idiots and Traitors,’ *Province*, 28 July 1950; ‘Why Don’t Dailies Want A-Bomb Ban?’ *Fisherman* (Vancouver), 1 Aug. 1950.

In September 1951, the *Vancouver Daily Sun* claimed, ‘The A-Bomb is the greatest single factor which may prevent outbreak of war in the near future . . . Russia has a big enough land force to march to the English Channel “any time they want to,” but would not, because our knowledge of atomic warfare is much greater.’ ‘A-Bomb Seen War Stopper,’ *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 22 Sept. 1951; ‘A Word to the Wives – I Wouldn’t Ban the Bomb,’ *ccf News*, 12 Apr. 1950; ‘ccf Counter Attacks “Stockholm Appeal,”’ *Province*, 29 July 1950; ‘Delegates Spurn Peace Petition,’ *ccf News*, 2 Aug. 1950; Steeves, *The Compassionate Rebel*, 206; Young, *Anatomy of a Party*, 281–2.

In December 1951, the National Executive directed the BC Executive to take action against Winch, Nimsick, and Turner. The provincial section refused, claiming the MLAs had forgotten about the 1950 resolution when they signed the petition.

natural corollary of the greatly modified form of “socialism” that is being handed down to us by our leaders.’⁶³

IMPACT

The BC left wing was inflamed by the convention proceedings, particularly the treatment of Eve Smith. Eighty delegates and observers held their own meeting across the street in the ballroom of the Georgia Hotel, and the next month, at a Left Wing Conference in Vancouver, they formed a Socialist Caucus of the CCF. Rod Young moved a motion to ‘disaffiliate from the CCF,’ arguing that it was ‘impossible to put forward Marxian ideas within the Movement,’ but a large majority favoured remaining in the CCF.⁶⁴ Smith acted as secretary of the group, which soon adopted the name Socialist Fellowship, after a kindred faction in the British Labour Party. Prominent CCFers took an interest in the Fellowship, including Steeves, Cameron, Strachan, Wallis Lefebvre, future MLAS Bill Hartley and David Stupich, and railroader Lefty Morgan.⁶⁵

Trotskyists participated in – and welcomed – these developments. Aubrey Burton attended the Left Wing Conference on the convention’s final day, and upon his return to Trail wrote to Dowson supporting ‘a strong left-wing faction organized within the CCF’ and suggested launching a newspaper akin to *Socialist Outlook*. Burton urged ‘a clean break with the CCF now in favor of complete concentration on the trade union aspect such as the Stalinists are carrying through,

63 ‘Booklet Banned by Convention,’ *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 29 July 1950; ‘Tract Banned Because It Conflicts with New CCF Executive Policy,’ *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 4 Aug. 1950. For Smith’s notes on the incident, see Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 118–20; also Dowson to Burton, 21 July 1950; Roslund (Burton) to Dowson, 1 Aug. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CRM fonds, LAC.

64 ‘Minutes of Left Wing Conference,’ 25 Aug. 1950, file 4-9, GMC, UBCSC; Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 120. The moderates seized on this development. As Steeves informed Cameron, ‘Somebody sent Jessie [Mendels] – anonymously – the minutes of the rebel meeting and the fat was sizzling. Some of them evidently think this a godsent opportunity to expel Rod, for moving the resolution to disaffiliate. A resolution was moved and carried to set up a trial committee on Rod, only Dave Stupich, Thomas and myself voting against. Grace MacInnis was there and fairly chattering with vindictive rage.’ Steeves to Cameron, 23 Sept. 1950, file 1-1, CCC; Coldwell to A. MacInnis, 7 Nov. 1950, file 73-3, AMC, UBCSC.

65 Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 131; R.E. (Lefty) Morgan, *Workers’ Control on the Railroad: A Practical Example ‘Right under Your Nose,’* ed. G.R. Pool and D.J. Young (St John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994).

whether openly as a Trotskyist or just as a trade union militant.⁶⁶ 'Coldwell has finished his party in this area now,' Burton believed, but Dowson was more cautious:

The elements that have reacted so violently to Coldwell's open attacks on elementary class struggle principles are not the workers of Canada who have come into and are moving towards the CCF but the left overs from the past of the CCF – the SPERS, the old fundamentalists. The workers as a whole in Canada know little of what did take place in the CCF convention and are not yet too concerned. They are not going to turn away from the CCF because of this convention ... This left that is developing now doesn't reflect the level of class understanding of the Canadian working-class or their class experience.⁶⁷

However, Dowson welcomed the Left Wing Conference that met in Vancouver, believing the 'Coldwell gang's' efforts to 'rip up the Regina Manifesto and create a lynch atmosphere against the BC section' was galvanizing left opposition in Eastern Canada. He anticipated the formation of 'something along the line of *our* Socialist Fellowship in the BLP,' highlighting the role of Trotskyists in the British left.⁶⁸

Dowson's correspondence with Burton sheds light on conflicting leadership currents within the Canadian working class and the nature of the new politics that was emerging in response to the Cold War:

Many of the lower ranks of the union leadership are only a few years removed from the shop, a few are leaders who were thrown up in the struggle, who were once militants and have got soft. Today in the unions they play much the same role as the Youngs, Eve Smiths etc play in the CCF. To a certain extent they are used as a left cover by the bureaucracy. To a certain extent they play an independent and critical role. At certain stages they act as a point of gravitation for militants like Young in the CCF in BC today ... [C]ompared to Coldwell he represents in a distorted way a progressive force and all critical elements tend to gravitate toward him ... [W]e want to contact these critical elements.⁶⁹

66 Rosslund (Burton) to Dowson, 1 Aug. 1950; Burton to Young, 7 Aug. 1950; 'Comrades of the CCF,' 5 Aug. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

67 Rosslund (Burton) to Dowson, 5 Aug. 1950; Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 21 Aug. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

68 Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 2 Aug. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. Emphasis added.

69 Dowson to Burton, 25 Apr. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

Dowson noted approvingly that the RWP's Vancouver branch had struck off 'three or four comrades to get into the CCYM.' In a letter to Rodney Young, Burton urged 'coordination' of forces 'in eastern Canada and the prairie provinces and our own BC group ... It would be a most desirable thing to have ourselves organized prior to our ousting.' In October, Burton – by then executive secretary of the Trail CCF Club – spearheaded the organization of a Socialist Fellowship in Trail, consisting of militants from his own Civic Workers Local 343 and left-wing CCFers in Mine-Mill Local 480.⁷⁰

The CCF Socialist Fellowship met regularly through 1950 and early 1951, establishing strongholds in the Stanley Park and Hillcrest CCF clubs and local units in Victoria, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Hedley, and Trail; agitation extended into the CCYM, which was abolished by the BC CCF executive the next February. Resolutions were sent to clubs and constituency associations through BC and Canada, and efforts were made to establish a dues base. The journal *Material for Thought*, published by Lefeaux, was endorsed as the Fellowship's official organ. Cameron, however, expressed concern with the group's direction, seeing its purpose as socialist 'education within the mass of the movement, not the organisation of a separatist movement.'⁷¹ Cameron's position was likely influenced by a threat from provincial executive member Tom Alsbury to have him expelled. According to Cameron, the Fellowship's activities were creating 'a furtive and conspiratorial atmosphere.' If the left acted strategically, it could emerge out of the January 1951 provincial council meeting 'in control of the BC section's policies,' Cameron believed, but the present direction, such as a resolution critical of the UN, would allow the reactionaries 'to come out stronger than ever.'⁷² Cameron's fears were confirmed. Following the January meeting, Provincial Secretary Jessie Mendels provided a detailed report on the Fellowship's activities and plan of organization,

70 Burton to Young, 7 Aug. 1950; Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 25 Sept. 1950; Rosslund (Burton) to Dowson, 2 Nov. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, IAC.

71 Cameron to E. Smith, 23 Jan. 1951, as quoted in Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 125–6; 'Summary of Minutes of Socialist Fellowship,' n.d., file 73-21 'Miscellaneous,' AMC, UBCSC; *Material for Thought* (Vancouver), July 1950, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC; Gretchen to Colin, 23 Sep. 1950; 'Minutes of Meeting of Socialist Caucus,' 1 Oct. 1950, file 1-1, CCC; 'Minutes of Meeting of Socialist Caucus,' 1 Oct. 1950, file 1-1, CCC; 'Joint Meeting Provincial Executive Members and CCYM Executive and CCYM Club Representatives,' 28 Jan. 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC; Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 145–52.

72 Cameron to E. Smith, 23 Jan. 1951, as quoted in Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 125–6; 'Report of Trial Board Appointed to Hear the Complaint of Colin Cameron,' 23 Sep. 1950, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC.

exposing the left to charges of being 'a disruptive inner caucus.' The moderates had been in a position where it could have been 'completely routed,' Cameron felt, but the Fellowship had put the left in a false position and on the defensive.⁷³

The moderates – Grant MacNeil, Jessie Mendels, Gladys Webster, Arnold Webster, Alex MacDonald, Frank McKenzie, Laura Jamieson, Tom Alsbury, and others – focused their efforts on 'building the anti-wrecking machine' in Burrard, where the Fellowship was recruiting new members and pushing for a motion of censure against Mendels. They met discreetly on Saturday nights to formulate strategy. MacNeil, provincial president, confided to Grace MacInnis, 'Our fight at the moment is to prevent the Fellowship gaining complete control of the next Provincial Convention.'⁷⁴ In March, he succeeded in having a resolution approved by the Provincial Executive, declaring that membership in 'the Socialist Fellowship is an offence against the Constitution of the CCF, punishable by expulsion'; this move won unanimous approval of the National Council but was rejected by the BC Provincial Council. MacNeil astutely alleged that the Trotskyist RWP was attempting to infiltrate the CCF through the Fellowship.⁷⁵ Laura Jamieson advocated a hard line, wishing to 'name specific people and have them expelled,' including the entire Stanley Park Club. If the convention got out of hand, she proposed having a national officer 'step in and more or less take charge ... They are

73 Cameron called for an end to 'silly resolutions,' yet enclosed a donation of \$5 for the Fellowship, stressing it was 'not dues.' Cameron to E. Smith, n.d., qtd. in Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 126; also Steeves to Cameron, 23 Sept. 1950, file 1-1, CCC, UBCSC; 'Report of the Provincial Secretary on the Socialist Fellowship,' [Jan. 1951], file 73-21, AMC.

74 G. Webster to G. MacInnis, 11 Feb. 1951; MacNeil to G. MacInnis, 6 Mar. 1951; G. Webster to G. MacInnis, 5 Apr. 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC.

According to Frank McKenzie, the debate had to be focused on loyalty, rather than foreign policy, for the moderates to succeed. In constituencies across the province, jostling ensued between supporters of the two camps. In April, Burrard voted to forward the resolution against 'an organization within an organization' to the convention, and approved a slate of moderate delegates. Victoria, Oak Bay, and other clubs, however, went to the Fellowship. McKenzie to G. MacInnis, 19 Feb. 1951; G. Webster to G. MacInnis, 5 Apr. 1951; Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 17 Apr. 1951; Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 26 Apr. 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC.

75 S.P. Lewis, *Grace*, 213–214; Resolution of Provincial Executive, n.d., and Resolution of National Council, 17 Mar. 1951, file 73-4, 'Correspondence 1951,' AMC; MacNeil to Ingle, 6 Mar. 1951; MacNeil to G. MacInnis, 6 Mar. 1951; G. Webster to G. MacInnis, 5 Apr. 1951; Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 17 Apr. 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC; Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 127–9.

going to blame us and claim we are dictatorial whatever we do . . . We might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, especially if being hung (or hanged) is the price of saving the CCF in BC.⁷⁶ Jamieson's hard-line stance was favoured by Grace MacInnis. However, Provincial Leader Harold Winch sought to reconcile the warring factions, advising provincial council delegates in April to 'forget everything and start out fresh,' which moderates believed contributed to 'the defeat of the executive' recommendation against the Fellowship. MacNeil, Alsbury, and Alex Macdonald visited Victoria to rake Winch over the coals; at a meeting in Winch's apartment, attended by the entire CCF caucus (excluding Leo Nimsick and Frank Calder), MLAs promised to go out to the constituencies to ensure 'good delegates are sent to the Convention.'⁷⁷

The Fellowship controversy was related to ongoing struggles against BC's 'Red' unions, which created tension in the CCF legislative caucus. In Trail, the epicentre of the Steelworkers' 1950 raid on Mine-Mill, Trotskyist Aubrey Burton observed that 'the CCF has been virtually split in this working class city by the union raiding tactics of their CCF leadership and the repercussions may well cost the CCF their remaining influence throughout the whole of the Kootenays.'⁷⁸ Nimsick, CCF MLA for Cranbrook and a charter member of Local 480, threatened to vote against the caucus to prevent CCF interference in the Steelworkers–Mine-Mill fight. CCF MLAs were 'preparing their case against the Labor Relations Board,' which had disallowed Steelworkers' application for certification. Nimsick demanded a halt to this interference, a position 'supported by Gretchen [Steeves] and evidently by the Fellowship,' which alleged 'that the trade union

76 Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 17 Apr. 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC. However, moderates including Frank McKenzie, a lawyer, and Alex MacDonald questioned 'under what article of the Constitution' or upon what specific evidence they could be expelled. This prompted Jamieson to ask MacInnis, 'If you know how, please let us know. I feel definitely it has to be done. If we can't do it, then the National will have to.'

77 Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 17 Apr. 1951; Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 26 Apr. 1951; also 'Report of Trial Board Appointed to Hear the Complaint of Colin Cameron,' 23 Sept. 1950, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC; S.P. Lewis, *Grace*, 212–14.

78 Burton to Dowson, 18 Apr. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. Following the 1950 Vancouver convention, Burton observed, 'Coldwell has finished his party in this area now, there is no disputing this but whether its effect will be of a permanent nature is of course as I said a matter for conjecture, a lot will undoubtedly depend on how much Herridge's personal influence can counter the disillusionment with the CCF in the minds of the workers here.' Rosslund (Burton) to Dowson, 5 Aug. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

struggle against Communist domination is undemocratic.⁷⁹ Fellowship supporters threatened to raise the matter at the 1951 Provincial Convention, believing that the ccf's 'further cooperation with ccf-PAC [Canadian Congress of Labour–Political Action Committee] will "water down our Socialism."⁸⁰

In the Fellowship, already-strained relationships were amplified by threatened disciplinary action. 'The Fellowship, due to diverse elements, is on the verge of falling apart anyway, and this might be the fatal blow,' MacNeil predicted.⁸¹ Some leftists, such as Steeves, Cameron, and Hartley, began distancing themselves from the Fellowship and returned to the ccf fold. Others, such as Eve and John Smith, and Doug Cameron, left the party. One dissident ccf'er in New Westminster, Georges LaFrance, threw away his membership card, suggesting his belief 'in revolutionary political action' was 'completely incompatible with the reform political action of the ccf'; LaFrance planned to join either the Socialist Party of Canada or the LPP.⁸² By the time the provincial convention opened in May 1951, the Fellowship had officially disbanded. MacNeil was re-elected president, cementing the power of the 'moderates,' though Jamieson lost her position on the executive and Steeves retained her seat. Writing at the time, Eve Smith succinctly described the ideological conflict in the ccf: 'This movement must decide whether or not it is going to be a socialist movement, or merely a social democratic party. Those terms now represent two schools of thought that I know we all

79 MacNeil to G. MacInnis, 6 Mar. 1951, file 4-10 'Personal Subject Files – Trial of Tom Alsbury for "Character Assassination of Colin Cameron," 1950–1957,' GMC, UBCSC.

80 MacNeil to G. MacInnis, 6 Mar. 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC. In December 1951, the Fellowship had adopted a resolution calling 'upon the working class of this country to muster under its banner.' 'Report of the Provincial Secretary on the Socialist Fellowship,' [Jan. 1951], file 73-21, AMC, UBCSC.

81 MacNeil to G. MacInnis, 6 Mar. 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC.

82 LaFrance to E. Smith, 12 May 1951, as quoted in Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 128; Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 18 Feb. 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC. Smith – who battled tuberculosis throughout her adult life – resigned from the ccf and retired to an acreage on South Pender Island. According to her biographer, 'She could not in the end continue to support a party that abandoned political education, paid mere lip service to internal democracy, allowed its leaders to ignore party policies, and increasingly tended to be controlled by self-perpetuating cliques.' According to Cathers, leftists differed on the ideological crisis in the ccf. Eve and John Smith felt there had been a betrayal of socialism, while Doug Cameron felt a majority in the party had never been committed to socialist principles. Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 94 and 150.

understand quite well. I am not going to waste our time giving definitions of Marxian Socialism and democratic socialism, except to say that Marxian Socialism is essentially democratic.’⁸³ By November 1951, the ‘moderates’ had finally wrested control of *CCF News* from Steeves. ‘Gretchen says we haven’t heard the last of it,’ Laura Jamieson wrote to Grace MacInnis. ‘They fight every inch, naturally. *CCF News* was about their last citadel.’⁸⁴

The BC CCF, bitterly divided, was in poor shape to take advantage of a generational sea change in provincial politics, as the Liberal-Conservative Coalition collapsed in 1952 and the upstart Social Credit party of W.A.C. Bennett established itself as the ‘new form of Coalition’ – holding power for two decades.⁸⁵ On the national level, the process to ‘revise’ the Regina Manifesto, inaugurated at the 1950 Vancouver convention, moved slowly. Disagreement among leaders

- 83 Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 127. Also McKenzie to G. MacInnis, 15 May 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC. According to Smith, the Fellowships’ ‘swan song’ was a Nanaimo conference where Mainland delegates went too far in their ridicule of Coldwell, alienating supporters on Vancouver Island. Cathers, *Beloved Dissident Eve Smith*, 129; also S.P. Lewis, *Grace*, 214; G. MacInnis to MacNeil, 23 May 1951, file 4-10, GMC, UBCSC. Grace MacInnis expressed her appreciation for MacNeil’s work: ‘Had it not been for your courage in grasping that particular nettle of the Fellowship and obtaining the help you needed at the time of the National Council meeting, British Columbia might now be lost as far as the CCF is concerned.’ She felt the ‘well-known habit of awarding consolation prizes when we think we have won a victory’ had to be discarded, to prevent Steeves and her group from using ‘the CCF News as a means – the most powerful means – of building themselves up again and fostering the fog of confusion which led to trouble before ... I think it is *the* moment to make a change in British Columbia’ (Cathers, *Beloved Dissident*, 127).
- 84 Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 24 Nov. 1951, file 4-5, GMC, UBCSC. In November 1951, MacNeil supplanted Steeves as chair of the CCF News Committee, but as a conciliatory gesture allowed Steeves to remain on the committee. Jamieson lamented this concession to the left: ‘The “Thaw” in the cold war in BC is having its effect early I am afraid.’ Jamieson to G. MacInnis, 24 Nov. 1951, file 4-5; also ‘Report of the Administration Committee on the Complaint Filed by F. McKenzie and A. Webster against the CCF News Committee,’ 15 Feb. 1951; MacNeil to Ingle, 6 Mar. 1951; G. MacInnis to MacNeil, 23 May 1951; file 4-10, GMC; McKenzie and Webster to Mendels, 23 Jan. 1951, file 73-21, AMC, UBCSC.
- 85 Frank Calder address, *Proceedings and Resolutions of the Sixth Annual Convention United Fishermen’s Federal Union of BC*, Vancouver, 20–4 March 1944, 316, Kevin Neish papers (private collection); David J. Elkins, ‘Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows: The BC Party System in the 1952 and 1953 Provincial Elections,’ *BC Studies* 30 (Summer 1976): 3–26; Gordon Hak, ‘Populism and the 1952 Social Credit Breakthrough in British Columbia,’ *Canadian Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (June 2004): 277–96; also David J. Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1995).

and rank-and-file members, particularly in Saskatchewan and BC, prevented the issue from resurfacing at the 1952 and 1954 conventions. However, in January 1956, the National Council debated the crisis facing the party and appointed a committee to produce a final draft for the upcoming national convention in Winnipeg. The outcome was the Winnipeg Declaration of Principles, which abandoned the overtly anti-capitalist language of the Regina Manifesto and accepted the concept of the 'mixed' economy. The transition initiated in Vancouver was complete, adapting the CCF to the ideological imperatives of the Cold War and laying the groundwork for a political marriage with the new Canadian Labour Congress.⁸⁶

Among the Trotskyists, the RWP maintained a separate party organization, but 'entryism' remained the motive strategy as the CCF Socialist Fellowship formed and then dissolved in the early 1950s. Trotskyists debated whether the CCF represented the main agency for 'political action by labor' or whether it had degenerated into a 'rotten section of the resurrected corpse of the Second International.' When Burton produced a report titled *Whether the CCF?* questioning the logic of entryism, Dowson advised against breaking from the party: 'With the CCF label on us and with the protection that the Socialist Fellowship gives we can in essence be Trotskyists politically, we can say everything we want openly but "Join the RWP! Join the Fourth International!"' Behind the scenes, Dowson grew weary of Burton's anti-entryist stance. In November 1950, he suggested Burton move to Vancouver for his 'final polishing off ... as a revolutionist.' A year later, Dowson described Burton as 'a most erratic and confused comrade' with a 'complete orientation to the Stalinist LPP' who 'never did and still doesn't know the score. He doesn't understand what our orientation is about.'⁸⁷

86 See Stanley Knowles, *The New Party* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961); 'CCF Endorses New Platform,' *Winnipeg Free Press*, 4 Aug. 1956; 'Notes on National Council Meeting,' 13-15 Jan. 1956, file 7-9 'National Council Meeting, Rough Notes, 1956,' vol. 7, CCF-NDP fonds, LAC; Frank H. Underhill, 'The Winnipeg Declaration of the CCF,' in *In Search of Canadian Liberalism* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960), 243-7; Young, *Anatomy of a Party*, 126-8, 172-3.

87 Dowson to Gang (Barry and Murray), 9 Aug. 1951; Dowson to Murray and Barry, 27 Sept. 1951; Dowson to Barry and Murray, 19 Oct. 1951, file 49-10 'E2-1951-From,' vol. 49, Dowson fonds, LAC. An RWP member named Barry defended Burton: 'Burton has our CCF orientation ... Maybe someday you will learn the elements of how to work with comrades. You don't come in from the outside like a visiting school inspector and grill and pound your comrades, you try to establish a friendly working relationship with them, and try to get across as much as possible in the brief period of your stay ... If I wanted to try and

The rwp formally dissolved in spring 1952, suspending publication of *Labor Challenge* as Trotskyists made a 'total entry' into the ccf. Dowson's brother Murray envisioned 'a long stay in the ccf stretching over several years,' suggesting that 'the comrades in bc will have to restrain themselves from leaping ahead of the rest of the country due to the left-tradition of the West.'⁸⁸ There was 'not a public face to the Trotskyist organization' between April 1952 and December 1955, Elaine Bernard noted.⁸⁹ bc Trotskyists submerged their activity into the Vancouver ccf faction Box 18 and Stanley Park ccf Club Forum, which created storms at ccf provincial conventions throughout the 1950s. A protégé of Dowson's named Barry, who had moved to Vancouver from Toronto, ensconced himself in the Vancouver-Centre ccf and Stanley Park Club, serving on the 1952 campaign committee that elected Laura Jamieson and Jim Bury to the legislature. Trotskyists' effectiveness was blunted, however, by splits in the Fourth International, which divided the Canadian membership. At the 1955 bc ccf Convention, party leaders attributed their woes to Trotskyist infiltration; the Ontario ccf had expelled fourteen members, prompting demands for similar action in bc.⁹⁰

The expulsions contributed to the December 1955 decision to re-establish a public face, with the launching of *Workers Vanguard*

wield the big stick I'd join the army.' Barry to Dowson, 28 Oct. 1951, file 49-9 'E2-1951-to,' vol. 49, Dowson fonds, LAC. There is no evidence of contact between Burton and the rwp (or later Trotskyist formations) after 1952. In the early 1960s, he was hired as business agent of Civic Workers Local 343 and attended CUPE's founding convention as one of two Local 343 delegates. See Jo Dunaway, *We're Your Neighbours: The Story of CUPE BC* (Vancouver: Canadian Union of Public Employees – bc Division, 2000), 10. Also Burton, 'Whether the ccf?'; Rosslund (Burton) to 'Reg, Ruth and all Vancouver Comrades,' 8 Oct. 1950; Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 23 Oct. 1950; Dowson to Rosslund (Burton), 27 Nov. 1950, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

88 Fitzgerald (M. Dowson) to Rosslund (Burton), 17 Mar. 1952, file 9-2, vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC. Murray Dowson wrote under the pseudonym T. Fitzgerald.

89 Bernard, 'A History of bc Trotskyism.'

90 'Fourteen Reds Ousted by Ontario ccf Party,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 9 Apr. 1955; 'ccf Plans Drive against Trotskyist Plotters Here,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 11 Apr. 1955; 'Just One Trotskyist Got Cameron's Help,' *Times*, 13 Apr. 1955; "'Trotskyites" Cost ccf '52 Election,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 14 Apr. 1955; 'Trotsky Communists Aim for Class War, Revolution,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 16 Apr. 1955; "'Trotskyism" Charge, Labor Policy Split ccf Delegates,' *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 16 Apr. 1955; Kane to Friends, 24 Oct. 1954; Dowson to Reg Bullock, 3 Dec. 1954, file 11-2 'Vancouver Branch 1954,' vol. 2, CTM fonds; Barry to Dowson, 5 July 1952, file 49-11 'E2-1951-to,' vol. 49, Dowson fonds, LAC; Hugh to Ross, 18 June 1954; Hugh to Ross and Murray, 21 Sept. 1954; Bill to Ross, 24 Oct. 1954, file 11-2 'Vancouver Branch 1954,' vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

newspaper and the Toronto-based Socialist Educational League (SEL), 'a product of the crisis that confronts the CCF.' SEL was committed to 'fight for a socialist CCF' and 'win affiliation to the CCF as the socialist education wing of the movement.' After the CCF abandoned the Regina Manifesto in 1956, SEL contemplated fielding candidates in the next federal election but maintained that the CCF was still 'an elementary and progressive break from capitalist politics.' By the time the NDP was founded in 1961, Toronto-based SEL had merged with the Vancouver-based Socialist Information Centre (SIC) to form the League for Socialist Action (LSA). 'Past differences, sectarian pride, or vanity – all the barriers which have kept the socialists divided – must be broken down,' the *Workers Vanguard* urged.⁹¹ The birth of the LSA, more stable organizationally than earlier Trotskyist groups and focused on the NDP, signalled a new era in the history of the Fourth International in Canada.

CONCLUSION

The 1950 Vancouver Convention of the CCF represented a turning point in the history of Canadian social democracy and provides a window into the ideological and political milieu of the early Cold War years. Coinciding with debates over the Korean War, atomic weapons, and the role of markets and the state, the CCF convention reveals the response of Canada's left to the Cold War while illuminating relations between 'left' and 'moderate' factions and the clandestine Trotskyist current. Largely ignored in the historiography of the period and of social democracy generally, this event provides potent insight into a

In the early 1950s, the Fourth International faced the most acute internal crisis since Trotsky's death in 1940. A group of dissidents issued a 'Militant Open Letter,' attacking the leadership of Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel as 'revisionist' and triggering an organizational break in the Trotskyist left. See correspondence on 'Militant Open Letter' and 'Pabloists,' file 11-2 'Vancouver Branch 1954'; also file 15-2 'Cannon, James P Correspondence 1954-1961,' vol. 2, CTM fonds, LAC.

91 'Found League for Socialist Action,' *Workers Vanguard*, mid-June 1961, file 57-8, Dowson fonds, LAC; 'Socialist Education League Organized,' *Workers Vanguard*, Dec. 1955, as qtd. in Bernard, 'A History of BC Trotskyism'; 'Running in the Federal Election and Our Orientation,' n.d., ca. 1957, file 57-11, Dowson fonds, LAC; 'Running in the Federal Election and Our Orientation,' n.d., ca. 1957, file 57-11, Dowson fonds; 'Confidential – For National Committee Members Only,' Socialist Educational League, 3 Jan. 1957, file 19-2 'Discussion Documents and Reports, n.d. 1955-1959,' CTM fonds, LAC.

moment of ideological tension in modern Canadian history. Commenting on the convention at the time, the *Canadian Forum* offered a critical perspective that grounded the inner-party conflict in a long-range view of ccf history: 'We wonder how many ccf members feel happy about the recent national convention. One might expect that those who supported national-office policies against so-called bc "Trotskyites" would be happy. Certainly, they succeeded in smacking down the "left-wing" group on every issue. However, when the fever of battle has died down, it may turn out to have been a Pyrrhic victory. To those who are concerned about keeping the party genuinely democratic and genuinely socialist, some of the trends apparent at Vancouver were disturbing.'⁹²

The magazine, a barometer of Canadian progressive opinion at the time, challenged the 'unwarranted amount of control by the resolutions committee,' the formula for allocating delegates, and 'the inclination of the leaders to predetermine policy' on Korea and the Regina Manifesto. Another *Forum* editorial questioned whether 'the ccf as a party' was 'finally condemned to an uncritical defense of the *status quo* throughout the world.'⁹³

To be sure, national leaders such as Coldwell and Lewis and their bc allies such as the MacInnis genuinely believed that a change in policy was needed to lift the ccf out of its electoral doldrums. From a position of strength during the Second World War, when the party led the national Gallup poll and nearly took power in Ontario, the ccf had slumped to a meagre thirteen seats in Parliament and skeletal organizations in most provinces outside Saskatchewan. British Columbia was an exception, where the ccf formed the Official Opposition, but the strength of the bc section's militant left wing was viewed as a liability by national leaders. This conflict came to a head at Vancouver in July 1950, leaving the 'moderates' firmly in control and the leftists alienated and fragmented in the wake of the Socialist Fellowship experience. The Trotskyists, always tiny numerically, were able to take advantage of these divisions to exercise disproportionate influence. While party leaders were quick to vilify all left criticism as 'Trotskyite,' there was a degree of truth to these charges. S.P. Lewis wrote in her biography of Grace MacInnis, 'It is still uncertain whether the fellowship actually had Trotskyist members,' but the foregoing study

92 'The ccf Convention,' *Canadian Forum* 30, no. 356 (Sept. 1950): 124.

93 'The ccf Failure in Foreign Policy,' *Canadian Forum* 30, no. 356 (Sept. 1950): 127-8.

has confirmed the role of RWP entryism in the CCF and Socialist Fellowship.⁹⁴

In the broader context of the Cold War, the 1950 Vancouver Convention had the effect of blunting the Canadian left's contribution to foreign policy debates. It was not too much to suggest, as writer S. W. Bradford did in the wake of the convention, that 'nowhere in this country (outside the Labor-Progressive Party) has there been in 1950 any serious radical criticism of the St Laurent-Pearson-Wrong obeisance to Washington . . . The CCF leaders have been busying themselves only with suppressing the BC socialist-pacifist point of view in the Vancouver Convention and out-shooting the Tories in calling for greater participation in the Korean conflict.'⁹⁵ The weight of the CCF in national and international politics remains open to debate. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that the CCF's unequivocal support helped facilitate the Liberal government's commitment of troops and arms for the Korean War. At the least, CCF support absolved Prime Minister Louis St Laurent from deep consideration of the political consequences of military action. The thinking of CCF national leaders was conveyed by Frank Underhill, author of the Regina Manifesto who by then had moved toward the Liberal orbit: 'Until the threat of Soviet totalitarianism has been removed, freedom is a more fundamental issue than socialism.'⁹⁶ At Vancouver in the summer of 1950, the CCF chose its side in the Cold War.

94 Lewis, *Grace*, 213–14.

95 'CCF Failure in Foreign Policy,' 127–8.

96 'Canadian Socialism and World Politics,' *Canadian Forum* 30, no. 357 (Oct. 1950): 151.

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