

THE EMERGENCE OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS  
IN INDUSTRIAL NOVA SCOTIA:  
A STUDY OF AMHERST, 1891-1925

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PART ONE

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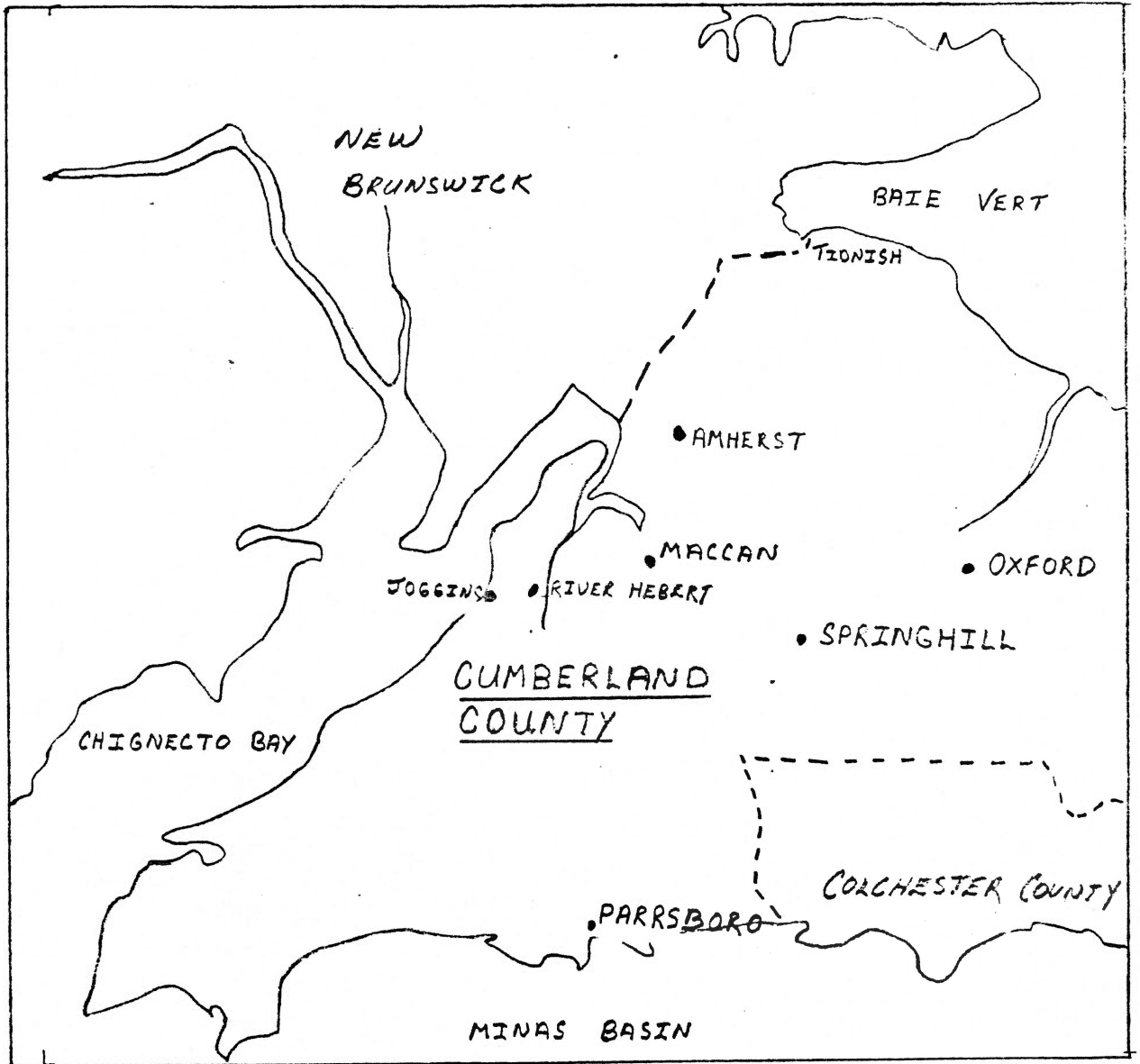
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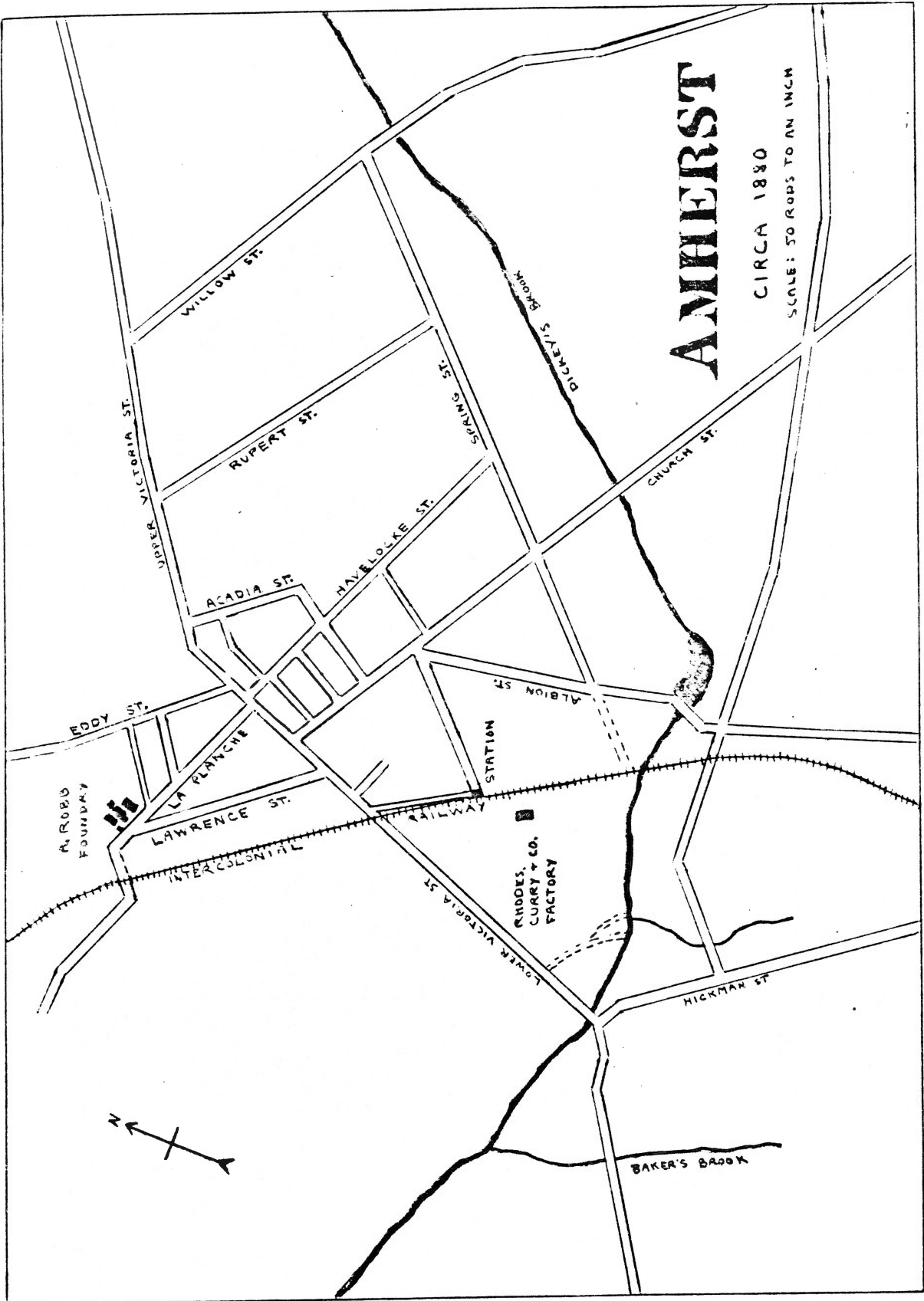
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## Abbreviations

A.F.L.	American Federation of Labour
A.T.L.C.	Amherst Trades and Labor Council
B.R.C.A.	Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America
C.L.P.	Cumberland Labor Party
I.A.M.	International Association of Machinists
I.L.P.	Independent Labor Party
I.M.U.	Iron Molders' International Union
O.B.U.	One Big Union
P.W.A.	Provincial Workmen's Association
S.P.C.	Socialist Party of Canada
T.L.C.	Trades and Labor Congress of Canada
U.M.W.A.	United Mine Workers of America

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## Introduction

In 1977, Thaddie Gould, a retired labourer and an Amherst resident since the early 1900s, remembered the town of his youth.

When I sit down sometimes and think about the Old Busy Amherst and what was here at one time, its just unbelievable. . . . Amherst went to pot so fast that it's pretty hard for a man like myself [to understand]. I remember 1910, everything was so lively around here. . . . I don't want to think of [these times] to often because it kind of makes you sick to think that Amherst went down so fast, in such a short time. What happened? I don't know.<sup>1</sup>

Gould's recollection of Amherst in 1910 was historically sound. Amherst had grown over the previous several decades into one of the Maritimes' most important manufacturing centers. It alone accounted for 20 percent of the capital invested in manufacturing in Nova Scotia and its industries included the country's largest railway rollingstock manufacturer, a nationally prominent steam engine and boiler firm, and the region's most important shoemaker. The future of the local economy did not rest solely on the fortunes of these businesses. Other manufacturers produced enamel goods, luggage, woolen ware, stoves, furnaces, and a variety of wood products for sale in regional and national markets. The rise of manufacturing in Amherst attracted hundreds of working people to the area and the town's population in the first decade of the new century doubled to reach almost 10,000. Amherst was Nova Scotia's most rapidly growing town outside of industrial Cape Breton.

By the beginning of World War One, Amherst's industrial fortunes had begun to reverse and in the post-war period the town faced a rapidly escalating economic crisis. In the mid 1920s not a single major industry of the pre-war era was operating in Amherst. Capital investment in manufacturing declined by several millions of dollars and the value of goods produced in Amherst fell from \$9.5 million in 1920 to \$2 million ten years later. Unemployment rose, the number of residents on relief increased, and several thousand people abandoned Amherst in search of jobs elsewhere in Canada and in the United States. The economic problems besetting Amherst by 1914 and which intensified through into the 1920s were not aberrations in an otherwise strong economy. By the 1920s Amherst was facing a chronic economic crisis, aspects of which continue to plague the town today.

Little has been written on the rise and decline of Amherst as a manufacturing center. In 1930 Robson Lamy, son of an Amherst businessman and a student at Mount Allison University, wrote a narrative of Amherst's industrial history that drew upon his acquaintanceship with members of the business class. A decade later Dr. Read, an economist working for the Nova Scotia Royal Commission on Provincial Development and Rehabilitation, prepared a detailed study of the prospects for economic growth in Cumberland County. The report is a valuable source of statistical information on the county's development from 1880 to 1940, and contains specific information on the growth of Amherst. In the 1960s Norman Pearson, an urban planner hired by Amherst to conduct an urban renewal study for the area, prefaced his final report with a brief historical overview of the town. There are,

unfortunately, no popular histories of the town that focus on the industrial period.<sup>2</sup>

This present study does not attempt to draw a complete portrait of Amherst society for the years 1867-1927, which correspond to the emergence and eclipse of the town as a manufacturing center. I have chosen several important themes in Amherst's history for more intensive investigation. The study attempts to show the ways in which important economic, social, political and, to a lesser degree, cultural changes influenced the history of Amherst.

The economic history of Amherst divides into two major periods. Beginning in the 1860s, Amherst began a long transition to industrial capitalism that accelerated in the 1890s when the town emerged as an important manufacturing center. The expansionary period ended in 1909 when the first of a number of fundamental changes began to occur in the town's economic structure. Indigenous Amherst capital was rapidly integrated into the national economy and, as this process advanced through into the 1920s, the possibility for sustained development in the town lessened. In 1867 the formation of the Amherst Boot and Shoe Company heralded the beginning of the town's expansionary cycle, and the company's closing in 1927, when the shoeworks was the last of Amherst's major industries to shut down, marked the town's collapse into chronic economic crisis. A study of Amherst's history suggests that the post-World War One crisis was a result of the uneven development of Canadian capitalism, The division of labour between regions that emerged with the rise of monopoly capitalism in Canada after 1900 created immense difficulties for manufacturing in Amherst.

This probing of Amherst's economic history within the context of Canadian capitalism is a case study of the process of regional underdevelopment in the Maritimes.

Another central theme in this study is the formation in Amherst of a capitalist class within which the manufacturers were the dominant force. The social origins of this group were found in the farms and artisan shops of the region's pre-industrial rural villages. As they collected in Amherst during the late 1800s, these ambitious manufacturers initiated a practice of close cooperation in economic, political, and social matters. By the late 1890s they were beginning in earnest to cast their horizons beyond Amherst and were becoming increasingly integrated into the Maritime capitalist class. In the early 1900s the growing centralization of corporate power in central Canada and federal state policies combined to limit the economic prospects of the Maritimes. Most Amherst capitalists did not resist this process but chose instead to ally themselves with the interests of central Canadian capitalism. As a consequence, many of the prominent manufacturing families of Amherst's expansionary period had abandoned the town before the crisis of the 1920s.

The nature of society in Amherst shaped the working-class response to economic and social change in the area. This is another major theme in my study of the town's history. Two related dimensions of local material conditions significantly influenced the pattern of working-class protest in Amherst during the period of this study. Local working people competed for jobs in a region of surplus labour and in Amherst struggled to survive in an economic context that became

increasingly unstable as the period progressed. This history of the Amherst working class focuses on its workplace and political response to these conditions, especially the attempt to build a viable trade union structure. The concept of class used in this study assumes that a class is a determined economic reality, ie., an individual or group's relationship to the means of production is a determinant of class position. Class consciousness, the subjective element of class, is the other critical component of the concept of class. As British historian Eric Hobsbawm argues, "class in the full sense only comes into existence at the historical moment when classes begin to acquire consciousness of themselves as such".<sup>3</sup>

The history of the labour movement in Amherst is not one of untrammelled progress toward the achievement of greater solidarity among working people. Labour's experience was more episodic than linear and this consequently is a study of usually small but significant victories interspersed in a record of defeats and important setbacks. Organized opposition to industrial capitalism dates to an 1890 confrontation between local members of the Knights of Labor and the manager of the Amherst Boot and Shoe Company. When the workers lost this struggle, almost a decade passed before interest revived in the labour movement. In the early 1900s, it was the skilled workers who led the initiative to establish unions in the town. They were, to an important degree, successful in this endeavour and took steps to promote greater unity among themselves. Central to this process were the trades and labour council, the civic labour party, and a cooperative store. The craft traditions and the ideology of the skilled workers' movement did not

necessarily give rise to a broader sense of working-class identity. What the phenomenon that British historian John Saville has described as the ideology of labourism fostered cooperation among skilled workers at the point of production.<sup>4</sup> What it did not do for most was to encourage these skilled working men to seek greater economic and political cooperation with other workers.

On the other hand, for a minority of skilled workers in Amherst, the tradition of craft autonomy was transformed through their experience into a broader vision of working-class action. By World War One they saw themselves as members of a national working-class movement and some had become socialist revolutionaries. These men and women provided direction to the post-war conflict that culminated in the May 1919 general strike and the election of the area's first Independent Labor Party candidate in 1919. The 1919 general strike and the popularity of socialist ideas in Amherst was a response of the local working class to the post-World War One crisis of industrial capitalism at home and abroad. Intensifying regional disparities gave the situation a special urgency. In shaping their reaction to the crisis, local labour leaders drew on their pre-war trade union and political experiences to create a mass-based, community labour organization. Labourism declined in importance as socialist ideas became increasingly popular. On the other hand, it was these same regional economic and social forces that severely weakened the Amherst labour movement in the 1920s.

The present study is a contribution to two developing fields of the study of Canadian history. As a contribution to the study of the

history of the Maritimes, it challenges several common assertions about the nature of capitalist development in the region. Significant levels of industrialization were achieved in the Maritimes and in this context Amherst was one of the most important centers of secondary manufacturing. If it is established that the region industrialized in the late 1800s, then the problem becomes one of explaining why the Maritimes "became a dependency rather than a workshop".<sup>5</sup> This study of Amherst suggests that such ready explanations as failed entrepreneurship and geographic determinism are inadequate. A more fruitful line of enquiry is found in the more recent studies based on models of metropolitanism and the neo-staples approach. The deepening complexity of economic, political, and social relations in Canada that characterized the emergence of monopoly capitalism though seem beyond the explanatory power of these models. This, at least, is what the historical record of Amherst suggests. Instead, the industrial rise and decline of Amherst should be understood as a dimension of the inherent tendency of capitalist economies to centralize production and to concentrate capital in pursuit of higher rates of return on investment.

The study is also a contribution to Canadian labour history. It suggests that it is essential to study the history of labour in the economic and social context in which working people lived out their lives. Amherst workers responded to the specific expressions of industrial capitalism in their region, although the form of their resistance often resembled that of other industrial workers. The history of the Amherst labour movement reveals that the miners of Cape

Breton and the mainland coal districts were not always alone in their opposition to the existing economic and social order. On the other hand, the Amherst experience demonstrated the problems in trying to establish a viable labour movement among working people who did not share the common industrial and social experience that fostered workers' solidarity in the mining districts. Finally, the study is further evidence that revolt of western Canadian workers in the early decades of the twentieth century was a more generalized phenomenon than the historians of the western exceptionalism thesis have been willing to concede in their writings.<sup>6</sup>



Footnotes

1. Thaddie Gould Interview, Amherst, 1977.
2. A. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst as an Industrial Centre; A Study of Economic Conditions" (Honours thesis, Mount Allison University, 1930); Nova Scotia, Royal Commission on Provincial Development and Rehabilitation, Report on Manufacturing in Cumberland County (Halifax, 1944); Norman Pearson, Town of Amherst, Nova Scotia Urban Renewal Study (Amherst, 1965).
3. E.J. Hobsbawm, "Class Consciousness in History" in Istvan Meszaros, editor, Aspects of History and Class Consciousness (London, 1971), p. 6; For a continuation of this discussion of class, see Perry Anderson, Arguments Within English Marxism (London, 1980).
4. John Saville, "The Ideology of Labourism" in R. Benewick, R. Berki, B. Parekh, editors, Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology (London, 1973), pp. 213-226.
5. David Alexander, "Economic Growth in the Atlantic Region, 1880-1940" in David J. Bercuson and Phillip Buckner, editors, Eastern and Western Perspectives: Papers from the Joint Atlantic Canada/Western Studies Conference (Toronto, 1981), p. 198. Alexander provides a good review of the economic literature on the Maritimes. See also L. Gene Barrett, "Perspectives on Dependency and Underdevelopment in the Atlantic Region", Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, V. 17 (1980), pp. 273-286; E.R. Forbes, "In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography" in Bercuson and Buckner, Eastern and Western Perspectives, pp. 47-67.
6. For western Canada, see David Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Toronto, 1978); on the east, for example, David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916", Labour/Le Travailleur, V. 4 (1979), pp. 85-113.

## CHAPTER I

### The Industrialization of Amherst, 1867 - 1907

#### I

The 1907 Annual Meeting of the Amherst Board of Trade was an occasion for self-congratulations. Amherst was now a regional manufacturing center sporting all the signs of early twentieth century material progress: a rapidly increasing population, industrial stacks belching smoke, and, of course, a railway. The town's population had risen by almost 50 percent between 1900 - 1905 to 7,200 and now hovered near 9,000. This growth rate was especially significant when contrasted with other towns in the region whose populations were stagnating or increasing very slowly. It was, in fact, from these other centers and the nearby rural areas that Amherst claimed its new residents. Maritimers moved to Amherst because its many industries offered the prospect of at least temporary employment. By 1907, few Maritime centers matched its investment in manufacturing or the value of goods produced by Amherst's companies.

The town hosted Rhodes and Curry Company, one of the largest, if not the largest, railway rollingstock manufacturers in Canada; Robb Engineering, a major producer of steam engines and boilers; and numerous other manufacturers of woolen goods, footwear, luggage,

stoves, enamel products and various furniture products for commercial and private use. These local companies did not restrict their sales to the Maritimes but also reached into national and international markets. As one local braggart boasted to the business magazine, The Busy East:

. . . a traveller could start on a journey any day and ride in a Rhodes-Curry Pullman to Montreal; he could have a bath in an Amherst Foundry tub in Winnipeg; he could witness Robb boilers furnishing the motive powers of many works in Calgary or Regina; he could find Amherst made shoes on the prairies, and he could find Hewson made sweaters in the logging camps of British Columbia. Practically everywhere over the northern part of this Continent Amherst made goods had gone and made a name for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Most of these industries were located along the Inter-Colonial Railway's (I.C.R.) mainline, which passed through Amherst in an east-west direction. To the west, the I.C.R. connected Amherst with Moncton, some 40 miles away, eventually with the Grand Trunk Railway system; east, Halifax lay 140 miles away and industrial Cape Breton, via Truro, was a 270 mile journey. In Amherst, the I.C.R. and Victoria Street, which ran approximately north-south provided the axis along which most of the town's growth occurred. Commercial development centered on Upper Victoria Street, north of the I.C.R. In 1907 this section of the town supported several new office blocks and retail outlets that spoke to Amherst's apparent prosperity. New facilities for the police and fire departments and civic administration, as well as several new school buildings, further added to the town's self proclaimed description of "Busy Amherst".

Residential districts also focused on the Victoria Street/I.C.R. axis. The poorest working-class housing was found south of the I.C.R., just beyond the 50 acre site of Rhodes-Curry. Upper Victoria Street, well north of the railway and beyond the commercial district, was home to many of the town's wealthiest families. Between these two districts was a transitional zone of mixed working and middle-class housing. The rapidly escalating cost of servicing these expanding residential areas and developments in the central area of the town apparently raised little concern among the members of the Board of Trade. They optimistically believed that the growth of the past decade would continue unabated. Expanding assessment rolls and industrial development, they predicted, could meet the financial burdens being placed on the town's government. The Board of Trade referred its skeptics to a report on Amherst's future commissioned by the Board and the town council. Speaking only in the most positive phrases on the possibilities for continued industrial development, the report forecast that Amherst's population would surpass 16,000 in 1920, and reach 20,000 by 1925.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the recession that the future held for Amherst, in 1907 there was no disputing its importance as a regional manufacturing center. In studying the underlying process of development in Amherst in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, two dominant themes emerge. First, agriculture provided only an initial stimulus to the town's growth. The regional expansion of industrial capitalism, especially in the Cumberland coal district in the 1870s and slightly later in Cape Breton, was by far a more significant factor than

agriculture for Amherst's economic development. Second, Amherst's industrial revolution was nurtured by an aggressive and cohesive group of industrial capitalists. In the 1860s, the nucleus of this group was already living in Amherst and formulating the economic and political strategy they considered necessary for their successful exploitation of the area's resources. Drawn from among the ranks of the village's merchants, master craftsmen and farmers, this group not only influenced Amherst's future but also played an important role in Nova Scotia's transition to industrial capitalism.

These themes of the formation of a cohesive capitalist group and its role in the town's industrialization, and the relationship of Amherst's economic development to that of the region dominate the town's history. The industrialization of Amherst can be divided into two major periods. The first period covers the early 1860s to the mid-1880s and was characterized by class formation and the gradual emergence of an industrial base. The second significant period stretched from the 1880s to the beginnings of the national recession in the autumn of 1907. This was the era of "Busy Amherst", when the town emerged as an important regional manufacturing center and its entrepreneurs first began to make significant financial alliances with other capitalists in the region.

It must be noted from the outset that this study does not attempt to present the totality of the experience of class formation and class consciousness in Amherst. This is not a study of capitalist-class culture but rather an exploration of some important aspects of that culture, especially its economic relationships and political

institutions, and, to a much lesser degree, its social and cultural organizations.<sup>3</sup> The focus on economic relationships is justified because an object of this investigation is to confront the erroneous but still popular portrayal of Maritime capitalists as failed entrepreneurs. This misconception has, in turn, become an equally false and misleading explanation for the contemporary underdevelopment of the region. This study also seeks to establish that significant levels of industrialization were attained in the Maritimes, an impression one would not obtain from a visit to Amherst today.<sup>4</sup> Amherst's deindustrialization and the acceleration of the process of regional underdevelopment is the focus of the second chapter.

## II

In the 1860s, Amherst was a small, slowly-growing agricultural center.<sup>5</sup> Farming was expanding along the Tantramar Marshes and several other low lying areas to the east and south of the village. The fertility of this dyked land contrasted sharply with the soils beneath the extensive soft wood forests that covered three-quarters of Cumberland County. The village's 1,839 residents were primarily of British origin and most were Maritime born, a demographic characteristic that changed little over the next 40 years. The small Acadian French population was descended from the first Europeans to dyke the marshlands and open the area to farming. In 1755 the British military brutally expelled the Acadians from the Maritimes and encouraged British immigration into the region. In the Cumberland

area, New Englanders moved north to take over the confiscated Acadian farms. They were joined before 1800 by Ulster and Yorkshire settlers and United Empire Loyalists. Population growth in the County was gradual through the 1840s, hovering at about 8,000 by the end of the decade. Settlement quickened in the 1850s and the county's population reached almost 20,000 by 1861 and 23,000 by 1871.<sup>6</sup>

Amherst was not Cumberland's largest urban center during most of the nineteenth century.\* Until the 1870s, the villages of Pugwash, River Hebert and River Phillip were larger than Amherst, due to their port-status locations along the shores of the Chignecto Basin and the Northumberland Strait. The LaPlanche River, a narrow tidal stream which ran through Amherst on its course to the Bay of Fundy, offered the village only very limited access to the sea. It was not until the building of the I.C.R. through the interior of the county that Amherst found itself located on a major transportation route. Yet despite its relative isolation, the village had advanced from a "few log cabins - rude habitations of the first settlers", as one writer noted, to a "neat and pretty little town" by the time of Confederation. Amherst now supported several hotels and general stores, as well as the usual variety of artisan shops of a village of its size.<sup>7</sup>

The importance to Amherst of the expanding agricultural activity in the surrounding area was evident to anyone visiting the village. Over a dozen sawmills, two grist mills, a flour mill, carding mill, and a tannery operated in or adjacent to the village. These were small and

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\* See Table I, p. 50.

usually seasonal firms that required little capital investment and few employees. Production in Amherst was carried on in a few small shops: shoemakers, blacksmiths, cabinet makers, coopers, and other craftsmen worked to supply the local demand for their wares.<sup>8</sup> In addition to handicraft production, the village's economy included the Amherst Boot and Shoe Company and the Robb Foundry. These two firms marked the leading edge of Amherst's developing industrial revolution and in their early histories is found the origins of the capitalist group that came to dominate Amherst's development well into the twentieth century.

In 1867, the Amherst Boot and Shoe Company was formed as a partnership among 14 local merchants, farmers, and master craftsmen. Prominent among these investors was Hiram Black, a successful farmer and future M.L.A., who served the company first as a director and later as its president; R.B. Dickey, lawyer, and the area's largest land owner; and Charles Tupper, the local doctor and druggist and, as of 1864 Premier of Nova Scotia.<sup>9</sup> Capitalized at \$20,000 and employing 14 men and five women, the company soon embarked on an expansion and diversification program that solidified its position as the area's most important shoemaker.<sup>10</sup> This occurred in 1873 when the company purchased the operations of its chief rival, the Amherst Shoe and Sewing Machine Company, and absorbed the village's two largest tanneries into its operations. The shoeworks now carried a capitalization of \$40,000 and reported increasing sales. The former owner of Amherst Shoe and Sewing Machine Company, M. D. Pride, became a major shareholder in the Amherst Boot and Shoe Company and was given the responsibility of managing the business. The son of a local



farmer, Pride soon became one of Amherst's most important industrial capitalists.<sup>11</sup>

The Robb Foundry was Amherst's largest business in the 1860s. Established two years earlier than the shoeworks, its founder, Alexander Robb, had immigrated to the area with his parents in 1838 from Northern Ireland. In Nova Scotia he apprenticed as a silversmith, a trade which he soon set aside in favour of tinsmithing. In 1848, together with another local craftsman, Robb opened a small stove repair shop which expanded gradually into the retailing of stoves imported from Boston. In 1865, Robb felt confident enough to cancel his arrangement with the Boston firm and to strike out on his own building stoves. Soon his foundry reported assets of \$12,000, employed 20 men, and recorded sales of upwards of 2,500 stoves. Because Robb already relied on steam power, he was able to diversify quickly into the repair and manufacturing of small machinery.<sup>12</sup>

The merchants, farmers, and master craftsmen involved in these early factories formed the nucleus of an emerging local industrial capitalist group. This assemblage, which initially included, among others, Hiram Black, Alexander Robb, M. D. Pride, Charles Tupper, and James and Charles Christie, proprietors of a local carriage works, now sought an industrial strategy for local and regional development. The program they settled upon in the 1860s found its initial voice in the Confederation movement. Strategically located near the untapped reserves of the Cumberland coal basin, Amherst capitalists advocated a continentalist rather than an ocean based economy. As historian D. A. Muise has convincingly argued, other coal districts also adopted this

plan because political union with central Canada was perceived as the first important step in the integration of the economies of the two regions.<sup>13</sup> The benefits to Nova Scotia from such links were thought to be twofold: first, it would create a stable market for the Maritime coal industry in central Canada; second, a common market with the Canadas would foster industrialization as Maritime entrepreneurs rushed to fill the Canadian demand for manufactured goods.

The continentalists, or Confederation advocates, found some of their most skillful and persuasive supporters in the Amherst area. Largely isolated from intensive participation in the shipbuilding and carrying trades, Amherst capitalists looked to coal mining and its related industries to stimulate the economy.<sup>14</sup> Charles Tupper spoke for most of the town's entrepreneurs in 1861, when he predicted that coal was the "great source of provincial wealth and prosperity" that eventually would "make Nova Scotia the great emporium for manufacturers in British America".<sup>15</sup> Tupper's argument appeared to have some foundation. The cancellation of the General Mining Association's coal mining monopoly in 1854 had precipitated vigorous activity in the coal districts, especially in Pictou County. Coal production and sales rose dramatically throughout the 1850s and early 1860s and to some extent generated industrial expansion. As Muise noted,

In terms of capital formation and international earnings, the impact of the coal mining industry was very substantial. But it was in the promotion of related industries that its presence was most felt. Input industries, from agricultural products to the supply of pit-props, prospered and expanded. Bulky cargoes contributed not a little to the growth of the shipbuilding industry in Pictou. In effect, coal was integrated into the expanding, though resource-based economy.<sup>16</sup>

It was this apparent potential of the coal industry to foster general economic expansion that convinced Amherst capitalists to lend their voices to the Confederation movement.

Tupper's Canada Party, later the Liberal-Conservative Party, enjoyed the allegiance of most of Amherst's ambitious entrepreneurs throughout the Confederation debates, and continued to receive such support well into the twentieth century. Hiram Black, director of Amherst's Boot and Shoe and Legislative Council member (1858-1867), Cumberland M.L.A. (1874-76) and president of the Liberal-Conservative Association in Cumberland in the 1870s and 1880s, "fought side by side" with Tupper during the Confederation debates. R. B. Dickey and Jonathan McCully, both associated with the shoeworks, joined Tupper among the Fathers of Confederation. The Robb, Pride, and Christie families also were staunch Conservatives.<sup>17</sup> These men supported Confederation as a first step in a long-term program to industrialize the region. Confederation also promised more immediate benefits for the village's manufacturers. Cumberland's coal industry had not experienced the rapid expansion that occurred in the colony's other coalfields, which enjoyed easy access to the sea. Amherst investors believed that the inland location of the coal deposits in their vicinity posed a major obstacle to the area's development. The best, or at least the quickest, solution to this problem of isolation seemed to be the construction of an inter-colonial railway. A railway such as this had interested Tupper for some time for it almost certainly would pass through Amherst. In his first year as premier, Tupper tried unsuccessfully to commit the House of Assembly to just such a scheme.

The Confederation argument, however, incorporated the plan and the I.C.R. was eventually completed through to Quebec in 1876.<sup>18</sup>

Support for Confederation was not unanimous in Cumberland County. Amherst proponents of the union faced determined opposition from the residents of the coastal villages, whose commercial interests lay with the "wood, wind, and sail" economy. During Canada's first general election, Tupper campaigned hard with promises of new industries and railways to defeat William Annand of the anti-union Nova Scotian Party. It was not an easy victory for Tupper who managed to squeak through only because of solid support from Amherst and nearby Mills Village (Oxford), a similarly ambitious center.<sup>19</sup>

After the election, Amherst's entrepreneurs considered the Confederation issue closed and turned their attention to the realization of some of the predictions made during the debate. The editor of the Amherst Gazette shared these ambitions and captured the sentiments of many of these men when he wrote that soon

Amherst shall become a city; when ever busy, moving, surging crowds hurry through her long broad streets, intent upon gain, or hasting to her lofty halls to listen to the burning eloquence of one of her many orators; when vast manufactories arise on every hand; when her marts of commerce are frequented by a throng of wealthy, intelligent, enterprising men, competent to make Amherst a city in more than mere name. Amherst has progressed vastly during the last few years, and we trust will go on, until at last our little village will become a pride to our native land.<sup>20</sup>

Such optimistic predictions about Amherst's future were dulled only slightly in the 1870s, a decade of modest economic expansion. Only 384 individuals were added to the village's population during these years, and capital formation proceeded slowly, as Amherst's rate of increase fell behind that of Dartmouth, New Glasgow, Truro, and Yarmouth. These

figures did not seriously discourage Amherst employers and they certainly felt no regrets for their continentalist policies. The National Policy debate of the late 1870s, in fact, provided local entrepreneurs with an occasion to join with other Maritime manufacturers in a reaffirmation and elaboration of their original program.<sup>21</sup>

Amherst manufacturers pointed to the expansion of their established industries and the opening of new workshops in the town when called on to defend their economic strategy. By 1880, Robb's and the shoeworks had doubled their assets and employed twice as many workers. The local economy expanded in the 1870s to include several new, small foundries and wood working firms, of which the Rhodes and Curry Company was by far the most successful. This wood working and contracting partnership, formed in 1877, quickly came to rival the more established businesses in its importance to the local economy.<sup>22</sup>

Nelson Rhodes and Nathaniel Curry were the principal partners in the business and their influence in local affairs grew as rapidly as their economic interests. They shared more in common than their business interests for their family backgrounds and early work experiences were remarkably similar. As a young man, Rhodes left the family farm in Cumberland County and apprenticed in the building trades in Boston before returning to live in Amherst in 1876.<sup>23</sup> Nathaniel Curry, after serving as a carpenter's apprentice in the Annapolis Valley, struck out for Boston at age 20. He soon left New England for the west and settled for four years in Carson City, Nevada, where he worked for the Virginia Trunk Railway. The practical knowledge

acquired in these years later influenced Curry's decision to diversify Rhodes and Curry into railway rollingstock manufacturing. In 1877, Curry returned to Canada and decided to locate in Amherst, where his brother, Mark, and, now brother-in-law, Nelson Rhodes had opened a wood working shop.<sup>24</sup>

The intensified mining exploration and development occurring in the nearby coalfields influenced the decision of Rhodes and Curry and other smaller companies to locate in Amherst. "A basin shaped strip of carboniferous coal that extends south east from Joggins to Springhill 25 miles away and has an average width of 12 miles", this coal district possessed three commercially viable seams, at Springhill, Joggins, and River Hebert. Springhill's outcrop was the district's largest and most readily exploitable coal deposit. Though this area was the scene of some early sporadic mining ventures by local farmers, its systematic exploitation began only in the 1870s with the completion of the I.C.R.<sup>25</sup>

Between 1871 and 1881, Springhill grew from a few houses to a town of 4,800 residents. The possibilities for employment in the coal industry attracted miners and their families to the area and the number employed in the Springhill mine rose from 19 in 1872 to over 1,000 in 1886 and to almost 1,800 by 1905. Coal sales experienced a similar growth rate and peaked in 1903.<sup>26</sup> The success of the Springhill mine led to a flurry of speculative investments in the district. New mines opened, railway companies obtained charters for branch lines, and as well schemes for smelters, iron and steel mills, and gigantic port

facilities were churned out regularly from the very active rumour mill of the era.<sup>27</sup>

It is difficult to determine accurately just how active Amherst investors became in the coal industry. Evidence suggests that while they did not ignore mining, the coal industry never dominated the investments of Amherst's wealthiest and most influential capitalists. In 1870, several Amherst residents participated in the formation of the Springhill Mining Company. Their control was soon challenged by the Saint John financed Springhill and Parrsboro Coal & Railway Company. Early in the next decade, a group of Montreal capitalists with interests in the Canadian Pacific Railway acquired control of both of these Cumberland companies. This takeover was significant because local control over the only viable coal seam in the district was relinquished. The consequences of this change did not become apparent until early in the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup>

After the movement of this Montreal syndicate into the Cumberland area, Amherst investment in the coal industry was limited to a relatively minor role in several extremely speculative ventures. Rhodes' and Curry's decision to participate in the financing of the Maritime Coal and Railway Company was the only major exception and, as we shall see, this decision revolved around a special set of circumstances. The absence of significant local, direct investment in the coal industry probably had as much to do with timing as any other factor. Amherst entrepreneurs were concentrating on building their own industries and had few capital reserves for other ventures. In the

late 1890s, when capital was available, the coal mining industry was dominated from outside the region.

The growth of mining in Cumberland and in Cape Breton was the dominant stimulus to Amherst's expansion from the early 1870s to the early 1900s, when the demand for manufactured goods in rapidly developing western Canada also became important. Forestry was one industry that clearly benefitted from the opening of the Cumberland mines because it created a large demand for logs for pit props and lumber for the construction of mine buildings and houses. A sawmill industry that produced \$114,000 in sales in 1870 reported sales of over one million dollars only 20 years later.<sup>29</sup> Some Amherst entrepreneurs participated directly in the forestry industry. James Hickman, a merchant and early director of the shoeworks, was the town's largest timber merchant by virtue of his control of timber assets valued at \$200,000. Rhodes and Curry and other smaller wood working operations also invested in the forestry industry. Rhodes and Curry extended their interest in timber to include the Sheet Harbour area in Nova Scotia and, in 1897, they joined an Amherst syndicate to purchase "one of the most valuable lumber properties in Newfoundland".<sup>30</sup>

The mining and lumbering activities in the Cumberland area had a pronounced affect on production at the Robb Foundry. In 1888, Frederick Robb, the owner's eldest son, explained to the Royal Commission on the Relations Between Labor and Capital that the foundry's "specialty has been stoves, but lately we have been moulding casting for the mines". He observed that his foundry was aggressively "entering into new lines of manufacturing" and that "about a year ago



we commenced boilermaking . . . and we are now fitting up so as to make our own engines".<sup>31</sup> Robb's intended to sell this equipment to the mining and forestry industries active in the area. Within several years of Frederick Robb's appearance before the Royal Commission, the foundry was advertising a complete line of portable steam powered electrical sawmills and boilers for the timber trade and announced that it was also "making a full line of pulp manufacturing machinery". In 1891, the foundry incorporated as the Robb Engineering Company, with a Board of Directors dominated by Alexander Robb's three sons, Frederick, David, and Aubrey. It was now set to extend its interests well beyond the Cumberland area.<sup>32</sup>

These changes at the Robb Foundry were an indicator of the transition underway in the Amherst economy. By the early 1880s, the town's broadening manufacturing sector began to establish its importance beyond the immediate area and, during the next 20 years, Amherst emerged as an industrial center of regional importance. An indication of the rate of capital formation in Amherst can be garnered from census data.<sup>33</sup> Investment in manufacturing was 34 times greater in 1910 than in 1890, growing from \$457,000 to \$17,327,000.\* The greatest shift occurred in the first decade of the century when investment increased 11 fold. In the twenty years after 1891, Amherst's population rose from 3,781 to 8,973, with 1900-1910 again showing the most rapid increase, as the population almost doubled. By 1910 Amherst thoroughly dominated manufacturing in Cumberland County.

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\*See Table II, p. 51.

It accounted for approximately 94 percent of capital investment in manufacturing, 75 percent of wages and goods produced, 57 percent of all employees, and 22 percent of the county's population. When these statistics are extended to include all of Nova Scotia, Amherst's record remains impressive. The town's share of manufacturing investment, which stood at just over 4 percent in 1890, topped 20 percent only 20 years later. By 1910, Amherst contributed 9 percent to the total value of all goods manufactured in the province.\*

Some interesting patterns emerge when Amherst is compared with other Nova Scotian and New Brunswick towns. Between 1890 - 1910, Amherst was the most rapidly growing center outside of industrial Cape Breton, which was booming because of its vibrant coal and steel complex. Amherst, furthermore, was the sixth largest center in the two provinces in 1910 and reported the highest capital investment in manufacturing, except for Sydney. These statistics on capitalization, of course, measure only one aspect of an urban economy and are presented only to establish Amherst's increasing importance to the regional economy. This is not to suggest that Amherst had eclipsed Halifax, Saint John, or industrial Cape Breton among the central components of the regional economy, or had yet presented a significant challenge to that ascendancy.\*\* Amherst's relative importance to the Maritime economy receives a more thorough airing later in this chapter. But first, more needs to be said about the specifics of the town's economy in this period. More precise information on the nature

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\* See Table III, p. 52.

\*\* See Table IV, p. 53.

of this aggregate investment is gleaned from considering ownership patterns, changing markets, and the relationship of local industries to their regional and national competitors. The latter two questions will be examined together and followed by a discussion of financing.

Rhodes and Curry unquestionably experienced the most dramatic changes of any local company in this period. In 1888, the firm employed 70-80 men and hired at least that number again on a seasonal basis. Its wood working shops produced building materials and furniture and its contracting business flourished. Soon to be known as the "Builders of Nova Scotia", the company received contracts to construct private and public buildings throughout the Maritimes. When the Dominion Coal & Steel Company began its rapid expansion in Cape Breton, Rhodes and Curry contracted to build hundreds of the coal company's tenement houses in Glace Bay and Bridgeport. By 1900, it was no longer the Rhodes and Curry wood working operations that impressed visitors to Amherst since the company had become one of Canada's largest producers of railway rolling stock. This new division opened in 1893, two years after the partnership had incorporated, when Rhodes and Curry purchased the assets of the Harris Car Works and Foundry of Saint John. The Harris equipment was removed to Amherst and Rhodes and Curry began an annual production of 350 railway freight and passenger cars.

The company wasted little time in expanding its railway car production facilities. Within ten years of the Harris purchase, Rhodes and Curry reported having the annual capacity to manufacture 4,000 freight and 60 passenger cars. The firm's fully integrated operation

attracted the attention of a writer for Canadian Machinery, who marvelled that the carworks, occupying 50 acres,

differs materially from nearly all other car works on this continent, in that most of them are merely assembly shops. The Amherst branch produces almost everything entering into the construction of the cars built there, and supplies various other car works throughout Canada with parts.<sup>34</sup>

All this represented diversification into an area in which Rhodes and Curry had expertise, and where it found an expanding market and few major competitors. Curry had worked for a railway company before settling in Amherst and both he and Rhodes were master carpenters, a skill essential to the building of the wooden railway cars of the era. The purchase of the Harris works left Rhodes and Curry with no serious competitors in the Maritimes and few rivals in the national markets. In the early 1900s, Canada's rapidly expanding railway system created a seemingly limitless demand for freight and passenger cars. Regional buyers from Rhodes and Curry included the I.C.R., Dominion Atlantic Railway, and the Dominion Steel and Coal Company, while purchasers from outside the region included the Canadian Northern, Grand Trunk Pacific, and, to a lesser degree, Canadian Pacific. American roads occasionally bought Amherst equipment but such sales never became a major source of revenue. Fuelled by its sales, Rhodes and Curry integrated its rail car production so that by 1905 it could report assets of \$3 million, sales of \$2.3 million, and a work force of 2,000. One final aspect of the competition in the industry is noteworthy. Because both railways and the construction of public buildings heavily involved government contracting and subsidies, Rhodes and Curry carefully nurtured its political allegiances. Between 1893 - 1909, Senators R. B. Dickey,

Thomas Black, and David Mitchell, Members of Parliament, J. M. Townshend and Charles Tupper, and Provincial Members of the Legislature, Thomas Black and B. J. Pearson were members of the company's board of directors. These political connections which crossed party lines became more necessary after 1903 when two major central Canadian rivals, Imperial Rolling Stock Company and Canada Car Company, were established.<sup>35</sup>

Operations at Robb Engineering also underwent a significant transformation in this period. Shortly after its incorporation in 1891, the firm established a design and drafting department under the direction of Aubrey Robb. The youngest of the three brothers, he had only recently graduated from a mechanical engineering program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. While at M.I.T., Robb convinced John Sweet, a professor of Mechanical Engineering, and E. J. Armstrong, M.E., to join the Amherst company's new design department. Together they drafted plans for the Robb-Sweet-Armstrong steam engine that, once in production, soon catapulted Robb's into national prominence. The steam engine produced electricity for municipal lighting plants, factories, sawmills, hospitals, hotels, and office buildings across Canada. International sales to Spain, England and several Caribbean countries made less pretentious than one might have thought Canadian Machinery's description of Robb's "Engines of World Wide Reputation." A prohibitive tariff hindered sales to the American market, a difficulty Robb's tried to circumvent in 1903 by establishing a branch plant in South Farmington, Mass. Due primarily to its successful penetration of the market for stationary steam engines, Robb's employed

450 men in a sprawling plant that housed machine, flange, blacksmith, pattern, and boiler shops, as well as a substantial foundry. Capitalized at over \$1 million in 1905, the work process was "well systematized", wrote a Canadian Machinery reporter, and "these systems . . . are almost automatic in their workings".<sup>36</sup>

The Amherst Boot and Shoe and Christie Brothers also grew larger and more diversified. By 1900, the shoeworks was the largest in eastern Canada, employing 200 men and women and producing footwear valued at almost \$500,000. Its Maritime market remained of central importance but the successful penetration of the western Canadian market led the company to consider opening a division in Regina.<sup>37</sup> Christie's, meanwhile, dropped the diminishing carriage making trade in favour of coffins, trunks, and travel luggage.

Established industries though did not account for all the increased capital investment in Amherst.<sup>38</sup> The Amherst Foundry & Heating Company and the Hewson Woolen Mill, both incorporated after 1900, added new dimensions to the local economy. Like most of Amherst's other important manufacturers, the Amherst Foundry's evolution followed the classical transition from artisan production to industrial capitalism. The foundry was the final result of the merger of three artisan shops in the 1890s, which followed closely on the decision of Robb's to abandon stove production. Taking up this trade, the firm gradually centralized and expanded its facilities until it was incorporated in 1904. Diversification at this time equipped the foundry to build furnaces and enamel products, especially bath tubs, sinks and preserving kettles. Considered a pioneer in the enamel business, the

Amherst Foundry found its greatest markets in Toronto, Montreal, Newfoundland, and Britain. Employing 150 men in 1907, the foundry had become a significant component in the economy.<sup>39</sup> The Hewson Woolen Mill opened in 1903 with a great fanfare. Its capitalization reached one million dollars by 1905 and the company employed 200 women and men.

Smaller firms that hired between 25 - 50 workers rounded out the list of the town's manufacturers. Companies like Victor Wood Working, Dunlop Brothers, and Wm. Holmes made clothing, furniture, carriages, doors and sashes, and food stuffs.<sup>40</sup> These businesses were of secondary importance compared to Rhodes and Curry, Robb's, Amherst Boot and Shoe, Amherst Foundry, Hewson's and Christie's, which together represented 95 percent of the town's capital investment in manufacturing, and employed an equal percentage of the local working class. Thus, by 1907, Amherst's six largest companies had penetrated markets outside the region, appeared competitive in their economic sectors, and seemed to have relatively secure futures. They were also profitable to their shareholders, especially those holding interests in Rhodes-Curry, Robb's, and the shoeworks. Throughout their histories all three companies were reported "as good dividend payers" and possessed of sound management. Such observations appeared accurate for the years up to 1907, though the absence of company records makes a definitive statement impossible. A similar problem arises when exploring the sources of investment capital and ownership, the question this study now addresses.<sup>41</sup>

The development of the Cumberland and Cape Breton coal districts and rapid expansion in the west, which were part of the intensified

growth of industrial capitalism in Canada, shaped the objective boundaries within which Amherst emerged as a manufacturing center. It was a cohesive group of local capitalists formed from the ranks of the town's merchants and artisans who took advantage of these circumstances. The linkages within this group by the early 1880s was exemplified in the financial support given to N. Curry and N.A. Rhodes. In securing a loan for \$7,500 from a British investor in 1881, Rhodes and Curry provided a list of guarantors that included the names of many of Amherst's merchants and manufacturers, both large and small. A study of the 41 names demonstrates that there was little distinction in Amherst between mercantile and industrial capital. Merchants such as Messrs. Chapman, Douglas, Dunlap, Hillson, Moffatt, and Tupper already held investments in the shoeworks and their backing of Rhodes and Curry was one more step along their path to increasing involvement in local manufacturing. Most would eventually join the board of directors of Rhodes and Curry and several other companies. Joining the guarantors already identified were the principals in Amherst's largest industries, the shoeworks and the Robb Foundry. Hiram Black, R. B. Dickey, W. T. Pipes, M. D. Pride, J. M. Townshend, and D. W. Robb supported the Rhodes-Curry loan. Smaller manufacturers also signed the document, including such individuals as tanners Charles Casey and D.T. Quigley, carriage makers H. Hicks and W. Holmes, harness maker W. Read, and painter G.P. Rodger.<sup>42</sup>

In the next three decades, members of this group and their descendants, led by the most prominent manufacturing families - Curry, Dickey, Black, Rhodes, Lusby, and Pride - intensified their business



cooperation. At what ultimately proved to be the apogee of Amherst's influence, these men still remained prepared to unite to foster and protect their interests.\* In 1908, for example, an "Amherst Syndicate" formed to confront a challenge for control of the shoeworks directed by Saint John capitalists. The New Brunswick financiers had secured temporary control of Amherst Boot and Shoe through some undetermined form of stock manipulation. Ownership returned to Amherst when members of the Rhodes, Curry, Black and Pipes families rallied to support the firm. W. T. Pipes, then provincial Attorney-General, became president of the reorganized company.<sup>43</sup>

Collaboration among local entrepreneurs was not restricted to crisis situations; in fact, it was such a consistent practice that most industries could accurately be described as community joint ventures. This was true of the Amherst Boot and Shoe and, to a large degree, of Rhodes and Curry, Robb's and the Hewson Woolen Mill. At Rhodes and Curry, Nelson Rhodes and Nathaniel Curry dominated the firm's affairs through its incorporation, purchase of the Harris Company, and rapid expansion through to 1907. Together with their sons, they monopolized the company's executive positions.<sup>44</sup> While management and financial control rested in the hands of the founding family, the firm did approach other local capitalists for political and capital resources. The decision to buy the Harris plant, for example, forced Rhodes-Curry to find the additional capital that brought Amherst merchants Thomas Dunlap and James Moffatt and lawyer J. T. Smith onto the Board of

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\* See Table V, p. 54.

Directors. Over the next 15 years, other prominent Amherst manufacturers and merchants also received invitations to join the Board. If directorships are accepted as an approximate measure of an individual's investment in a particular business, then the long term financing of Rhodes and Curry was definitely an Amherst affair. As far as can be determined from incomplete evidence, between 1893 - 1907, all Rhodes and Curry directors were Amherst residents, except for financier J. C. Robertson, Saint John; Senator Mitchell, Drummondville; and B. F. Pearson, Halifax. Robertson joined Rhodes and Curry in 1893, to represent several Saint John investors, who acquired an interest in the company through the Harris sale. Mitchell and Pearson were not appointed until 1905, although both had worked with Curry on investment schemes prior to this date. The significance of these appointments is explored later but they did not represent any erosion of Rhodes' and Curry's influence in the carworks.<sup>45</sup>

Robb Engineering's management and ownership patterns were similar to those at the carworks. After incorporation control of the company fell to the three Robb sons, their sisters, and G. W. Cole, the company's accountant, who dominated the firm's affairs throughout this period. But the massive expansion of the Amherst shops and their movement into New England after 1903 placed a heavy financial burden on Robb's. This was met by making alliances with several major Halifax based financial institutions though Robb's remained locally controlled through the expansionary era.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the financing of Hewson's Woolen Mill needs brief consideration. Launched in 1903 amid tremendous fanfare in the local press, this company had all the

hallmarks of an attempt to duplicate on a grand scale the founding of the shoeworks 36 years earlier. Prominent among the first directors were N. Curry; J. A. Dickey, son of R. B. Dickey; and Dr. Charles Hewson, an investor in several companies. H. L. Hewson and his brother E. E. Hewson initiated much of the planning behind the new company.

In 1896, H. L. Hewson was a partner in a newly formed woolen mill in Oxford, a short distance from Amherst. Disgruntled because his Oxford associates lacked "the spirit of progress", Hewson sold his interest in the company and moved to Amherst. In 1902, his proposal to establish a woolen mill in Amherst received a warm reception from local investors as they subscribed to all the shares in one day. Hewson used two arguments to convince investors to subscribe to the project. He reminded them of his experience in the woolen industry and assured them that skilled workers and machinery could readily be gotten from England. Second, Hewson noted that the mill would employ primarily unskilled women and children and therefore would not be in competition with other industries for workers. The mill would complement the town's heavier industries and, as Hewson candidly observed, the manufacturers could advertise that they "not only hire the man of the house but his boys and girls as well".<sup>47</sup>

After Amherst's incorporation in 1889, businessmen no longer restricted their investments to manufacturing firms. They soon established the Canada Electric Company and the Amherst Street Railway Company and then negotiated with the town to provide Amherst with these utility services. The individuals promoting these companies once again provided a virtual "who's who" of the town's business class: Pride was

named as the street railway's president and his directors were N. Curry, N. A. Rhodes, J. M. Townshend and William Fillmore, a prominent merchant. N. Curry and N. A. Rhodes sponsored the Canada Electric Company along with J. A. Dickey, David Robb, and D. W. Douglas, hardware merchant. The street railway was never completed but Canada Electric signed a contract with the town to provide power for lighting. In 1903 the company became part of the Maritime Coal and Railway Company, another firm in which Curry played a central role.<sup>48</sup>

The multiple business associations among Amherst capitalists fostered cooperation on a broad spectrum of political and social issues. As long as they collectively identified their personal futures with that of Amherst, no event was too minor to attract their attention. This engagement in local affairs reinforced their already powerful position in the town. In 1889, Nathaniel Curry and Frederick Robb led the campaign among local manufacturers for Amherst's incorporation. They successfully argued that Amherst needed the greater financial flexibility afforded incorporated towns to provide what they identified as essential services. These included a water system, primarily for industrial use, fire protection, the construction and maintenance of streets, electric power, and a sewage system. After securing incorporation, the manufacturers campaigned to control the council, the most important local political institutions. During the period from 1889 - 1907, Amherst's prominent business families repeatedly won election to town council: N. Curry, Thomas Dunlap and J. A. Dickey, son of R. B. Dickey, each held the mayoralty for three years. N. A. Rhodes and C. A. Lusby, president of the Amherst Foundry,

served one term each as mayor. The composition of the six-person council followed much the same pattern.

The Amherst Board of Trade was also used by the manufacturers to further their influence over the local political process. Its unofficial debut occurred in 1890 when local capitalists rallied to support the owners of the shoeworks locked in an intense confrontation with the Knights of Labor. Formal organization followed four years later, with the election of merchant D. T. Chapman as president and Frederick Robb as vice-president. "Leading citizens have always deemed it an honour to preside over its deliberations", observed the Daily News, and "its members stood together to promote the interests of Amherst". These interests were synonymous with those of the manufacturers. The translation of these interests into policy pronouncements extended from the grandiose to the mundane.<sup>49</sup>

Transportation was a constant concern of the Board. Amherst capitalists always harboured a desire to establish the town as a seaport. In 1889, these hopes were raised as plans were laid for the construction of the Chignecto Canal to join the Bay of Fundy and Northumberland Straits but the project soon collapsed, amid rumours of stock manipulation and other illegal doings (Appendix One). The failure of the Chignecto project only temporarily discouraged the Board of Trade and, in 1898, "a large meeting of the leading men at Amherst" discussed building a canal from the sea to the town. "The town would thus become, it is pointed out, an important distributing point for the Maritime provinces". Though federal funding was unavailable for a canal, monies were forthcoming in 1904-05 for a Board request for the

construction on the Fundy coast of the Amherst Pier to be connected by rail with the town. Pleased with the pier, local capitalists next proposed a steamship service between Amherst and Saint John to further penetrate the New Brunswick market. Amherst's "manufactured goods", the Board said, should be shipped "to the Valley and other New Brunswick Fundy Ports in return for their fruit and vegetables".<sup>50</sup>

The Board of Trade kept continual pressure on the federal government to improve railway service and facilities at Amherst. A usual demand was that the I.C.R. increase its freight and passenger service to Amherst and the surrounding area. In December 1904, when E. R. Emmerson, Minister of Railways and Canals, visited Amherst at the request of the Board, he received a petition for a new station, more track and platform accommodation, a track master, and a siding to the Amherst Pier. The delegation of officials from the town's industries and civic government that greeted the minister was satisfied with Emmerson's promise to study their demands and report back to them. Over the next several years the government agreed to all of the requests of the Board including the building of a new station. It also conceded to a Board petition to operate a summer "Suburban Special" train to Pugwash on the Northumberland Strait. This route had little to do with business and a good deal to do with pleasure, for the train gave Amherst's wealthier families access to their recently built cottages along the Strait.<sup>51</sup>

The federal government's eagerness to meet these requests was part of its attempt to wean Amherst capitalists away from the Conservative Party. Although the Liberals had elected H. L. Logan in 1896 and

re-elected him in 1900 and 1904 for the Cumberland constituency, very few Amherst manufacturers supported the Liberals. But Cumberland was not a secure Liberal seat, and this was largely due to the party's failure to erode Conservative support among the town's influential capitalists. Although the Board of Trade invested considerable energy in the politics of railways and harbours, these were not the only issues that interested them. It petitioned the town council to support concessions to local companies seeking services and to endorse the Board's resolution to hire a Montreal advertising agency to produce promotional material on Amherst.<sup>52</sup>

The organization's most widely publicized project was its lobbying on behalf of the Maritime Coal and Railway Company. Incorporated in 1904, the company operated coal mines in Chignecto and Joggins and owned Joggins railway. In 1906 it proposed that the slack coal mine at Chignecto be used to produce electrical power for Amherst. The electricity was to be generated at the pit's mouth by four large furnaces and sent by transmission line to Amherst, eight miles away. American scientist, Thomas A. Edison had suggested that these projects were feasible, but no one as yet had pioneered such a project. N. Curry, a director of the primarily central Canadian financed Maritime Coal and Railway Company, put a motion before the Board of Trade urging "that the town should do all in its power to encourage" the company. D. W. Robb seconded the motion and it was "heartily endorsed" by M. D. Pride, C. A. Lusby and other Board members. The Amherst council agreed to construct a transmission station, provide a right-of-way for the power lines, and enter into an exclusive contract with the company for

electricity. Local industries subscribed to the power at a rate half the cost of steam.<sup>53</sup>

The Board of Trade was thus a potent force in Amherst affairs. Town councillors, often association members wearing different hats, regularly consulted with the Board on economic matters. This included the bonusing of new industries. During negotiations between the council and Hewson Woolen Mill investors, the town agreed "in addition to some special privileges" to exempt the company from taxation for 30 years. These concessions then were extended to all new manufacturing firms locating in Amherst that did not compete with any established industry. In provincial and federal politics disagreements among board members were never very divisive. Conservatives, like Rhodes, Curry, Robb, and Pride, and the small but important Liberal minority represented by Pipes and Lusby, found that agreement on most issues was easily obtainable, whether the discussion occurred at Board meetings or in the more sociable surroundings of the exclusive Marshlands Club. The amicable political arrangements were embodied in the organization of W. T. Pipes' Amherst law firm. While Pipes, one of Nova Scotia's most prominent Liberals, served as provincial attorney general, his associate of several years, E. N. Rhodes regained Cumberland from the Liberals in the federal election of 1908 for the Conservatives.<sup>54</sup>

The co-operation among Amherst capitalists on economic and political issues was a dimension of a shared world view rooted in their own historical experience. Another early expression of this ideology occurred in 1890 when the Amherst Boot and Shoe workers chartered an Assembly of the Knights of Labor. M. D. Pride, angered by what he



interpreted as the workers lack of gratitude, fired the 50 members of the Knights and, together with the town's other manufacturers, issued a stinging denunciation of the union. The arguments the employers advanced against unionization evolved from their personal experiences as industrial capitalists, or at least their perception of that history. Thus it was not surprising to find the statement infused with paternalistic ideas.<sup>55</sup> "Nearly all the managers of the principal manufactories of Amherst have been wage earners", the document argued, and the employers wished to assure "their fellow mechanics that they did not get to their present position by means of trade unions".<sup>56</sup> In the past, "mutual confidence and good feeling between the employers and the employed" had prevailed in Amherst, which explained why local mechanics "were better off and more contented" than those unionized workers in larger centers, the statement continued. The introduction of unions, especially the American Knights of Labor, the manufacturers warned, would not be permitted because they threatened to "come between us and our workmen" and generate "distrust and enmity" in the relationship between capital and labour.<sup>57</sup>

There were other reasons for rejecting unions which went beyond the realm of the personal relationship between the employers and the workers. These were the economic forces of the marketplace over which neither capital or labour had any influence, the manufacturers warned their workers contemplating membership in the Knights of Labor. "We would ask, do not the laws of 'supply and demand' regulate wages as well as other commodities in defiance of any society?", the manufacturers queried local workers. A mechanic was indeed "more

independent that the employer who cannot move his factory at will" because the worker was "free to go any place where he can get more." Consequently in the United States, the statement argued, the workers' attempts to circumvent the laws of the marketplace through unionization had forced employers "to protect themselves against the unreasonable demands of trade unions" through the creation of trusts.<sup>58</sup> If this novel explanation for the rise of monopoly capitalism was not enough to convince Amherst workers against the evils of unions, the employers were prepared to provide further evidence of the damaging effects of workers organizations. Amherst's economic success partly resided in the fact that the manufacturers were not beleaguered with unreasonable demands from unionized working men, as were the employers in Halifax and Saint John. Finally, the statement concluded with the employers' confident prediction that the majority of Amherst workers were "totally indifferent or opposed" to the Knights, but "in order that there may be no doubt" concerning the manufacturers position on unions, the employers stated their intention to refuse work to any known union member.<sup>59</sup> In 1890, the manufacturers' solidarity destroyed the Knights in Amherst, although other factors were involved. The paternalistic ideas that permeated the employers' attitude toward their workers in this struggle continued to dominate their thinking on industrial relations at least through until World War One. Their opposition to unions never weakened, though their ability to enforce this position through the use of persuasion and other more forceful means lessened as the period progressed.

The business concept of Amherst capitalists gradually drew them into various regional and national trade associations. They participated in the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Industrial League, the Mining Society of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Lumberman's Association and other similar organizations, which often questioned government railway and tariff policies and discussed the general state of their trade. As economic conditions worsened after 1907, Amherst manufacturers took an even greater interest in regional associations.<sup>60</sup> Involvement in these bodies symbolized a more fundamental process at work by 1900. Local capitalists and capital was gradually being drawn into the regional economy though the focus for these manufacturers remained on their Amherst investments. N. Curry, N. A. Rhodes, and D. W. Robb led the way in these activities, but they certainly were not the only Amherst men involved.

N. A. Rhodes and N. Curry lent their influence and capital to projects outside Amherst with increasing frequency after 1900. Some investments like the Wentworth Copper Company and the New Brunswick Petroleum Company were ill considered and came to naught. Their interest in the regional iron and steel industry though was significant because it had implications for the future of Amherst carworks. Rhodes' and Curry's initial speculations revolved around the Londonderry Iron Company and the Springhill coal mines. In April 1904, N. Curry and B. F. Pearson, Colchester M.L.A. and a principal in the Dominion Iron and Steel Company, announced a major program for Parrsboro on the Fundy Shore. The village was the site of a proposed steel smelter that was to draw coal from Springhill and iron from

Londonderry. In October, N. Curry, Pearson, A. G. Robb and major Montreal financiers made a well publicized tour of the Londonderry mill. The financing of the project apparently proved impractical and plans did not proceed any further.<sup>61</sup>

Curry's interest in a large steel mill grew from his conviction that "in a very short time all trains will be built of steel from the locomotive to the rear". Thus when the Parsboro plans collapsed, Curry set about finding an alternative source of steel. In 1905, Rhodes and Curry reported to its shareholders that it had purchased the Sydney Manufacturing Company, whose property abutted that of the Dominion Iron and Steel Company (DISCO). The Sydney plant was to be enlarged and equipped to build steel railway cars with DISCO providing the steel. Pearson's election to the Board of Rhodes and Curry several months earlier was not a coincidence and these developments may indeed have been part of a possible merger discussed by the two companies. The arrangement between Rhodes and Curry and DISCO never reached the degree of cooperation suggested in the original announcement for unknown reasons. These events had a significance that went beyond the success or failure of the immediate plans. A fully operational Sydney plant building the steel box cars of the future could only have meant the marginalization of the increasingly obsolete wooden car facilities in Amherst. Curry spared the town this fate in 1905 but only four years later he entertained a merger that ultimately brought the closure of the Amherst carworks for just this reason.<sup>62</sup>

After 1900 David Robb found himself becoming increasingly involved with capitalists from outside Amherst for somewhat different reasons.

The expansion of the local shops and the plans for a branch plant in the United States forced him to seek additional financial support and he drew on Royal Securities and the Eastern Trust of Halifax to support his move into the United States. Consequently, Halifax financiers R. E. Harris, W. B. Ross, and Max Aitken took directorships in Robb's. This decision created difficulties for Robb and by 1909 he must surely have questioned the logic of such arrangements.<sup>63</sup>

While some of Amherst's more prominent businessmen explored financial opportunities that reached beyond the boundaries of the town, many small shops opened to take advantage of the trade generated by the larger factories. Some like the machine, plumbing, and building supply shops prospered from contracts offered by the manufacturers. The building trades expanded to meet the demand for factory expansions, office blocks, schools, hospitals, and homes in a town whose population had doubled since 1900. Wholesale and retail outlets expanded and the town supported six hotels and a dozen restaurants. Amherst also became the area's center for publishing with the Liberals and Conservatives each supporting daily and semi-weekly newspapers. These publishing houses published other materials that ranged from periodicals on hunting and fishing to town directories. The one feature of these small businesses that was common to all was their dependence on the continued prosperity of the manufacturing companies. It was this relationship that explained their owners' willingness to accept the leadership of the manufacturers in political and economic affairs.

The development of Amherst from the 1860s to the early 1900s was on a fundamental level a response to the emergence of industrial

capitalism in Canada. In the Maritimes, this process encouraged the growth of primary and secondary industries, especially after the formalization of the National Policy in 1879. In the coal districts and in Halifax, Saint John, Moncton, Yarmouth, and some smaller centers, capital was invested in a wide range of industrial activity from mining and iron and steel milling to production of cotton and woolen goods. Most of the coal and steel industries fell to outside control early in their histories, although the Nova Steel and Coal Company proved a temporary exception to this rule. Indigenous capital tended to invest in the many secondary industries that were founded in the 1880s. In some respects the Cumberland economy represented many of the tendencies evident in the regional economy of this era. The focus of the economy shifted from the sea faring towns and villages along the Fundy and Northumberland shores to the mining and manufacturing centers linked to extra-regional markets by the I.C.R. In Springhill, investors in Canadian Pacific Railway assumed control of the major mines and exported the coal to meet its corporate demands elsewhere. Investment in the Cumberland coalfield in the 1870s provided an early stimulus to the location of manufacturing in nearby Amherst, especially the foundry, construction, and wood working factories opening in the town. Robb Engineering built steam engines and boilers for the mining and forestry industries before entering other markets and Rhodes-Curry used their success in the construction and wood working to branch out into the manufacturing of railway cars.

Amherst was the only Cumberland urban center located directly on the mainline of the I.C.R., thus it had an advantage over other

villages in the 1870s. It was also home, very early on, to a group of ambitious entrepreneurs whose origins were rooted in the farms, small shops, and general stores of the village. Their commitment to industrial development within a continental political economy began with their support of Confederation and the founding of their first manufacturing enterprise, the Amherst Boot and Shoe Company. They strayed very little from this path through the late nineteenth century and, in 1907, most continued to believe that their businesses were best served through such development. There was a remarkable degree of economic and political cooperation among the members of the capitalist group especially within the manufacturing elite. By 1890 the manufacturers provided leadership for the capitalist group on almost all economically and politically important questions that came before it. By 1907, their ability to exploit financial opportunities created by the industrialization of the Maritimes and the opening of western Canada attracted increasing attention to Amherst. But the organization of the national economy had changed substantially over the previous 50 years and its effects were about to push Amherst's economy in a direction that few could have predicted.

Appendix One

The Chignecto Canal Project

Construction on the Chignecto Canal began in 1889 though proposals for the project dated back several decades. The isthmus between the Bay of Fundy and the Northumberland Strait is only 20 miles wide but the massive tides in the two basins created special engineering problems. Large harbours were planned for each side of the isthmus and a four track railway was to join the two ports. Ships would be hauled from the water and carried overland by rail to the opposite harbour where they would be refloated. This procedure was to reduce the mileage from Saint John to Montreal by 700 miles and to foster trade between Canadian and American east coast ports. Supporters of the scheme predicted that the canal would generate fees in excess of \$800,000 each year, which would be used to repay any government subsidies granted to the project.

The Chignecto Marine Transport Railway Company, Ltd., received a federal government charter in 1889 that included a list of incorporators on which was found some of Canada's most prominent railway promoters. Capitalized at \$5.5 million, much of which was raised in England, and supported by government subsidies the company still continually complained of capital shortages. Charles Tupper, Cumberland M.P. and Minister of Finance, urged the government to support the project but his departure for London in 1888 left the canal project without a strong voice in the federal cabinet. By 1896, construction was halted and a government commission probed the financial affairs of the Chignecto Marine Transport Railway Company.



The commission soon reported that the entire project should be discarded and that the federal government should not advance that company any additional monies. Frederick Robb submitted a minority report that defended the project and argued that once in operation the canal would prove profitable.

Robb represented the opinion of most Amherst capitalists who understandably wanted the project to proceed. The county had already provided the company with the right-of-way for the canal free of charge and several Amherst men, James Hickman, W. D. Douglas, and C. J. Townshend, were among the incorporators. Robb Engineering and Rhodes-Curry were employed in building the canal and most Amherst businessmen believed that a completed canal would bring new industries to the area. When the project finally collapsed local manufacturers did not immediately give up all hope for its revival. They periodically floated the idea before government officials but eventually settled for the building of the Amherst Pier.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Amherst Daily News, 22 June 1967; A. D. Provand, Chignecto Marine Transport Railway Company, Ltd., Report, 1899; C. R. McKay, "Investors, Government and the CMTR: A Study in Entrepreneurial Failure", Acadiensis, V. IX (1979), pp. 71-94.

Table I

Population of Selected Towns and Villages  
in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, 1881 - 1931

	<u>CUMBERLAND COUNTY</u>	<u>AMHERST</u>	<u>SPRINGHILL</u>	<u>PARRSBORO</u>	<u>OXFORD</u>
				1,004	
1881	27,368	2,274	900	1,206	1,249
1891	34,529	3,781	4,813	1,909	1,427
1901	36,168	4,964	5,178	2,705	1,285
1911	40,543	8,973	5,713	2,856	1,392
1921	41,191	9,998	5,681	2,161	1,402
1931	36,366	7,450	6,355	1,919	1,133

Source: Calculated from the Census of Canada, 1881 - 1831 and Nova Scotia. Royal Commission on Provincial Development and Rehabilitation, Report on Manufacturing in Cumberland County, 1944, Table 3, p. 57.

Table II

Capital Investment in Manufacturing in  
Amherst, Nova Scotia, 1881 - 1931

	<u>No. of Estabs.</u>	<u>No. of Employees</u>	<u>Capital in \$000s</u>	<u>Raw Materials in \$000s</u>	<u>Wages in \$000s</u>	<u>Annual Products in \$000s</u>
1881	52	228	81	140	83	283
1891	97	683	457	347	198	724
1901	11	1,299	1,444	1,016	336	1,551
1911	19	2,142	15,763	2,544	1,147	4,625
1921	17	1,884	N.A.	N.A.	2,214	9,698
1931	22	638	N.A.	N.A.	654	2,079

Source: Calculated from the Census of Canada, 1871 - 1931 and Nova Scotia. Royal Commission on Provincial Development and Rehabilitation, Report on Manufacturing in Cumberland County, 1944, Table 3, p. 57.

Table III

Population and Capital Investment in Manufacturing  
in Amherst Expressed as a Percentage of  
Statistics for Cumberland County, 1881 - 1931

	Population			Capital in \$000s		
	<u>Cumberland</u>	<u>Amherst</u>		<u>Cumberland</u>	<u>Amherst</u>	
1881	27,368	2,274	8.3	557	81	14.5
1891	34,529	3,781	10.9	924	457	49.4
1901	36,168	4,964	13.7	2,277	1,444	63.4
1911	40,543	8,973	22.1	17,327	15,763	90.9
1921	41,191	9,998	24.2	N.A.	N.A.	
1931	36,366	7,450	20.4	N.A.	N.A.	

Source: Calculated from the Census of Canada, 1881 - 1931 and Nova Scotia. Royal Commission on Provincial Development and Rehabilitation, Report on Manufacturing in Cumberland County, 1944, Table 3, p. 57.

Table IV

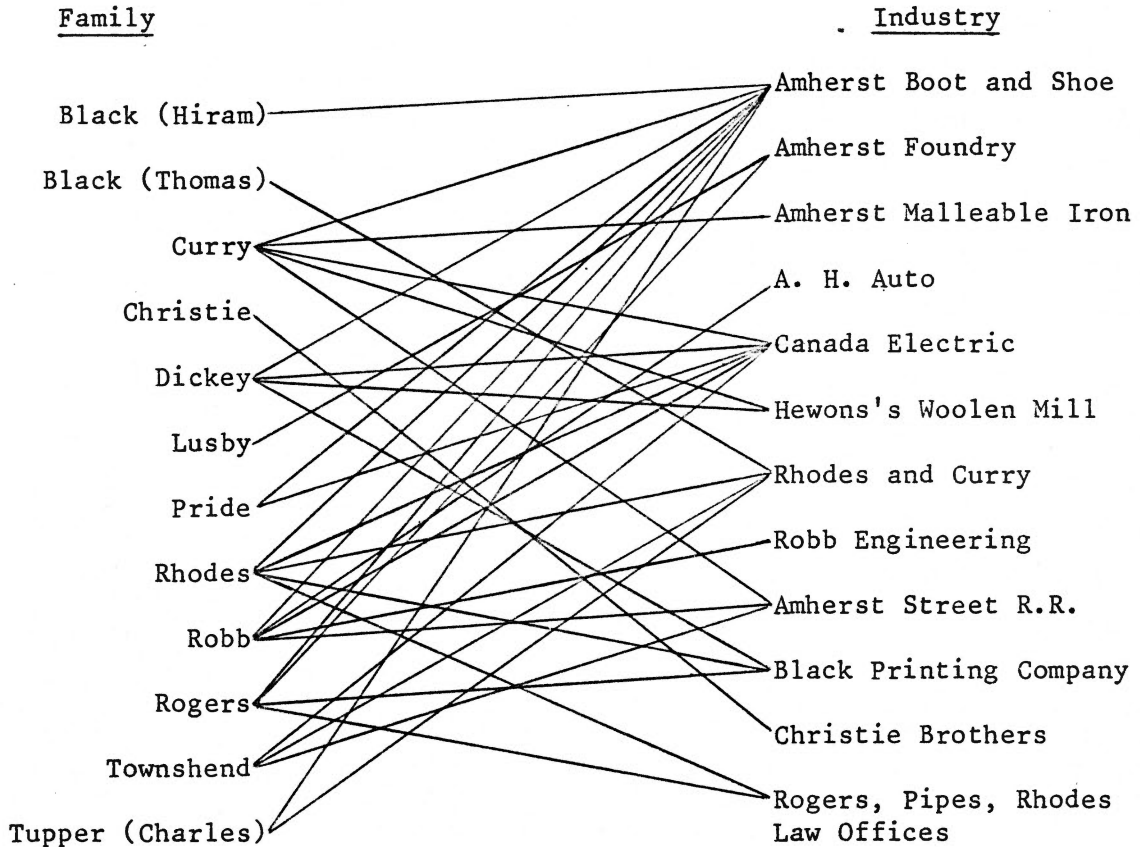
Manufacturing in Amherst Compared with Selected  
Cities and Towns in Nova Scotia and  
New Brunswick, 1891 - 1911

	No. of Estabs.	No. of Employees	Capital in \$000s	Raw Materials in \$000s	Wages in \$000s	Annual Products in \$000s
<b>AMHERST</b>						
1891	97	683	457	347	198	724
1901	11	1,299	1,444	1,016	336	1,551
1911	19	2,142	15,763	2,544	1,147	4,625
<b>DARTMOUTH</b>						
1891	35	633	1,049	763	142	1,037
1901	15	489	1,046	717	191	1,068
1911	11	476	1,681	703	200	1,145
<b>FREDERICTON</b>						
1891	163	828	369	388	251	828
1901	14	573	618	373	185	691
1911	20	688	882	800	346	1,397
<b>HALIFAX</b>						
1891	348	4,021	5,297	4412	1,160	7,198
1901	104	3,203	6,637	4,502	1,238	6,927
1911	112	4,014	14,068	7,628	1,735	12,140
<b>MONCTON</b>						
1891	97	948	1,134	1,339	317	1,973
1901	21	1,450	1,503	626	581	1,291
1911	34	1,948	1,666	637	1,010	3,233
<b>NEW GLASGOW</b>						
1891	123	1,117	1,050	726	397	1,512
1901	21	430	440	196	160	438
1911	26	776	1,063	430	346	1,034
<b>ST. JOHN</b>						
1891	773	5,888	4,838	4,628	1,865	8,131
1901	187	5,252	5,252	3,545	1,634	6,712
1911	177	9,242	9,242	5,473	2,269	10,081
<b>SYDNEY</b>						
1891	162	338	139	132	114	335
1901	21	637	12,092	331	204	631
1911	20	3,890	24,623	1,730	2,231	9,395
<b>TRURO</b>						
1891	131	708	368	389	233	844
1901	16	350	464	353	143	633
1911	14	688	2,046	812	298	1,334
<b>YARMOUTH</b>						
1891	151	930	783	699	290	1,234
1901	27	757	704	399	253	870
1911	34	714	1,540	591	220	1,198

Source: Calculated from Census of Canada, III, Table XI, 1911, p. 350.

Table V

Financial Cooperation Among Amherst's  
Dominant Business Families Before  
World War One



Source: Compiled from a variety of manuscript, newspaper, and business paper collections.

Footnotes - Chapter I

1. The Busy East, May 1918.
2. Norman Pearson, Town of Amherst, p. 10.
3. See Edward Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English", in his Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (London, 1978), pp. 35-91. This question is considered in more detail in Chapter III.
4. A survey of the literature on the emergence of regional disparities in Canada is presented in Chapter II.
5. Norman Pearson, Town of Amherst, pp. 1-6 is the source of the descriptive material on Amherst for the years prior to 1860.
6. Ibid., p. 6-7.
7. Amherst Gazette, 26 December 1873.
8. Canada, Census (1871) Industrial Manuscripts.
9. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst", p. 5; The Busy East, January 1918.
10. Canada, Census (1871) Industrial Manuscripts.
11. Ibid.; R.G. Dun and Company, The Mercantile Agency Reference Books for the Dominion of Canada (Toronto, 1882); The Busy East, January 1918.

Net Assets and Sales, Amherst Boot and Shoe Company

	<u>1871</u>	<u>1873</u>	<u>1883</u>	<u>1893</u>	<u>1903</u>	<u>1913</u>
Sales	\$15,000		\$145,440	\$386,000	\$446,000	\$1,019,700
Net Assets	3,000	\$13,377	51,524	157,527	336,255	696,295
Employees	19				200	

Source: Canada, Census (1871) Industrial Manuscripts; The Busy East, 14 August 1914, p. 18.

12. J. Norman Ritchie, The Story of Robb's (Amherst, n.d.), pp. 1-7; Canada, Census (1871) Industrial Manuscripts.
13. D. A. Muise, "The Federal Election of 1867 in Nova Scotia: An Economic Interpretation", Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly, V. 36 (1968), pp. 327-351; Muise, "Two Letters on the 'Pacification of Nova Scotia'", Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly, V. 1 (1976), pp. 12-13.

14. As the statistics indicate, shipbuilding was not a major trade in Cumberland County. Very little of the Cumberland industry was carried on in Amherst, which apparently constructed two ships.

Shipbuilding in Cumberland County Compared with Selected Other Counties, 1871 & 1881

	1871		1881	
	Total	Vessels/Tonnage	Total	Vessels/Tonnage
Yarmouth	249	82,475	238	118,922
Hants	115	45,959		
Halifax	153	21,202		
Kings	83	19,255		
Cumberland	85	10,942	81	16,647

Source: Canada, Census, 1871, 1881.

15. Nova Scotia, House of Assembly, Debates and Proceedings, 1861, p. 54.
16. D. A. Muise, "Federal Election of 1867", p. 329.
17. Amherst Daily News (henceforth, D. Ns.), 20 October 1897.
18. D. A. Muise, "Federal Election of 1867", pp. 327-351, offers a solid analysis of the relationship between railway development and the coal industry, and the politics of Confederation in Nova Scotia. The evidence from Amherst supports his general thesis on politics and the debate on economic development.
19. D. A. Muise, "Federal Election of 1867", p. 342, notes that "Charles Tupper was able to carry Cumberland County by only a very slim majority of 98 votes. In fact, his opponent William Annand won eight of the twelve polls in the constituency. Only Tupper's complete domination of the future railroad centers of Amherst and Mills Village, where he polled a combined majority of 232 votes, enable him to gain the victory".
20. Amherst Gazette, 26 December 1873.
21. T. W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-1910" Acadiensis, V. 1 (1972), pp. 3-28 offers an excellent description of the reaction of Maritime entrepreneurs to the National Policy.
22. H. J. Morgan Papers, V. 15, Public Archives of Canada (henceforth, P.A.C.).
23. Ibid.
24. Industrial Advocate, April 1910.



25. Eugene Forsey, "Economic and Social Aspects of the Nova Scotia Coal Industry" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1926), pp. 2-4. Although there is as yet no comprehensive study of the economic history of the Cumberland County coal industry, information can be found in Eugene Forsey, "Economic and Social Aspects of the Nova Scotia Coal Industry"; David A. Frank, "Coal Masters and Coal Miners: The Roots of Class Conflict in the Cape Breton Coal Industry" (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1974); Sharon M. Reilly, "The Provincial Workmen's Association of Nova Scotia, 1879-1898" (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1979); Bertha I. Scott, Springhill, a Hilltop in Cumberland (Springhill, Nova Scotia, 1926).

26. Springhill Coal Industry Statistics

	<u>Tons of Coal Sold</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Average Daily Output</u>
1872	1,000	19	14
1881	151,747	392	620
1891	406,192	1,370	1,780
1901	359,603	1,406	1,792
1906	435,574	1,700	1,995
1907	280,475	1,538	1,577

Source: C. O. Macdonald, The Coal and Iron Industries of Nova Scotia (Halifax, 1909), p. 177.

27. A sampling of the reporting on these schemes can be readily found on the pages of the Industrial Advocate for this period. One of the most ambitious projects called for the construction of a large steel smelter at Parrsboro. Nathaniel Curry was one of the principals in this scheme, which will be discussed later in a somewhat different context. Numerous proposals for the expansion of the Londonderry Iron Works also were floated at this time.

28. B. Scott, Springhill; T. W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes", pp. 15-16; E. Forsey, "Economic and Social Aspects of the Nova Scotian Coal Industry", p. 46. The domination of the most important Cumberland coal seams by capitalists from outside the region also helps to explain why Springhill never emerged as a competitor with Amherst for manufacturing industries. Montreal investors had little interest in financing secondary industry in the Maritimes.

29. Gross Sales of Wood Products in Cumberland County, 1870 & 1890

1870 - Gross Sale of Wood Products	\$200,000
Sawmilling & Shingles	57%
Shipbuilding	25%
Carriage Making, Furniture, Cabinets, etc.	18%

1890 - Gross Sale of Wood Products	\$2,000,000
Sawmilling & Shingles	57%
Sash & Door	17%
Shipbuilding	10%
Carriages, Coffins, etc.	9%
Cabinets & Furniture	5%

Source: Nova Scotia, Report on Manufacturing in Cumberland County, p. 81.

30. Industrial Advocate, November 1897.
31. Canada, Royal Commission on the Relations Between Labor and Capital, 1889, Evidence, Frederick Robb, p. 322.
32. Maritime Merchant, 1 April 1897; Norman Ritchie, Story of Robb's, pp. 10-19.
33. The decennial census is somewhat misleading because it does not indicate important fluctuations that occurred within the decade. In Amherst, for example, the statistics for 1900-1910 do not indicate that almost all the population and investment increases took place in the first six years of the decade. The source for the statistical material presented here is Canada, Census (1881, 1891, 1901, 1911) and Nova Scotia, Report on Manufacturing in Cumberland County.
34. Saint John, Daily Sun, 17 March 1893; Industrial Advocate, January 1901; Canadian Machinery, V. X (1913), p. 296. A description of the Rhodes and Curry plant is available in The Busy East, April 1911; February 1912; Industrial Advocate, January 1908.
35. A sampling of such contracts can be found in the following sources: Canadian Machinery, V. I (1905), p. 455; Industrial Advocate, November 1896, February 1898, September 1905; Labour Gazette, April 1901; Railway and Shipping World, June 1899; Amherst News & Sentinel, 5 August 1904. In 1904, Rhodes and Curry's corporate charter was revised to permit the establishment of subsidiaries of which there were soon at least two, the Canadian Rolling Stock Company and the Amherst Malleable Iron Company. The first company was a subsidiary held through mortgage bonds and with a board of directors dominated by Rhodes, Curry, T. R. Black, and Charles Tupper. Its purpose was to provide credit to Rhodes-Curry purchasers. The malleable iron works was incorporated in 1906 with Curry as a principal shareholder. It was later fully integrated into Rhodes and Curry. News and Sentinel (henceforth N. & S.), 18 September 1904; Industrial Advocate, July 1906.

36. Norman Ritchie, The Story of Robb's, pp. 10-22, describes the innovation in the Robb engines. Robb's first American operation was actually established in Cambridge, Mass. but was moved less than a year later to South Framingham, when it was offered a bonus by the local council. Norman Ritchie, The Story of Robb's, pp. 20-21 and Industrial Advocate, October 1902, April 1905; Canadian Machinery, V. 8 (1908) p. 33. This article, "Canadian Birth Place of Engines of World Wide Reputation" offers an excellent description of the Robb plant and the premium system used to pay its employees.
37. The Busy East, August 1914; Labour Gazette, November 1905; D. Ns. 4 January 1918; The Busy East, January 1918.
38. Industrial Advocate, October 1909.
39. D. Ns., 28 July 1890; Industrial Canada, June 1904; The Busy East, May 1913.
40. Labour Gazette, November 1905. A description of many of Amherst industries, large and small, is available in the town directories (1900, 1908), The Busy East, February 1912, and Industrial Canada, August 1913.
41. The Annual Report, Amherst Boot and Shoe Company, 1913 declared that the "company for 35 years has been an uninterrupted dividend payer", The Busy East, August 1914. In 1909, Robb's reported the first deficit and failure to make dividend payment in its history, Labour Gazette, April 1909, pp. 1041-1041. No similar statement is available for Rhodes-Curry, though from 1903-1908 it apparently paid dividends averaging 12 percent, Canadian Machinery, V. I (1905), p. 122; D. Ns., 14 July 1909.
42. Shannon Papers, V. 800, Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia (henceforth, P.A.N.S.).
43. The Busy East, January 1918.
44. Until 1909, N. Curry presided as president, N. Rhodes as vice-president, and A. S. Curry, Nathaniel Curry managed the Sydney, C. B. Plant. After 1900, N. Curry's and N. Rhodes' sons assumed increasing responsibilities in the company: J. M. Curry became secretary-treasurer, V. G. Curry sat on the Board of Directors, and E. N. Rhodes was the company's solicitor.
45. Saint John Daily Sun, 17 March 1893; Railway and Shipping World, May 1904; Industrial Advocate, May 1904, March 1905, March 1906; W. R. Houston, ed., Directory of Directors in Canada, 1906 (Toronto, 1906).
46. Norman Ritchie, Story of Robb's, pp. 13-15.

47. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst", pp. 12-13; W. R. Houston, Directory of Directors, 1906, p. 266; Labour Gazette, November 1905. N. & S., 28 May 1906; The Busy East, February 1912.
48. Nova Scotia, Statutes, Chapter 126 (1889), p. 269-271, "An Act to Incorporate Amherst Street Railway Company, Ltd."; Chapter 128 (1889), p. 282-286, "An Act to Incorporate the Canada Electric Company, Ltd."; W. R. Bird, Amherst, Nova Scotia, Diamond Jubilee (Amherst, 1949), n.p.
49. D. Ns., 30 November 1918.
50. Industrial Advocate, April 1898; N. & S., 31 May 1904, 25 April 1905.
51. N. & S., 16 December 1904, 31 May 1904, 24 April 1906.
52. N. & S., 24 April 1906, 2 December 1904.
53. Industrial Advocate, August 1907; N. & S., 8 May 1906; Industrial Canada, March 1906; Canadian Machinery, II (1906), p. 83.
54. P.A.N.S., A Directory of the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1758-1958 (Halifax, 1958), p. 294.
55. "Employers of Amherst to Their Employees", 25 April 1890, Sir John Thompson Papers, V. 106, P.A.C. Extracts from this letter have been reprinted in Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada 1812-1902 (Toronto, 1982), pp. 155-156.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.; Although it was not the intention of this study to delve into the non-economic and non-political dimensions of the experience of the manufacturers, preliminary investigation does indicate that lives of the members of the business class included several key social and religious institutions. Membership in the Baptist church, for example, was a common denominator among many of the manufacturers, including the Rhodes, Curry, Black, Christie, Pride, and Hewson families. These families supported the church financially and donated funds to Acadia University, the regional college of the Baptist Church. Some families, like the Rhodes, also sent their sons to Acadia. Members from many of these families involved themselves in the temperance movement, which in Amherst received strong leadership in the Baptist congregation. If the Baptist Church was a key religious institution of the manufacturers, then the key social institution

was the Masonic Lodge. Though little is known about the entire membership of the organization in Amherst, it is apparent that almost all of the local manufacturers belonged to the "Masonic Fraternity". Inter-marriage among the members of the elite also was not uncommon in the early 1900s. E. N. Rhodes married the daughter of W. T. Pipes, V. G. Curry wed D. T. Chapman's daughter, his brother married Marion McKeen, the daughter of a prominent merchant, and J. H. Douglas wed another of W. T. Pipes daughters. Thus the business class apparently was connected by an intricate web of social and religious ties that reinforced the political and economic interactions already discussed. Who's Who and Why, 1919 - 1920, pp. 85, 471, 473, 542, 907, 998, 1009, 1242.

60. Industrial Advocate, February, March 1903.
61. D.Ns., 14 April 1905; Industrial Advocate, October 1904.
62. D.Ns., 22 October 1909; Industrial Advocate, March 1905; Canadian Machinery I (1905), p. 122.
63. Norman Ritchie, The Story of Robb's, pp. 20-21. Frederick Robb died in 1897 and David assumed the management of the company. A. G. Robb devoted his time to the supervision of the engineering department.

Chapter II  
The Industrial Decline of  
Amherst, 1908-1920

I

The emergence of Amherst as an important Maritime manufacturing center had taken more than five decades to complete. Its collapse was much more precipitous. The first signs of underlying problems in the Amherst economy followed the revival of trade that occurred at the end of the late 1907 to 1908 recession. By the time of the next economic downturn in autumn 1913, it was painfully obvious that the era of "Busy Amherst" was over and would never be revived. The First World War pulled Amherst back from the brink of disaster with its orders for war materials, but the reprieve was only temporary. In the early 1920s, the situation had worsened beyond that of the pre-war recession and this time there was no escaping the crisis as industry after industry permanently closed its doors. The 1927 bankruptcy of the Amherst Boot and Shoe Company, whose founding 50 years earlier had heralded the beginnings of "Busy Amherst", rang the final death knell for this manufacturing town. The factories that only a short time before had hired hundreds of men and women to make railway cars, steam engines, boilers, boots, shoes, stoves, furnaces, woolen wear, and enamel products now fell silent. Machinery and other equipment in the shops

was crated and carried away to other centers while Amherst's empty factories crumpled into disrepair. The town now had only one export: working men and women moving to Boston, Montreal, or points further west in search of the steady jobs that Amherst capitalists had promised them but had never delivered.

The economic cycle of industrialization and de-industrialization in Amherst corresponded to the timing of the process elsewhere in the region. In the 1880's rush to industrialize, Maritime capitalists in Halifax, Saint John, Yarmouth, Moncton, and in some smaller centers invested capital in textiles, cottons, woolen, footwear, rope, confectionary, and foundry products. Between 1880 and 1890, Nova Scotia's industrial output increased 15 percent more than Ontario's and predictions for even more rapid development followed announcements of new investments slated for the Cape Breton coal district. A promotional pamphlet went so far as to declare the "Industrial Ascendancy of Nova Scotia" and some businessmen foretold of a time in the near future when the Maritimes would be home to Canada's Birmingham, Sheffield, and Manchester.<sup>1</sup>

Even during the optimistic 1880s disturbing trends were apparent in the Maritime economy. Industrialization never reached a level of intensity capable of absorbing the thousands of Maritimers forced from the rural areas by the decline of the agriculture and the shipping industry. By the middle of the 1890s, indigenous capital financing the new manufacturing found it increasingly difficult to challenge successfully their central Canadian competitors. Some Maritime capitalists resisted this process, but most willingly, indeed,

enthusiastically participated in the integration of their companies with their central Canadian counterparts. Soon the region's consumer goods industries became dominated by central Canadian interests and by 1914 heavy industry had followed the same path. This realignment in the industrial sectors found its parallel among the region's financial institutions which experienced a similar integration. By the First World War, the process had left few, if any, sectors of the regional economy unaffected and, as historian T. W. Acheson has concluded, "the Maritimes had become a branch-plant economy" controlled by central Canadian capital.<sup>2</sup> This integration of the Maritimes into a national economy dominated from the center subordinated the needs of the region to those of the metropolitan centers of Canadian capitalism. Maritimers today continue to experience the effects of this dependency through high unemployment rates, low wages, and generally poor living conditions.

Most historical studies of the Maritimes' political economy are in broad agreement with Acheson's description of the regional economy though a similar consensus is not to be found when attention shifts to explanations of the decline. The debate among economists, geographers, historians, and sociologists over the sources and significance of regional dependency is reviewed in several excellent articles on the subject and therefore no thorough presentations of these arguments is offered here.<sup>3</sup> Historical interpretations of regional inequalities usually fall into one of four broad and interrelated schools of thought. One popular interpretation, which works within a rather loosely defined theory of metropolitanism, emphasizes the failure of



entrepreneurial leadership and the region's fragmented geography as the decisive factors in the decline.<sup>4</sup> Other studies share, on some levels, the staples approach first applied to the Maritimes by its major theorist, H. A. Innis, in his seminal writings on the cod fisheries. This approach found support in the work of S. A. Saunders, Innis's student, and enjoys a contemporary popularity among historical geographers.<sup>5</sup> A third body of literature focuses on political explanations of Maritime dependency, especially the increasing domination by central Canada of national political institutions after 1900. These institutions legislated policies that detrimentally affected the Maritimes' political economy and brought about its decline in the early twentieth century.<sup>6</sup>

This study of the de-industrialization of Amherst implicitly addresses these interpretations while exploring the Marxist analysis that views uneven development as an integral feature of capitalistic economic growth. This explanation proposes that uneven development among regions in an industrial capitalist economy results from the inherent tendency in the system to centralize production and to concentrate capital in its pursuit of higher rates of return on investment. In the Maritimes by the late 1880s this complex process of uneven development created the circumstances through which the more established industrial economy of central Canada was able to assert its hegemony over the region. Central Canada's domination of the Maritimes proceeded through a number of mechanisms that involved the formation of a centralized state; the creation of national commodity and labour markets; a growing division of labour between regions; the extension of

central Canadian financial control over the region; and finally, through cultural hegemony.<sup>7</sup>

Amherst's decline after 1907 was a specific example of this process which featured the extension of outside financial control over local industries through mergers and takeovers. Businesses that for whatever reason remained under indigenous ownership ultimately suffered from the building of the national markets that their owners had earlier promoted. By the middle of the 1920s, Amherst lost its position as an important Maritime manufacturing center and its population, like that of many other Maritime towns, became part of a national reserve army of labour. The study of this post 1907 collapse divides chronologically into two sections beginning with a discussion of structural changes in the economy before 1914. The transformation of the local economy in these few years largely determined the pressures affecting Amherst in the next phase of its history, which began with the pre-war depression and closed with the collapse of the Amherst Boot and Shoe in 1927.

The study concentrates on the two-stage process of the integration and then marginalization of Amherst companies within larger and usually Montreal controlled corporations. Because the Rhodes and Curry Company and the Robb Engineering Company dominated Amherst's economic landscape, their fortunes after 1907 are closely followed. A second theme running through this chapter is the shifting social and economic base of the business elite between the 1909 reorganization of the carworks into the Canadian Car and Foundry Company of Montreal and the convening in Amherst of the 1920 Annual Meeting of the Maritime Board of Trade. The reshaping of the ownership of Rhodes and Curry had

immediate repercussions on the composition of the elite that would be felt for many years. It was a very different elite that attended the Board of Trade meetings to express displeasure with federal government policies that they held responsible for Amherst's problems. The protest congealed in the 1920s into support for the Maritime Rights movement, which, with other class responses to the crisis, is the subject of the final chapter of the thesis.

## II

In 1907 a deepening crisis in the stock markets of the world's industrial countries moved these economies into a recession. In Amherst this brought a halt to the expansion that had continued almost uninterrupted since the late 1880s. By February 1908 conditions were already "exceptionally dull" as the annual factory closings for taking inventory and general maintenance work stretched to unusual lengths. One month later, Rhodes and Curry first imposed a 10 percent wage reduction and then laid off workers until it was operating with only 200 of its normal 1,500 employees. Robb Engineering instituted a four day rather than the normal five and one-half day week and even then it provided work for fewer than half its employees. The situation at the Amherst Malleable Iron caused concern because it completely shut down and showed no sign of re-opening. No Amherst industry escaped the recession unscathed. The sagging economy slowed construction and building trades workers faced wage reductions of 10 - 20 percent. The increasing numbers of workers without jobs soon became grave enough

that the region's unemployed were warned to avoid Amherst. In late summer "a large number of young men formerly employed left for the west on the harvesters' excursion".<sup>8</sup>

Little improvement in these conditions occurred in the winter of 1909 though a gradual revival began in the spring. It was another year before local reports declared confidently that "the crisis is over and conditions have again become normal".<sup>9</sup> The implication that the era of "Busy Amherst" was about to return after its unwelcome two year hiatus was not entirely misplaced. Between 1909-1913 industries did rehire many of their workers and some shops even complained about labour shortages. Expansion at the carworks, shoe factory, and woollen mill relieved unemployment in the building trades and helped raise Amherst's assessment value from \$3.5 million in 1910 to its peak of almost \$4 million in 1913. The population had also returned to 1907 levels after declining during the recession.<sup>10</sup>

Two new companies decided to locate in Amherst at this time. The greatest fanfare accompanied the move of the Nova Scotia Carriage and Motor Car Company to Amherst after 40 years in Kentville, Nova Scotia. First assembling and then building automobiles as early as 1904, Nova Scotia Carriage was attracted to Amherst by the promises of local businessmen to finance a major expansion. In 1912 the firm, capitalized at \$2 million, built shops in Amherst amid predictions that it would soon employ 1,500 workers and manufacture 1,000 automobiles annually. But Nova Scotia Carriage encountered difficulties before production commenced. Design faults meant the new five storey factory could not bear the weight of its machinery and, as the shop literally sank into

earth, capital shortages sealed its fate. The company survived two years before declaring bankruptcy.<sup>11</sup>

The Amherst Piano Company also opened for business in 1912. Twenty Amherst businessmen, including N. Curry, G. T. Douglas, C. T. Hillson, and E. N. Rhodes, subscribed to \$125,000 in capital stock and the Nova Scotia Trust Company underwrote another \$100,000 in stock. In 1913, production began on a newly designed piano that never required tuning. Though the business survived into the 1920s its financial position was always precarious.<sup>12</sup>

The revival of trade after 1908 pleased the Amherst Board of Trade. The board sponsored public meetings to promote the town's incorporation as a city and to urge the council to hire an "industrial commissioner", who would be responsible for attracting new companies to Amherst. In 1909, the board supported a Halifax petition of the federal government to finance an alternative railway from the I.C.R. to the west, because it believed that Amherst would be a division point on the proposed line.<sup>13</sup>

One event more than any other occupied the attention of the Board of Trade after 1908. It planned to mark Amherst's 20th anniversary of incorporation with an "Old Home Week" festival that celebrated the town's past prosperity and pointed to the revival of the economy after the recession. It was to be a celebration of "Busy Amherst", past and present. Early organizers included N. Curry, N. Rhodes, C. A. Lusby, H. L. Hewson, and C. S. Sutherland, manager of the shoeworks.<sup>14</sup> Although economic conditions forced a year long delay in the program, the July 1910 festivities of parades, sporting contests, special

religious services, and industrial exhibitions were declared a "magnificent success" by the Amherst Daily News. The industrial exhibit at the Winter Fair Building inspired the boast that "no other town in the Maritime Provinces can produce such an array of manufactured articles". A cavalcade of automobiles owned by members of the business group received enthusiastic attention "watched by thousands of spectators as it paraded the streets of the town". Riding in their automobiles like southern plantation owners overseeing their vast estates were N. Curry, Victor Curry, and Mark Curry, Mayor of Amherst. The Rhodes, Hewson, Douglas, Lusby, Christie, and Black families also were represented in the procession.<sup>15</sup>

The celebration's success probably helped many residents push aside nagging memories of recent hard times and put some faith in predictions that "everything points to an era of industrial expansion".<sup>16</sup> What many citizens could not have known, however, was that they had witnessed the last grand display of the capitalist group's wealth and power. A careful scrutiny of the Board of Trade members responsible for the "Old Home Week" festivities gives some clues to the slowly changing composition of the business group in Amherst. In late September 1909, the group was depleted when first, N. A. Rhodes and then W. T. Pipes died leaving behind portfolios that encompassed all of Amherst's important industries. These deaths were only the latest of a number among the town's first generation of industrial capitalists. In the 1890s, Alexander and Frederick Robb and Hiram Black had died and in the next decade M. D. Pride, J. A. Dickey, T. R. Black, C. S. Chapman, J. M. Townshend, and Charles and George Christie, Tom Dunlap and

T. Quigley also died. Commenting on the death of the "old guard", the Daily News reminded its readers that these men had laid the "foundations of Amherst's most important industries" and, claimed the Saint John Sun, their wealth was accumulated through "industrial profits", not by "financial manipulation".<sup>17</sup>

These deaths did bring about some changes in the organization of the town's business group, but the changing generational composition of this elite was not a decisive factor in Amherst's decline. There was no evidence to suggest that the men replacing the original entrepreneurs were any less astute than their predecessors in the ways and means of business practices. By the time of the deaths of Rhodes and Pipes, the second generation of Currys, Rhodes, Robbs, Blacks, and other families already held important positions in many Amherst companies.<sup>18</sup> What had altered significantly though was the regional and national political economy in which these post 1907 Amherst capitalists participated. One clear sign of changing times for the Amherst economy was N. Curry's and N. A. Rhodes' decision to reorganize their company into a joint-stock corporation. This decision in the spring of 1909 had far-reaching implications for the industrial future of Amherst though few recognized this at the time.

Over the summer of 1909, N. Curry and N. A. Rhodes negotiated with a group of Maritime capitalists interested in converting Rhodes and Curry into a joint-stock company. The result of these discussions was the September incorporation, under a federal charter, of the Rhodes and Curry Company, Ltd., with an authorized capital of \$3 million divided into \$2 million of seven percent preference stock and \$1 million of

common stock. The company issued the common stock and \$1.8 million of its authorized preference stock, all of which was subscribed before a printed prospectus was prepared. C. Meredith and Co. and Royal Securities Co. of Montreal, and W. B. Tennant and J. M. Robinson and Son of Saint John underwrote the entire issue. The purpose of the incorporation was to permit the new company to acquire all the capital stock of Rhodes and Curry, whose net assets in 1909 were certified at \$2 million. The reorganized company's board's president and vice-president were N. Curry and N. A. Rhodes. J. R. Douglas, another Amherst investor in the previous company also sat on it. But the remaining positions on the board went to the regional and Montreal-based financial interests behind the new company, represented by Max Aitken of Royal Securities, T. J. Drummond of the Canada Iron Corporation, corporation lawyer C. H. Cahan, formerly of Halifax and now residing in Montreal, and Saint John capitalists W. B. Tennant and J. M. Robinson.<sup>19</sup>

Curry explained to the public that Rhodes and Curry had ambitious plans to expand the carworks and that it needed capital that could be raised quickly on the stock market. Though Curry did not specify the total amount of capital the company eventually hoped to raise, he hinted that Rhodes and Curry were contemplating the addition of a locomotive works, which implied a financial commitment probably in the million dollar range. The very cost of such diversification, and the fundamental differences between the manufacture of rolling stock and locomotives, meant that Curry's news deserved to be greeted with considerable skepticism.<sup>20</sup> This announcement was likely intended to



deflect public attention away from secret negotiations to reorganize further the financial affairs of the carworks. Max Aitken's placement on the board of Rhodes and Curry signalled to Canadian investment circles that he had other plans for the company's future. Aitken joined the boards of companies he helped organize for usually one of two reasons: either the business was in financial trouble and required his personal attention, or he saw possibilities for further reorganization. Speculation about Aitken's designs for the Rhodes and Curry Company were clarified in mid-October 1909 with word of the formation of the Canadian Car and Foundry Company, one of Canada's largest mergers of the time.<sup>21</sup>

The \$8 million capitalization of Canadian Car and Foundry represented the combined assets of Rhodes and Curry, and two Montreal rolling stock firms - the Canada Car Works and the Dominion Car and Foundry Works. The Canada Car Company had been operating for four years and by 1909 had the capacity to manufacture 25 box cars daily and 100 passenger cars per year. Dominion Car, organized in 1906, was Canada's first steel car manufacturer and reported a daily capacity of 30 cars. Together the three companies reported a daily capacity of 75 freight cars and 160 passenger cars per year. This merger brought 85 percent of Canada's rolling stock manufacturing capacity under one corporate structure.<sup>22</sup>

The various interests involved in the merger found representation on Canadian Car and Foundry's board of directors. Rhodes and Curry Company, represented in negotiations by Aitken, Curry, Robinson, and Tennant, secured Curry's appointment to the presidency, while

W. W. Butler of Dominion Car became vice-president and N. A. Reeder of Canada Car became 2nd vice-president. Other directors included Montreal manufacturer James Redmond who was president of Dominion Car, George Edward and T. J. Drummond who were connected to several steel industries, I. H. Benn, the London associate of the Canadian investment firm, Price Brothers and Company, and Max Aitken, who together with Redmond and Drummond made up the executive committee. Aitken soon withdrew from both this committee and the board, apparently content with the success of the merger. During the next five years the board experienced some changes when Royal Bank president Herbert Holt joined the company in 1910 and N. Curry's son, V. G. became second vice-president in 1913.<sup>23</sup>

The participants in the Canadian Car and Foundry merger were motivated by three factors: first, they wished to create an "absolute combine of Canadian carbuilding interests"; second, the rationalization of production that the merger permitted aided the shift to the building of steel cars, an expensive but necessary change. Finally, the merger promised to increase the personal wealth of its principal actors. Canadian Car and Foundry dwarfed its competitors (Crossen Car Company, Cobourg, Ontario, and Sillicker Car Company, Halifax) in every aspect of the business. Even the carbuilding shops of the Canadian Pacific Railway in Montreal offered little challenge to the hegemony of Canadian Car and Foundry. The C.P.R. could meet only one-fifth of its own demand for rolling stock and soon placed orders with Canadian Car and Foundry.<sup>24</sup> The merger also made possible the rationalization of the three companies' capital and production resources. This decision

was important because steel was replacing wood as the major component in rolling stock and the cost of this new technology was high. Deciding what facilities were to be modernized would have an important effect on the general consolidation plans of the company.<sup>25</sup> The creation of Canadian Car and Foundry also increased the fortunes of its investors; for example, N. Curry emerged from the deal with \$3 million of the \$8 million capital stock.<sup>26</sup>

The implications for Amherst of the formation of Canadian Car and Foundry were not immediately obvious. Curry's declaration at the time of the merger that "each company will probably work along separately for awhile, but the merger will be in fact as well as in name in the future" did not indicate how or when this consolidation would occur, nor did it hint at what the Amherst carworks' function would be in the corporation.<sup>27</sup> The changes in management at first seemed to have little effect on local operations. Between 1910-1913, Canadian Car and Foundry worked its shops to capacity to fill the Canadian railways' orders for rolling stock. Carbuilders in Amherst continued to manufacture wooden cars and watched the company expand the capacity of the malleable iron. In 1912 the company built an additional shop in Amherst scheduled to begin steel car production on a small scale in the following year. The construction division of the old Rhodes and Curry Company continued to enjoy uninterrupted success and its business showed no signs of slackening in the future.<sup>28</sup>

Decisions at the corporate level in Montreal left less room for optimism in Amherst than the busy days of 1910-1913 might have suggested to many residents. The company's consolidation plans raised

the potential for the marginalization of the carworks in Canadian Car and Foundry's corporate structure. The company first tried to meet the demand for steel cars by modernizing and expanding its Montreal factories and with the construction of a technologically advanced carworks in Fort William, Ontario.<sup>29</sup> It was only after these changes still appeared insufficient to meet demand that Canadian Car and Foundry decided "to build steel cars even at Amherst", as one student of the industry has observed with some amazement.<sup>30</sup> In 1911 the company made another decision that potentially threatened the Amherst carworks when it purchased the Montreal Steel Works and the Ontario Iron & Steel Company of Welland, Ontario. Canadian Steel Foundries, a subsidiary company presided over by Curry now of Montreal, managed the new steel division of Canadian Car and Foundry. The integration of this steel capacity into Canadian Car and Foundry further concentrated its interests in central Canada. It also ended any possibility for the Amherst rolling mill to emerge as a central supplier of steel for the manufacturing divisions.<sup>31</sup>

Thus by 1913 when the demand for rolling stock was intense and competition of little consequence changes in the corporate structure of Canadian Car and Foundry had already begun to marginalize the Amherst carworks. Management and production were gradually being consolidated in Montreal and the Amherst division was the last to be modernized. If over-capacity became a problem because of a slackening in demand or the emergence of stronger competitors, the marginal divisions in Canadian Car and Foundry's structure faced a bleak future. During a year of record sales in 1913 officials of the Montreal company saw just such

dark clouds on the horizon. First came the announcement of the formation of two well financed competitors, the National Steel Car Company and the Eastern Car Company, and then the country began a deep-slide into the pre-war depression.

National Steel Car, with its head office in Montreal and production shops in Hamilton, opened in January 1913 with a 9,000 car annual capacity. Eastern Car appeared down the road from Amherst in Pictou County as a subsidiary of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company. Equipped to build 25 steel cars per day, Eastern Car's capacity when combined with that of National Steel Car offered a serious challenge to Canadian Car and Foundry's control of the rolling stock industry. The investors in the new companies felt that the Canadian market could easily absorb this increased capacity. On another level, Nova Scotia Steel's forward integration theoretically ensured it a reliable demand for its primary steel. The creation of Eastern Car may also have been part of Nova Scotia Steel's maneuvering in its attempts to defeat a challenge by Dominion Coal and Steel Company to control it. D.O.S.C.O. was another Aitken prize which linked the financial struggle indirectly to Canadian Car and Foundry. Eastern Car survived the 1913-1915 depression and operated successfully into the 1920s while the Amherst carworks declined.<sup>32</sup> This suggests that corporate decision making played a more important role in the decline of the Amherst plant than such traditional explanations as geography or market location and size.

Production at National Steel and Eastern Car did not create an immediate crisis in Canadian Car and Foundry's market. In 1913 over 7,500 workers manufactured \$20 million of rolling stock, and Canadian

Car and Foundry's 30,000 car annual capacity still far outstripped its rivals.<sup>33</sup> But because these competitors were well financed and operating modern plants their potential challenge to Canadian Car and Foundry could not be easily dismissed. Its management considered plans to continue to stabilize costs through a further consolidation of the 11 corporate divisions dispersed across central and eastern Canada.<sup>34</sup> The severe economic collapse of autumn 1913 hastened this process of consolidation as Canadian Car and Foundry struggled to cut its losses in a suddenly saturated market. This process ultimately sealed the fate of the Amherst carworks.

While residents wondered about the carworks future, they were shocked by the news that foreclosure proceedings had been initiated against the town's second largest industry. In 1912, Robb Engineering defaulted on its mortgage held by the Commercial Trust of Montreal failed to pay a dividend and interest on its bonds, and missed its property tax payments in Amherst and South Framington, Mass. The Commercial Trust mortgage was signed in 1907 in one of Robb Engineering's last successful years. Between 1908 and 1912, only 1910 was moderately successful and in 1908 Robb's for the first time missed dividend payment. This record persuaded the officials at Commercial Trust and the Montreal Trust Company, the trustee of bondholders, to launch foreclosure action. Robb Engineering had little recourse but to file for bankruptcy.<sup>35</sup>

Robb Engineering's financial difficulties can be traced to the expansionary years before 1908. Evidence suggests that the company fell prey to some of the many stock manipulation practices common to

the period when its success attracted the interest of Halifax capitalists. In 1901 John Stairs and R. E. Harris joined Robb Engineering's board of directors and an expansion of the Amherst shops and the move into the United States soon followed. Stairs, described as "the personification of the new Halifax capitalism" until his death in 1904, presided over the affairs of such key regional financial institutions as the Eastern Trust Company and Royal Securities, as well as being a principal director in major corporations like the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company.<sup>36</sup> Harris' portfolio was equally impressive as over his business career he was president of Nova Scotia Steel and Coal, Eastern Trust, Demerara Electric, and Trinidad Electric, and held directorships in another 13 corporations.<sup>37</sup> By 1903 their associates W. B. Ross, M. C. Grant, and T. E. Kenney had joined the board, which the Halifax members now numerically dominated. Their presence among Robb Engineering's directors indicated the increasing role that their financial institutions played in the company's development.<sup>38</sup>

The reason for the engineering company's 1902 decision to open a factory in the United States and the exact relationship between the two companies remains a mystery. Though a high American tariff was the official rationale for the move, the "considerable activity in stock trading" among the directors indicates other motives were of importance.<sup>39</sup> Stairs and his Halifax associates completely dominated the financial affairs of the American Robb-Mumford Company through their investments and representation on the board of directors; Harris and Ross sat on the board with Max Aitken, who worked for Stairs' Royal

Securities. They appointed D. W. Robb and several other executives from the Amherst plant to similar positions with Robb-Mumford in an obvious attempt to use Robb's reputation in the industry to attract new investors.<sup>40</sup> Evidence of stock watering was found in the company's 1909 annual report, which recorded a bonded debt of \$238,800 on a total paid-up stock of \$281,320. Interest charges on this debt amounted to over \$27,000, or \$3,000 more than the business' operating expenses and was a principal factor behind the reported net loss of \$14,000.<sup>41</sup>

In 1912 when the two Robb companies had been stretched to their financial limits the bondholders through the Montreal Trust forced Robb's to sell its assets at auction. Aitken and Ross were among the Montreal Trust directors who apparently had decided it was time to discard Robb Engineering.<sup>42</sup> The companies' assets were purchased by the Corporation Agencies, Ltd. of Montreal which consolidated them under a new corporation, the International Engineering Works. Under the agreement bondholders received the interest due to them plus par value in six percent preference shares in the new company for each bond held on Robb Engineering assets. Capitalized at \$1.5 million, International Engineering had financing arranged with the Bank of Montreal through the intervention of Corporation Agencies whose representatives, C. H. Cahan and H. A. Lovett, became the company's senior officers. Both men were Maritimers who, after first established themselves as corporate lawyers in Halifax, had moved to Montreal several years earlier. D. W. Robb joined the board of International Engineering but did not hold an executive position in the company.<sup>43</sup>



International Engineering officials confidently predicted that the infusion of new capital removed "some of the factors which have been found disadvantageous in the past" to the company's performance. They promised to pursue vigorously reductions in "the costs of operations" to help improve the company's profitability.<sup>44</sup> An accounting and production efficiency company combed the Amherst shops and concluded that new accounting procedures and a time study programme were needed. The consultants' report was adopted, as the 1913 annual report recorded that "various sweeping reductions have been made in management, selling and overhead factory expenses"; a small profit of \$12,500 was also declared.<sup>45</sup> By the time the 1913 depression began to sweep across the nation, Amherst's second most important industry was thoroughly integrated into Montreal's financial-industrial hegemony. This extension of metropolitan financial control over Robb's had worked itself through in a different manner than at the carworks but the ultimate result was the same.

In 1913 a third Amherst industry shocked residents with news of its reorganization. The Hewson Woolen Mill closed unexpectedly putting its 250 men and women out of work. Until its closure the mill appeared quite successful with few outward signs of its worsening fiscal crisis. Sales improved from 1906 onward and two-thirds of the market was located in western Canada. The bright sales picture prompted the company to build a three storey addition in 1912 as part of a larger expansion.<sup>46</sup> Circumstances surrounding the financing of these plans raised the first public signals that all was not well with the company. In 1911, Halifax financier F.B. McCurdy and Truro's textile

manufacturer Frank Stanfield proposed a new financing scheme guaranteed, they claimed, to raise net profits from \$50,000 to \$70,000. Their plan involved a stock promotion campaign across the Maritimes that was severely criticized after the company's collapse. Though the promotion raised capital for Hewson's, the mill reported a loss of \$58,000 in 1912. The annual report recorded that the manufacturing operation had made a profit of \$25,000 but bond interest and other fixed charges had wiped out this profit.<sup>47</sup>

The 1912 financial report delivered by Frank Stanfield, who was now the president of Hewson's, raised suspicions among many investors that "misrepresentation was made at some state of the company's early history".<sup>48</sup> This discontent focused on the 1911 promotion of the company and Stanfield was criticized sharply for his role in the affair. Investors accused Stanfield of vigorously promoting the stock throughout the region while neglecting the management of the company. Rumors circulated that Stanfield had little interest in seeing the mill operational and that he intended to move its equipment to his Truro factory.<sup>49</sup> An investigation committee of the investors substantiated many of the mismanagement charges against Stanfield and other company officials, which made co-operation among these officials and the investors almost impossible. The Amherst council and the Board of Trade tried desperately to mediate the dispute since they feared the mill would never be reopened.<sup>50</sup> In 1914 E. N. Rhodes, writing from his Ottawa Office, "promised orders enough to keep the woolen mills going six months", if investors would support another financing proposal originating with Stanfield and McCurdy.<sup>51</sup>

About 75 percent of the investors agreed to the Stanfield-McCurdy plan to exchange their holdings for common stock in a reorganized company. The minority investors steadfastly refused to accept this proposal or several others that were offered to break the deadlock. They demanded that their money be recovered and threatened to launch lawsuits against Stanfield and other Hewson officials. Because the majority investors were unable to raise sufficient capital among themselves to purchase the interests of the dissenters, in 1915 the woolen mill was forced into liquidation.<sup>52</sup> At a Halifax auction in December 1915, Hewson's was acquired by its bondholders for the "comparatively low figure" of \$102,000, a remarkably low sum when set against outstanding bonds of \$350,000, plus \$125,000 in bonds held as collateral by the Bank of Nova Scotia against a \$50,000 loan.<sup>53</sup> The saga of the woolen mill did not end with its sale at auction as the bondholders now in possession of the plant considered offers to purchase it. In March 1916 A. J. Campbell, a Truro, Nova Scotia barrister, "acting as trustee for certain interests" announced his purchase of the mill for \$105,000, which was secured with a \$10,000 deposit.<sup>54</sup>

Campbell operated on behalf of Frank Stanfield who now emerged as the mill's new owner. Reorganized as the Amherst Woolen Mill, the business operated as a subsidiary of Stanfield's Ltd., Truro, with A. J. Campbell as president and Frank Stanfield as treasurer. Production soon began on government war contracts secured for the mill by E. N. Rhodes, while the acrimonious debate over the company's early financing still remained vivid in the minds of Amherst residents.<sup>55</sup> The

opening of the woolen mill did not end suspicion in the town that Stanfield's involvement in Hewson's was at least partially responsible for its collapse. Stanfield's admitted neglect of the company during his tenure as president and his role in 1911 refinancing plan were now widely known. The fact that Stanfield was accused at a public shareholder's meeting of trying to move the mill's equipment to his Truro plant left many wondering about his plans in 1916 for the Amherst subsidiary of the Truro based company.

The thorough restructuring of the Amherst economy between 1909 and 1913 affected in some form all of the town's manufacturers. In 1913 Christie Bros. & Company participated in the "Great Casket Merger" that brought nine of Canada's largest funeral supplies companies together in the Dominion Manufacturing Company of Toronto. Christie's involvement in the merger required considerable financial maneuvering by the Amherst firm because only one division was affected. The manufacture of funeral supplies began at Christie's in the 1880s and in the 1890s it diversified into making travel luggage and trunks. In 1912, in anticipation of the Dominion Manufacturing merger, Christie's was divided into two separate companies, Christie Bros. & Company and Christie Trunk & Bag Company. The luggage business remained in the control of the Christie family and the funeral supply business was directed by T. S. Roger and several Halifax investors. In the next year, the final stage of the transaction brought Christie Brothers & Company into the Dominion Manufacturing Company though the Amherst division continued to operate under the Christie name.<sup>56</sup>

The changes in ownership at Christies' left only the Amherst Boot and Shoe and the Amherst Foundry untouched by major reorganizations. But the shoeworks had undergone a challenge from Saint John capital between 1906-1908, whose defeat had marked the last cooperative effort of Amherst manufacturers to remain control of a local industry. At the Amherst Foundry it was not for the lack of trying that it was not involved in a merger. Over the autumn and winter months of 1909-1910, C. A. Lusby and W. Knight negotiated earnestly with officials of the Standard Company of Port Hope, Ontario to finalize a merger. Lusby announced in February 1910 that these arrangements were complete though the actual merger never did take place for unknown reasons.<sup>57</sup>

The financial realignment of four of Amherst's six largest companies after 1907 could not help but have a serious impact on the economy's future. Rhodes and Curry and Robb Engineering together provided as much as two-thirds of the capital investment in Amherst and employed a similar percentage of its working class. Their ownership and management now resided in Montreal where officials, in pursuit of the profits their investors demanded, made corporate decisions that recognized few allegiances to any one division or locale within that structure. The implications of these changes for the working class and the middle class of small businessmen were serious enough even during the prosperous years before 1913. Workers found their bargaining power reduced and as the depression approached they found it increasingly difficult to resist wage reductions and changes in the organization of their work. The problem facing the merchants, retailers, and other small businessmen sprang from their dependence on the business

generated by the manufacturers. If these companies retreated from Amherst, small businessmen stood to suffer a significant decline in their trade. Over the next decade, middle-class and working-class representatives spent increasingly large chunks of their time trying to cope with a de-industrialization process that they would never fully understand.

The dependent status of the Amherst economy was part of the process of uneven development within Canada creating a national economy dominated by the industrial and financial centers of Montreal and Toronto. Amherst, like the Maritimes on a regional basis, found itself rapidly reduced to a necessary but dependent role within Canada's industrial capitalist economy. A most striking feature of this transformation was the integration of the Maritimes industrial and capital resources into the realm of central Canadian capitalism which was evident as early as the 1890s. As historians have discovered, the region's manufacturing capacity and financial reserves were almost totally dominated from central Canada by 1914, which left the Maritimes with a branch-plant and branch-bank economy.<sup>58</sup> The point to stress in these developments is the integration or merging of interests between central Canadian and Maritime capitalists. The process cannot be reduced to some notion of a central Canadian takeover of the Maritimes against the will of naive or unsuspecting Maritime capitalists. An investigation of the impact of the changes in the Amherst economy on its business elite helps clarify this argument.

The departure of members of the Amherst business elite for Halifax and Montreal personified the changes in the economy. "There would seem

to be some peculiar fate which attracts people from the east", observed a Toronto newspaper columnist, "and forces them to gravitate to bigger centers, once they test their wings and make the discovery that they can fly". N. Curry's anticipated move to Montreal to become the "head of one of the largest and most promising industries of the Dominion" prompted those musing and the comment that Curry's company had "not a bad record for a little shop operating in a back woods burg like Amherst".<sup>59</sup> There was really no suspense as to whether Curry would leave Amherst after the Canadian Car and Foundry merger and his departure was an important loss to the town's business group. While Curry's largest investments remained in Amherst, he was an instrumental figure in the financing of many local industries and offered the elite strong political leadership. After 1909 his business transactions reached well beyond Amherst and he moved to Montreal to supervise his broadening financial interests.

Building his success in Amherst, Curry acquired an impressive portfolio of company presidencies and directorships. In October 1909, Curry accepted a Bank of Nova Scotia "proposition" to join its directorate, which he did the following month after first purchasing the stock necessary to qualify.<sup>60</sup> By 1912, in addition to his presidency of Canadian Car and Foundry and Bank of Nova Scotia position, Curry was president of Canadian Steel Foundries and a director of the Montreal Trust, Camaguey Company, Sterling Coal Company, and Canadian Light & Power Company. His position with the Bank of Nova Scotia linked Curry to the Eastern Trust Company through John Payzant, president of the bank and vice-president of the trust

company. Charles Archibald, vice-president of the Bank of Nova Scotia was president of the West Indian utility Camaguey Company whose vice-president was W. B. Ross, also of Halifax. Ross and Curry joined Aitken on the board of Montreal Trust which, in turn, was closely linked to another financial institution with Maritime origins, the Royal Bank. By 1919, Curry held 12 company presidencies and was a director of another 30; as well, in 1912 Curry accepted an appointment to the Senate.<sup>61</sup> This list only suggests the myriad of his corporate and political linkages that was one more example of the merging interests between Maritime and central Canadian capitalists.

T. S. Rogers was another Amherst capitalist leaving town at about the same time as Curry. After graduating in law from Dalhousie University, Rogers returned to Amherst and joined the law firm of Townshend and Dickey. He soon was well placed in the Amherst elite through his financial connections with the Amherst Foundry and the Amherst Boot and Shoe whose presidency he assumed at the time of T. W. Pipe's death. In 1910 he resigned this position though remaining a director and prepared for his departure to Halifax to establish a corporate law partnership. His career in the provincial capital proved quite successful as he arranged the sale of Christie Bros & Company to Dominion Manufacturing and became a director of several companies including Nova Scotia Steel and Coal.<sup>62</sup> As director in the Amherst Boot and Shoe with Rogers, E. N. Rhodes began to detach himself gradually from local affairs. Another graduate of Dalhousie's law school, Rhodes practiced law in Amherst with the prominent Liberal industrialist, W. T. Pipes.



Rhodes family origins and connections with Pipes ensured the young lawyer of a position in the local elite. By the time Rhodes left Amherst in 1908 to represent Cumberland County in the House of Commons for the Conservatives, he held directorships in Rhodes and Curry, Amherst Boot and Shoe, and the Canadian Rolling Stock Company and later added the Amherst Piano Company and the Nova Scotia Trust Company to his portfolio.<sup>63</sup> Rhodes' shift of interest away from Amherst took longer to materialize than in the case of Curry and Rogers. Through his re-election in 1911 and 1917, Rhodes placed increasing emphasis on his non Cumberland responsibilities especially after his promotion from Deputy Speaker to Speaker of the House of Commons in 1917. He declined to run in the 1921 election because he wished to devote himself to new business interests that included the presidency of the Ontario based British American Nickel Corporation.<sup>64</sup> Rhodes returned temporarily to Nova Scotia to lead the Conservative party to victory in the 1925 provincial election but did not run in Cumberland County, choosing instead to run in Hants County. A Halifax newspaper commenting on Rhodes' engagement in provincial politics noted that the Conservatives had chosen an Ontario businessman who had not lived in Nova Scotia for ten years as their leader.<sup>65</sup>

The preceding studies of the realignment of industries and the subsequent move of leading Amherst business and political figures to Montreal and Halifax illustrates the degree to which the uneven development of the Canadian economy had eroded Amherst's manufacturing base and integrated indigenous capital into the country's centers of industrial and financial power. The Currys, Rhodes, Rogers, Aitkens,

and other Maritime capitalists encouraged these changes as the history of Rhodes and Curry and Robb Engineering demonstrated. This subordination of the Amherst and regional economies was well advanced before the beginning of the pre-war depression and before freight rates, regional political representation, and other similar explanations of regional dependence could be considered fundamental factors in the process. The 1913 depression and the events of the next decade graphically illustrated to Amherst residents the significance of the pre-war changes and influenced their responses to the truly desperate situation after World War One.

### III

"Amherst immediately felt a tremor in every one of its industrial nerves", observed a commentator, when the reverberations of the pre-war depression reached the town in late 1912.<sup>66</sup> By November, manufacturers "finishing up old contracts" laid off hundreds of workers who pressured the town council for relief support. As these demands for relief rose, Amherst's revenues fell precipitously: assessment shrank from \$4 million to \$3.3 million in one year and unpaid taxes increased from \$8,000 in 1913 to \$29,000 in 1916. Water and sewage systems fell into disrepair and road repairs were stopped as the town struggled to meet the crisis. Some residents simply abandoned their homes as they joined hundreds of others leaving the town. The construction of homes, businesses, and public buildings halted and did not begin again until 1917.<sup>67</sup> The depths of this depression plunged

much deeper than that of the 1908 recession throughout which the town had remained confident that a return to prosperity was assured. But in 1913 the situation was more complicated and provided much less room for optimism.

The Hewson Woolen Mill, embroiled in financial controversy, showed little prospects of opening in the near future, if ever. At the carworks, uncertainty about its future increased as the Montreal company began to consolidate its holdings because of the depression. In 1912 Canadian Car and Foundry reported assets of \$13 million and sales of \$16.5 million but by 1914 Curry was warning Prime Minister Borden that unless the government spurred railway construction 75 percent of the company's operations would soon be closed.<sup>68</sup> The Amherst shops were silent even before Curry addressed his appeal to the prime minister. In 1913, the malleable iron works had been prepared for a shutdown that did not end until 1920. Employment in the car shops was sporadic and Canadian Car and Foundry officials in Montreal devised plans to rationalize production that included the dismantling of equipment for shipment to central Canada, a graphic example of the marginalization of the Amherst carworks.<sup>69</sup>

Reorganization at the International Engineering Works alleviated part of the company's financial burden though it now faced difficulties of a different kind. During the fiscal wheeling and dealings of the previous years, company officials failed to perceive or simply neglected to respond to the growing obsolescence of their product. Hydro electricity and electric turbines were destroying the market for the steam engines and boilers that had brought Robb Engineering to

national prominence. Such competition and the general circumstances of the depression left the company's employees without work for much of 1913-1915. D. W. Robb and International Engineering's executives meanwhile put the design department to work modeling a steam tractor slated for production when the economy improved.<sup>70</sup> With the boiler shop, carworks, and woolen mill virtually closed, the only somewhat brighter picture at the Amherst Foundry and the Amherst Boot and Shoe did little to improve the crisis in the economy. The future looked bleak for Amherst because a national economic recovery would not necessarily solve the problems of the local economy.

World War One offered temporary relief to Amherst from the hard times in 1913-1914. An estimated 500-1,000 men enlisted, which reduced unemployment, and by spring 1915 government contracts for war materials breathed new life into several local companies.<sup>71</sup> International Engineering was the first to benefit from the bloodletting in Europe and soon was in "the shell business in a big way". The federal government contracted International Engineering later in the war for marine engines and boilers, which beginning in 1917 the company also sold along with munitions to the Americans. D. W. Robb's and especially C. H. Cahan's connections with the Conservative party certainly did not harm the company's chances at government contracts that proved bountiful enough to keep International Engineering working three, eight hour shifts and saw it hire women production workers for the first time in its history.<sup>72</sup> The directors not surprisingly reported a substantial operating profit for 1915 that reduced but

certainly did not clear the company's debts accumulated over the previous years of little activity.<sup>73</sup>

In 1916 Frank Stanfield purchased the Hewson Woolen Mill and opened it for the first time in three years on the promise of government contracts from his political and business ally E. N. Rhodes. The next year the company, now called the Amherst Woolen Mill, supplied the Canadian and American governments with soldier and hospital blankets and on the strength of these sales reported a \$35,000 net profit in 1918.<sup>74</sup> J. A. McDonald, President, Amherst Piano Company, faced with sagging consumer sales because of the war exigency pursued contracts to build munition boxes. Writing to Borden's private secretary in 1915, McDonald, a well connected Conservative, told A. E. Blout that he was not "going to try to pull any political strings . . . but I will consider it a favour" if the piano works receives contracts for "any description of furniture, camp-beds, ammunition boxes or anything of this nature". McDonald's appeal was rewarded with a contract to supply International Engineering with shell boxes though it required several additional letters to Borden.<sup>75</sup>

The Amherst Boot and Shoe and the Amherst Foundry, the only remaining locally owned companies from the expansionary period, fared quite differently during World War One. Operations at the foundry slowed during the depression and only partially recovered through the war years. C. A. Lusby attributed this situation to a shortage of consumer capital and anticipated a revival of his business at the war's end. On the other hand, the Amherst Boot and Shoe weathered the depression to report the largest sales in its history during the war.

In 1915, P. C. Black, son of Hiram Black one of the shoeworks original partners and president of the company since 1911, reported that some government contracts for army boots were being declined because of the pressing demands of the regular trade. In 1918 the shoeworks recorded sales of \$1.2 million and offered its "usual dividend of six percent".<sup>76</sup>

Canadian Car and Foundry saw its profit outlook improve considerably with the war. Profits rose from \$700,000 in 1914 to \$2 million in 1917 when the corporation declared a 1.75 percent dividend on its preference stock, the first such payment in three years. Net profits soared to \$3 million in 1918 and, while announcing a seven percent dividend on preference shares, N. Curry predicted - that the war-strengthened Canadian economy ensured prosperity for the years ahead.<sup>77</sup> The bright sales record of Canadian Car and Foundry reflected its successful bids for shell contracts and rolling stock with European governments; for example, millions of dollars in sales of cars and munitions to the Russians, British, and French were reported in 1915 and 1917; a 1918 agreement with the American government called for the construction of \$10 million in steel hulled ships at the Fort William plant. The considerable correspondence during the war between Curry and Borden who were personal friends indicated that most Canadian Car and Foundry contracts received the active support of the Canadian government.<sup>78</sup> E. N. Rhodes on at least one occasion made a similar intervention though this was to ensure Borden's endorsement of a company bid.<sup>79</sup> Canadian Car and Foundry did face one serious problem in the middle of this prosperity because to meet its contracts the

company's indebtedness rose from \$2 million to \$7 million between 1915-1917.<sup>80</sup>

Canadian Car and Foundry's Amherst shops shared only marginally in the business created by the war. Some shell forging equipment was installed and, in 1917 and 1918, rolling stock was manufactured in the town. Decisions made in the Montreal head office did affect the Amherst plant's capability to receive a significant share of the contract work. First, Canadian Steel Foundries received the majority of the shell business and a significant amount of the remaining contracts went to American companies. When questioned by Borden about the propriety of this action, especially because the contracts involved federal government subsidies, Curry offered two defenses. Canadian Car and Foundry had to meet the "demands" of the American "partners" like J. P. Morgan and Company who had helped finance the multi-million dollar deals with the Europeans and, Curry noted, the Americans could produce the shells more cheaply than the Canadian shops.<sup>81</sup>

A parallel situation arose over the distribution of rolling stock orders though this is somewhat more difficult to document. Evidence leaves the impression that the Montreal carbuilders were "very busy" throughout much of the war. The Amherst plant with shell orders and car construction never operated beyond one half of its capacity with a maximum of only 800 employees. Company policy appeared to be designed to withdraw the Amherst carworks from the mass production of rolling stock and to limit its shops to building specialty equipment like cattle and refrigerator cars. Canadian Car and Foundry's decision to build its Fort William plant in 1912 rather than possibly modernize

the Amherst facilities created further problems. Though both divisions were idle in 1914 the western plant because of its steel operations later received a \$10 million contract to build ships. Thus the war did not reverse the trend towards the peripheralization of the Amherst carworks; in fact, it likely contributed to this process as new investment continued to be channeled elsewhere. Canadian Car and Foundry's decision to keep the Amherst malleable ironworks closed throughout the war and its subsequent conversion into a prison-of-war camp stood as stark reminders of the increasing marginality of the Rhodes-Curry works.<sup>82</sup>

World War One did not bring a revival to Amherst. Most industries opened after operating on short time or not at all during 1914 and most of 1915. Unemployment declined, assessment rolls stopped falling, and unpaid taxes were reduced from \$29,000 in 1916 to \$20,000 by 1918, all of which led town officials to conclude that Amherst had "emerged from the war greater than ever".<sup>83</sup> The time was ripe, exclaimed one writer, for a "re-awakening of the booster spirit" that had characterized the business elite's performance in the "Busy Amherst" era. Articles with confident titles like "It Is Still Busy Amherst" and "A Thriving Industrial Town with City Ambitions" appeared in The Busy East and the daily press as local politicians and small businessmen tried to convince themselves more than outsiders that Amherst had a strong economy. But the Amherst economy was not alright, a fact that no one could ignore any longer. Uneasiness over the future crept into even the most strident literature emanating from the town's publicity bureau. "More prosperous times" and the rise of Amherst to a



"flourishing city" would surely come but not until after the "re-adjustment" to a peace time economy brought a "possible slight depression".<sup>84</sup>

Predictions of a bright future for Amherst were based on faith more than any true assessment of the reality of the situation. The "re-adjustment period" began even before peace was declared as work slowed in many industries. Many local businessmen might have found solace in the trade statistics for 1919 and 1920 but even these identified a decline in the number of jobs available.\* Looking into the future saved Amherst businessmen from directly confronting the ugly reality of the town's decline and reflected their sense of impotence against what they perceived as natural economic forces. This feeling of powerlessness among the post war elite contrasted sharply with the world-view of local capitalists before 1907. The group of manufacturers forged originally from among the town's early master craftsmen, merchants, and farmers had provided the business class with much of its direction in the expansion era. After 1907 though the subordination of the Amherst economy altered the composition of the business class, a change personified in the attrition of its manufacturing group. By 1919, for example, the Rhodes and Curry families' abandonment of Amherst was as advanced as that of the company that made them wealthy and powerful. E. N. Rhodes prepared for return to a full time business career in Ontario and the Currys continued to prosper in Montreal. N. Curry still vacationed at Tidnish, the cottage

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\*See Table II, p.51.

area that he and the Board of Trade had opened in the early 1900s, but he no longer had any significant financial ties to Amherst. Curry spent little time in the town and usually only returned for special occasions like the unveiling of a monument in honour of a son killed in the war.<sup>85</sup>

An analysis of the membership of the Amherst town council for 1918-1920 and the local delegation to the Maritime Board of Trade meetings in 1920 highlights the changes in the business elites social base and its center of political leadership. Between 1918-1920, 12 men sat on the council for one or more years, whose occupations included a merchant-wholesaler, real estate agent, small contractor, travelling salesman, postmaster, and four lawyers with no important industrial connections; the remaining members listed working class occupations. This sharply contrasted with the council membership of the expansionary period when the manufacturers or their friends maintained a clear hegemony over civic government. In the post war years they had not been pushed aside but rather the changing composition of the council reflected the declining interest of manufacturing in Amherst. Since T. M. Curry had presided as mayor over the Home Coming celebrations in 1910 none of the town's industrial families had sat on council.<sup>86</sup>

When the Amherst Board of Trade hosted the 1920 Maritime Board of Trade Annual Meeting, 12 of the town's leading businessmen attended the sessions. The host delegation included six wholesale-retail merchants, two lawyers, the Royal Bank manager, and the postmaster, D. W. Ralston mayor of Amherst. P. C. Black, president of the Amherst Boot and Shoe and Alex Christie, manager of Christie Brothers and Company rounded out

the group. Black's presence was interesting from two perspectives because he represented the only direct link among the group with the manufacturers of "Busy Amherst" and directed one of the only two factories from that era not involved in a merger. The meeting's attack on federal government railway policies interested the Amherst Boot and Shoe and the Amherst Foundry because of their sales in central and western Canada. Alex Christie of Christie Bros., division of Dominion Manufacturing, must have found his position awkward in light of such discussions. Officials from the carworks and engineering shop were conspicuous by their absence, which less than 15 years before would have been inconceivable. Canadian Car and Foundry had already appointed a non-Amherst resident to manage the carworks and International Engineering was preparing for a similar move.<sup>87</sup>

The response of the post war business class to the problems Amherst faced reflected their economic status as small businessmen. Ever since the first signs that all was not well with the Amherst economy, they had found themselves in an unnerving predicament. They relied on the business the manufacturing companies generated through the purchase of supplies and payment of wages to hundreds of works; on the other hand, the policies of these various industries now threatened the livelihood of many merchants, wholesalers, and other independents. Their difficulty in grasping the significance of the process of de-industrialization was expressed in their haphazard response to the crisis. First, as A. D. Ross, one of their leading spokesman warned through the pages of the Daily Press, no action should be taken that would encourage the outside controlled industries to retreat further

from Amherst or worsen the situation for locally owned companies. The issue that concerned him most in this regard was working-class agitation for better working and living conditions. He warned local workers that

The past four years has witnessed more hard sledding for many of our industries. The Nova Scotia Carriage Co. has gone into liquidation. The Amherst Foundry for the greater portion of the past period has only been working part time. The same holds true of the Canada (sic) Car Co. and the depreciation of property in Amherst has largely been due to the inactivity of our industrial life. The time has come when as a town we should do our part in making an effort to bring about restoration of the activity that formerly prevailed here. . . . This is not a time when heavy stripes should be laid upon the manufacturers of Amherst. The workingmen of the town have their 'whole' at stake in their homes and their garden plots here, so that a revival of our industrial life means an increased value to the property of our workingmen.<sup>88</sup>

Ross often reiterated this theme in his coverage of the deepening militancy among Amherst workers near the war's end which culminated in the general strike of May 1919. He admitted that the increasing uncertainty of the future of local industries was a cause of the labour conflict though in his estimation a general strike only worsened the problem. A second response among the business class to the difficulties of the Amherst economy found its expression in their willingness to consider issues of Maritime Union and Maritime Rights. The 1920 Maritime Board of Trade Annual Meeting heard Amherst mayor D. W. Ralston appeal to delegates "to stand together" against federal railway and taxation policies. Similar themes dominated speeches by H. M. Canfield of the Amherst Board of Trade and Hance Logan, former Liberal M. P. for Cumberland, Amherst resident and president of the Maritime Board of Trade. Their attack on rising freight rates, the consolidation of the I.C.R. within the government owned Canadian

National Railways, and Ottawa's reluctance to invest in capital works projects in the Maritimes would soon find its political expression in the Maritime Rights movement.<sup>89</sup>

A good example of the thinking of Amherst's political and business leaders' state of mind in the post war years appeared in the December 1919 issue of The Busy East.<sup>90</sup> Deputy town clerk of Amherst, R. D. Crawford in a cryptic reference to the May general strike informed the readers that "a close bond of union cements the management and the employees of the various industries and that the differences that arise are usually amicably settled". There followed the perfunctory boasts about Amherst's many industries with their markets stretching across Canada and, though the descriptions were somewhat subdued from earlier ones, there was no hint of a crisis among the town's manufacturing concerns. In Crawford's article, however, the third feature of the business class emerging response to the situation could be detected when he chose to emphasize a new direction for the Amherst economy. Rather than challenging de-industrialization the elite would accommodate itself to the process. "Many of the natural advantages of Amherst have been somewhat overlooked and imperfectly utilized", Crawford thought, because manufacturing and especially the carworks has "overshadowed" other possibilities.

Crawford's alternative emphasized that Amherst's future stability rested with its retailing and wholesaling possibilities. Now that the railways had failed the town, or so Crawford believed, it was time to return to the sea. "With proper harbour facilities linking the town by water with St. John, Boston, and other Atlantic sea board cities

possibilities of trade would be unlimited", suggested the deputy-clerk, and, in a fit of even greater fantasy, finished with a call for the revival of the Chignecto Canal Project. Echoing again the prediction of entrepreneurs of another era, Carter concluded that farming, lumbering, and mining would provide the products to ship from the Amherst seaport. The article did add one new twist to earlier discussions of the town's future. Upstaging Maritime politicians of the 1980s, Carter placed his ultimate faith for Amherst in the realization of "the unequalled power of the Bay of Fundy tide" with its "benefits of untold opportunities".

If the Amherst delegates of the Board of Trade meeting could have foreseen the disaster that was to befall the town over the next decade, their protests would have been much more determined. In the 1920s every major industry closed: during 1923 Canadian Car and Foundry suspended all work in Amherst, after earlier having shut down the malleable iron shops and the rolling mill. In the same year, International Engineering through a financial slight of hand by the Bank of Montreal was sold to the Dominion Bridge Company which used only a skeleton crew to construct bridges not manufacture engines, boilers, or even tractors. Frank Stanfield accomplished what he had been trying to do for a decade when he closed the woolen mill in the 1920s and moved its knitting equipment in Truro. In 1927, the Amherst Boot and Shoe, which had faced declining profits since shortly after the end of the war because of high freight rates and increasing competition, ceased operations and the Amherst Piano Company soon followed suit for much the same reasons. And, the Amherst Foundry

working only part time sold out to the Fawcett Company of nearby Sackville, New Brunswick. Some objective measurements of the collapse saw Amherst's population fall from 10,000 to 7,500 over the decade; manufacturing jobs decline from almost 2,000 to 638; and the aggregate payroll drop from \$2.2 million in 1920 to \$.5 million in 1925, and after a slight rally, bottomed out in 1933 at \$275,000.\* These conditions created deep social tensions in Amherst as local working-class leaders and the representatives of local business interests pursued very different responses to the crisis.

The collapse of the Amherst economy in the 1920s was one element in the generalized crisis in the Maritimes. Uneven capitalistic development in Canada had now firmly subordinated regional needs to those of the metropolitan centers of financial and industrial concentration. In Amherst the integration of its economy into the emerging national system was well advanced by World War One and, though the decline was not immediate, in retrospect the fall appeared almost inevitable by this time.

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\*See Table II, p. 51.

Footnotes - Chapter II

1. Halifax Board of Trade, Industrial Agency of Nova Scotia (Halifax, N.S.), n.p.
2. T.W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes", pp. 3 - 28.
3. David A. Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Industry and the Rise and Fall of the British Empire Steel Corporation" Acadiensis, V. 7 (1977), pp. 3-34; E. R. Forbes, "In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography", L. Genè Barrett, "Perspectives on Dependency and Underdevelopment in the Atlantic Region", Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, V. 17 (1980), pp. 273-286; Henry Veltmeyer, "A Central Issue in Dependency Theory", Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, V. 17 (1980), pp. 198-213 and "Dependency and Underdevelopment: Some Questions and Problems", Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory, V. 2 (1978), pp. 55-74.
4. T. W. Acheson, "The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes", is the seminal work of this interpretation.
5. Harold A. Innis, The Cod Fisheries (Toronto, 1954); S. A. Saunders, Studies in the Economy of the Maritime Provinces (Toronto, 1939); L. D. McCann, "The Mercantile-Industrial Transition in the Metal Towns of Pictou County, 1857-1931", Acadiensis, V. 10 (1981), pp. 29-64 and "Staples and the New Industrialism in the Growth of Post-Confederation Halifax", Acadiensis, V. 8 (1979), pp. 47-79.
6. Ernest R. Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927 (Toronto, 1979).
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13. Ibid., February 1912; D.Ns., 20 November 1909. Descriptions of Amherst by the local correspondent in The Busy East provide thorough, though embellished, description of the economy. See, for example, The Busy East, February, April 1912. George T. Douglas of the Rhodes and Curry Company wrote a similar article entitled "The Industries of Amherst, N.S.", Industrial Canada, August 1913.
14. D.Ns., 22 June 1967, 30 September 1909.
15. Ibid., 22 June 1967.
16. Labour Gazette, January 1918.
17. D.Ns. 30 September, 1, 2, 4, 8 October 1909.
18. See Chapter I, "The Industrialization of Amherst", footnote #44.
19. Railway and Marine World, August, September 1909; D.Ns., 14 July 1909.
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22. D.Ns., 15, 22, 23 October 1909; Railway and Marine World, December 1909; Monetary Times, Annual Review, 1913; Abram E. Epp, "Cooperation Among Capitalists: The Canadian Merger Movement, 1909-1913" (Ph.D. thesis, John Hopkins University, 1973), pp. 541-544.
23. Railway and Marine World, December 1909; Daily News, 23 October 1909; Abram Epp, "Cooperation Among Capitalists", pp. 544-546.
24. D.Ns., 15 October 1909; Abram Epp, "Cooperation Among Capitalists", pp. 550-557 includes a discussion of the failure of the Silliker Car Company. The company was attracted away from Amherst to Halifax in 1906 through a bonusing scheme originating with the Halifax Board of Trade. While in Amherst, the company was very small and its loss to Halifax was not a serious blow to the economy.

25. The Railway and Marine World, December 1909, quoted Curry as saying that "the savings in buying, selling, freight, administration and manufacture (sic) with these three concerns combined should add at least 40% to net earning without charging more for the output".
26. Monetary Times, 8 January 1903.
27. D.Ns., 22 October 1909.
28. Canadian Machinery, 10 July 1913; The Busy East, 12 January 1912.
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30. Ibid., p. 500.
31. W. R. Houston, Directory of Canadian Directors, 1912; Monetary Times, Annual Review, 1913, p. 262; Abram Epp, "Cooperation Among Capitalists", p. 548.
32. Ibid., pp. 558-562; Acheson, "National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes", p. 26.
33. Abram Epp, "Cooperation Among Capitalists", p. 563.
34. Monetary Times, Annual Review, 1913, p. 262.
35. Robb Engineering Papers (henceforth, Robb Papers), V. 14, Dalhousie University Archives (henceforth, Dal. Archives); Industrial Advocate, October 1912.
36. T. W. Acheson, "National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes", p. 25.
37. W. R. Houston, Directory of Directors, 1912; Who's Who and Why, 1919-1920, p. 455.
38. Industrial Canada, April 1902; Industrial Advocate, April 1903.
39. Norman Ritchie, The Story of Robb's, p. 20.
40. "Robb-Mumford Dividend, 30 June 1905", Robb Papers, Dal. Archives; Norman Ritchie, Story of Robb's, p. 20.
41. "Return of Annual Net Income for South Farmington Plant, 31 December 1909", Robb Papers, V. 14., Dal. Archives.
42. Norman Ritchie, Story of Robb's, pp. 20-21; W. R. Houston, Directory of Directors, 1912; Industrial Advocate, October 1912.
43. Ibid.; Norman Ritchie, Story of Robb's p. 21; Who's Who and Why, 1919-1920, p. 186, 770; Canadian Machinery, 8 May 1913.

44. Industrial Advocate, October 1912.
45. Gunn, Richard and Company, Report, Robb Papers, Dal. Archives; Canadian Machinery, 9 April 1914.
46. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst" p. 35; Industrial Canada, January 1911; Busy East, February 1912; Canadian Textile Journal, July 1906.
47. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst", pp. 35-38.
48. Canadian Textile Journal, March 1914.
49. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst" p. 37; Halifax Mail, 9 November 1911, reported that Stanfield had taken control of Hewson's. The announcement was correct but several years premature. Canadian Textile Journal, May 1914.
50. Ibid., February 1915; Robson Lamy, "The Rise and Decline of Amherst", pp. 39-40.
51. Ibid., p. 40.
52. Ibid.; Canadian Textile Journal, May, July 1914; January, February, March 1915, provides the details of the wrangling among the financial interests in the Hewson affair.
53. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst", p. 40; Canadian Textile Journal, September, October 1915.
54. Ibid., March 1916.
55. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst", p. 41.
56. Monetary Times, 26 October 1912, 23 March 1913.
57. Labour Gazette, October 1909, pp. 418-419; Industrial Canada, February 1910.
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60. H. C. McLeod to Board of Directors, 22 October and 17 November 1909, Correspondence with the Board of Directors, Bank of Nova Scotia Archives.
61. W. R. Houston, Directory of Directors, 1912; Who's Who and Why, 1919-1920, p. 1009.
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63. Ibid.; Who's Who and Why 1919-1920, p. 998.
64. Rhodes' declining interest is apparent from a reading of the Rhodes correspondence, Rhodes Papers, P.A.N.S. See also, Ernest R. Forbes, Maritime Rights, p. 134.
65. Ibid., p. 137.
66. The Busy East, May 1918.
67. Labour Gazette, June, November 1913, January, April 1914; Norman Pearson, Town of Amherst, p. 12; D.Ns., 25 July 1917.
68. Monetary Times, 14 December 1912; Abram Epp, "Cooperation Among Capitalists", p. 550; In 1914, Curry and Borden corresponded on the need of federal government subsidies for the building of the Canadian Northern Railway. Curry urged the government to assist the railway as a means to reverse the depression. Borden Papers, V. 25, 29, P.A.C.
69. Robson Lamy, "The Development and Decline of Amherst", p. 32.
70. Norman Ritchie, Story of Robb's, pp. 21-22.
71. Norman Pearson, The Town of Amherst, p. 12.
72. Norman Ritchie, Story of Robb's, pp. 21-22; D.Ns., 1 November 1917, 6 June 1918.
73. Canadian Machinery, 13 April 1916.
74. D.Ns., 5 September 1917.
75. J. A. McDonald to A. E. Blout, 16 September, 8 December 1915 and A. E. Blout to J. A. McDonald, 5 November 1915, Borden Papers, P.A.C.
76. D.Ns., 13 February 1918, 28 May 1919; The Busy East, November 1915.
77. D.Ns., 18 March 1918; The Busy East, January 1919.

78. D.Ns., 2 August 1917; Canadian Machinery, 6 January 1916, 25 March 1915; The Busy East, February 1918; Borden Papers, V. 47, 50, P.A.C. contain extensive correspondence between Curry and Borden about munition and other war related contracts. See also N. Curry to S. Hughes, 7 December 1915 and N. Curry to Borden, 8 December 1915, Borden Papers, P.A.C.
79. E.N. Rhodes to Borden, 21 August 1917, Borden Papers, P.A.C.
80. D.Ns., 18 March 1918.
81. Canadian Machinery, 27 May 1915; D.Ns., 2 August 1917; N. Curry to Borden, 17 June 1915, Borden Papers, P.A.C.; Canadian Machinery, 6 January 1916.
82. D.Ns., 29 October 1917, 30 September 1918; The Busy East, February 1918; Labour Gazette, June, July 1917.
83. Nova Scotia. House of Assembly. Journals of the House of Assembly, Appendix No. 14, Statistics of Nova Scotia Towns", 1916, 1918; The Busy East, May 1918.
84. The Busy East, May 1918, "It Is Still 'Busy Amherst'"; December 1919, "Amherst, A Thriving Industrial Town With City Ambitions", November 1920, "Why Amherst Is Optimistic".
85. Norman Pearson, Town of Amherst, pp. 11-12.
86. Occupations of council members was gathered from Amherst Directory 1918 and 1920-1921.
87. The Busy East, November 1920.
88. D.Ns., 25 July 1917.
89. The Busy East, November 1920.
90. The Busy East, December 1919.

### Chapter III

#### The Origins of the Amherst Labour Movement, 1890 - 1910

##### I.

Moulder William Rackham was a young man when he arrived to take up his trade in Amherst in the late 1880s. He was in many respects typical of other members of his craft. A union man since 1874 when he had joined the Moulders' Friendly Society, Rackham was attracted to the Knights of Labor through his own union's association with the movement. Proud of his craft, Rackham aspired to the respectability that he thought implicit in being a skilled working man in the nineteenth century. His notion of the appropriate propriety for his status led him into the temperance movement in the early 1890s and his commitment to the ideas of self-help made him an ardent advocate of the co-operative movement. In 1890, Rackham could not have predicted the outcome of the rapid changes that were beginning to occur as Amherst became increasingly integrated into Canada's industrial capitalist society. Because he worked at Rhodes and Curry, Rackham experienced the changes in his daily work routine and he sought new defences against the harshness of the new order. In 1897, the Knights of Labor

having collapsed, Rackham turned to craft unionism and became a charter member in the Amherst local of the Iron Molders' Union of America. He used this position to urge other skilled workers to organize. Seven years later he helped to create the town's first labour council and debated politics in the "Workingman's Club". From these discussions and his experiences on the shopfloor, Rackham developed an appreciation of the need, for greater working-class unity. He consequently assumed a strategic role in agitation for an independent labour party in 1908, during which time he became exposed to socialist ideas. While Rackham retained his I.M.U. membership throughout his life, he was convinced by the 1914 collapse of the Amherst labour movement of the need for industrial unionism. Further radicalized by conditions during World War One, Rackham emerged in 1918 as a respected leader of the Amherst Federation of Labor. He also campaigned in the Independent Labour Party's successful election of miner Archie Terris in the 1920 provincial election. By the mid 1920s, however, Rackham shared in the disappointment of other working-class leaders as the movement to which he had devoted much of his life collapsed under the weight of internal dissention and town's industrial decline.<sup>1</sup>

William Rackham's adult life spanned the history of the labour movement from its formative years until its setback in the 1920s. But because Rackham was always on the progressive or cutting edge of the movement, his biography overstates the movement's linear development. In the history of the labour movement are found many twists and turns, and numerous defeats in the workplace and at the polling booth. Hostile economic and social conditions always threatened the viability

of the movement in Amherst. This chapter briefly sketches this social and economic context within which the labour movement began, identifying the ideological and structural barriers that tended to fragment the working-class identity. Here the recruitment of workers, the nature of the labour market, ethnic and racial tensions, and the relationship of fraternal associations to the labour movement are analyzed. With this overview in mind the study shifts to its central purpose, which is a discussion of the institutional development of the labour movement before 1910. It concludes with an analysis of the movement's ideology at the time of the Cumberland Labour Party's intervention into provincial politics in 1909. The study argues that the "labourism", a concept borrowed from British historian John Saville, of the craft union movement in Amherst faced an internal challenge from an influential minority of its own members by 1910. This minority vision was critical of exclusivism of the craft union experience and sought new workplace and political structures to facilitate its call for greater working-class unity in the struggle against capitalist exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

## II

The transformation of the Amherst economy between 1890 and 1910 brought significant changes in the world of the working men and women. At the beginning of the period the worker more than likely passed his working day in an artisan shop or small factory. In 1890, there were only 700 workers employed in manufacturing and they were distributed



among almost 100 different shops.\* Only the shoeworks employed more than 100 workers, while the next largest companies, the Robb Foundry and Rhodes and Curry, had permanent staff of about 75. Over the next 20 years production expanded dramatically but simultaneously concentrated in relatively few establishments. The increased physical size of the workplace, greater mechanization, and substantially larger workforces were the results of this change that the average worker could not escape. There was a substantial rise in the available number of jobs to about 3,000, but a half dozen manufacturers dominated the labour market. Rhodes and Curry employed 1500 men on average, Robb Engineering 450, the shoeworks and wooden mill over 200, the Amherst Foundry 150, and several smaller foundries and woodworking factories hired between 50-100 men. Amherst also supported a substantial building trades industry that grew in response to the construction demand created by the rise of manufacturing and the town's population increase.

The absence of company records and adequate census information makes the identification of the occupational structure in Amherst difficult. In 1890, 18 percent (683) of the population was engaged in manufacturing, a figure that increased to 26 percent (1,299) in 1900, and then slightly declined to 24 percent (2,142) in 1910.\*\* A classification of employment by industry and sex in 1911 reported 2,229 manufacturing jobs divided into railway car building (800), the metal

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\* See Table II, p. 51.

\*\* See Table II, p. 51.

industry (631), woodworking (282), boot and shoe (216), woolen goods (212), and several other less significant occupations.<sup>3</sup> The 1911 Factories' Report provided the only accurate glimpse into the ratio of male to female workers in Amherst's manufacturing sector. The carbuilding, metal trades, and woodworking occupations, which accounted for 79 percent of all manufacturing positions in Amherst, were the exclusive preserves of the males. Women basically found employment in the woolen mill and the shoe factory, and of these two companies the woolen mill was of critical importance. In 1911, only 246 women and young girls were employed in manufacturing and 212 of these positions were in the woolen industry. Thus before the opening of the woolen mill in 1903, there were very few women engaged in manufacturing; in fact, it was the availability of this supply of unskilled labour that influenced the location of the plant in Amherst.<sup>4</sup>

The classification of occupations by skill has to remain impressionistic. But given the types of industries in Amherst, a significant proportion of the working-class population must have occupied skilled occupations. The engineering shops, foundries, and the carworks all required skilled help, especially machinists, moulders, boiler makers, and pipe fitters. These metal workers, often referred to as the new craftsmen, likely accounted for the largest portion of skilled workers in Amherst. In 1905, for example, the Amherst Foundry reported a staff of 35 moulders and 30 stove fitters among a workforce of 90 men, and Robb Engineering hired 150 machinists, 80 moulders, 80 boilermakers, and 90 men in its repair shop, of whom a significant number would have been machinists. Such statistics must be

treated cautiously because these numbers frequently included apprentices and, in some cases, the helpers of the skilled workers.<sup>5</sup> The effect of this occupational stratification on workplace organizing is discussed later in the study. Woodworking factories and the building trades provided employment for carpenters, cabinet makers, masons, painters, and other related trades.<sup>6</sup> The most complex occupational structure was in the carworks, where anyone involved in the construction and repair of railway freight and passenger cars might simply be referred to as a carman. Because the rollingstock manufactured in Amherst was largely of wooden construction, many of the carmen were journeymen carpenters and cabinet makers or semi-skilled workers with some basic training in these trades. Painters, upholsters and other classifications related to wooden car manufacturing were also employed by the company. Though the building of steel railway cars in Amherst never surpassed that of wooden rollingstock, the percentage of iron and steel in each car did increase through the period of this study. The trucks for the boxes were, of course, already made of metal and the introduction of steel underframes began early in the twentieth century. Thus increasing numbers of metal workers, skilled and semi-skilled, were introduced to the carshops as the period progressed. Moulders, blacksmiths, and axle rod makers were in the plant at its inception but they were joined by 1900 by an increasing number of machinists. The new techniques in production before World War One brought tinsmiths, welders, riveters, pipefitters, press operators, and other semi-skilled metal workers into the carworks. The company hired many labourers in addition to its considerable numbers of

skilled and semi-skilled workers.<sup>7</sup> Labourers were also in demand in the town's construction industry and most other companies provided some employment for these unskilled men and women.<sup>8</sup>

The workers and their families who moved to Amherst in the late 1890s and early 1900s shared at least one common characteristic with the town's older residents. They were more likely than not to have been born in the Maritimes.\* Even during the years of Amherst's most rapid expansion, between 1900-1906, at least 91 percent of the population was born in the region.\*\* This was not surprising because the small towns and villages of the surrounding area were the principal source of Amherst's growing population. The collapse of the rural economy after 1870 forced thousands of Maritimers to relocate and the typical migration pattern first took the migrants to the major town nearest their home.<sup>9</sup> Amherst's industrializing economy acted as a magnet for many of these displaced Maritimers. Demographic statistics for Cumberland County demonstrate that Amherst and, to some degree, the coalmining district were the only areas that did not experience a stagnating or declining population base before World War One.\*\*\* Local residents interviewed about the recruitment of labour for Amherst's factories invariably pointed to the rural areas; indeed, it was the path that most of them had followed to Amherst. After leaving the family farm near Amherst, Robert McKay joined Robb Engineering in 1905 as a machinist's apprentice. McKay found many of his acquaintances

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\* See Table I, p. 172.

\*\* See Table II, p. 173.

\*\*\* See Table I, p. 50.

from the area of the family's homestead already working at Robb Engineering, a company which, McKay speculated, recruited most of its labour from rural Cumberland. Amherst's development attracted many Maritimers from beyond the county boundaries and often involved the move of an entire family to town. Winifred Farnell arrived in Amherst in 1904 with her parents from Sheet Harbour, Nova Scotia. Her father and brother found employment in the carworks. Rural New Brunswick was yet another source of workers for the shops and factories in Amherst. In the early 1900s, for example, Thaddie Gould accompanied his parents to Amherst from the eastern shore of New Brunswick where they had worked in a lobster canning factory. Once in Amherst, Gould's father found employment in the car works, while Gould, his brother, and two sisters, went to work at the recently opened woolen mill.<sup>10</sup>

Statements by Amherst manufacturers on labour recruitment provided a contemporary check on the memories of the residents interviewed. When the Royal Commission to Investigate the Relations Between Labor and Capital stopped in Amherst in 1888, local manufacturers expressed their satisfaction with the labour market because a readily available supply of labour was a more or less permanent feature of the area. "As a general thing there is little difficulty getting all [the help] we want", Nathaniel Curry told the commissioners, though occasionally "good mechanics" had to be sought in Halifax and Saint John.<sup>11</sup> Throughout Amherst's industrial period, the manufacturers only on the rarest of occasions were forced to recruit workers from outside the region. When they did, it was usually to fill a temporary shortage of skilled workers. Rhodes and Curry brought small groups of moulders,

the exact numbers are not known, on one occasion from Montreal and another from Scotland in the early 1900s.<sup>12</sup> In 1910, Curry reported that only about seven percent of his employees were from Scotland or England, while the balance of workers were "natives of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island". This ratio of native to foreign born workers at the carworks was reflective of the population as a whole in Amherst.<sup>13</sup>

The large surplus of labour in the region created a difficult context within which employed workers struggled to assert some control over the labour market. This was the situation in 1890 and the problem from the workers perspective worsened as period advanced because of the increasing integration of the regional labour market.<sup>14</sup> Even during the years of most intensive economic activity in Amherst, labour shortages among both skilled workers and labourers were of short duration. These circumstances mitigated against collective action and gave the employers the upper hand in negotiations. Because the manufacturers could easily find replacements for dissatisfied employees, Curry explained, they expected the workers to request "in a friendly sort of way" changes in their working conditions. "If a man made a demand for increased wages", Curry observed, "and said that he would take that or go away", the worker was sent packing, a luxury not all Canadian manufacturers could afford.<sup>15</sup> J. F. Frey, an organizer for the I.M.U., offered a different perspective on the situation. When Frey toured the moulding shops of Amherst and several other Maritime centers in 1900, he found that wages were "everywhere very low" and working conditions "appalling". High unemployment in the region, Frey

exclaimed, was the culprit in the system that forced journeymen moulders to accept wages only slightly better than those of their apprentices. This unacceptable situation was true even for the region's unionized moulders in Halifax and Saint John, the discouraged I.M.U. organizer observed in the report on his Maritime tour. Frey's comments came ironically at a time when the Amherst economy and that of the region's other industrial centers, like Cape Breton, were relatively prosperous.<sup>16</sup>

Several other aspects of the labour market influenced the history of the labour movement in Amherst. The seasonal rhythm in the labour market added to the precariousness of working-class life in Amherst. Building tradesmen were most affected by the seasonal nature of their work. Whether working on construction or in one of the several woodworking shops in Amherst, carpenters, masons, and bricklayers often found it necessary to take employment in the lumber industry to make ends meet over the winter.<sup>17</sup> Even workers in the industrial trades experienced a seasonality in their employment. Annual closing of factories for maintenance in late autumn or early winter lasted three to four weeks or longer if business was slow. In late 1907, for example, layoffs extended well beyond their regular duration because of the recession and many employees were not recalled for over a year. During more prosperous times workers still faced uncertain job prospects. In addition to the regular maintenance shutdowns, many workers faced periodic unemployment because of shortages of materials or a sudden rise in company inventories.<sup>18</sup> E. E. Hewson described the situation in a letter to Mackenzie King in 1910. "In this town

employment is not always uniform. There are parts of the year when factories are busy, labour is in demand, and employees are only too glad to work full time", but Hewson noted, "at other seasons large numbers of men are sometimes laid off or put on short time" and therefore were "anxious to work full time, whenever, they are permitted to do so".<sup>19</sup>

Steady employment was needed to offset what the workers at least perceived as the rising cost of living. Though detailed work on the cost of living remains to be done, the evidence that led historian Ian McKay to conclude that "Maritime workers all faced an economy in which wage levels often did not keep pace with inflation" can be extended to Amherst.<sup>20</sup> Even in the early 1900s, when the Labour Gazette's Amherst correspondent observed that "wages generally are high owing to the demand", workers worried about the high cost of living, especially housing prices. In July 1907, the correspondent explained that the most important problem "to be solved in this section is the reduction in the cost of living and the supply of houses to rent at a reasonable cost". He complained on other occasions "that there is not a vacant house here and the rents asked are abnormally high". This problem persisted through until the pre World War One depression, as in 1912 the Labour Gazette reported that in Amherst "house rent is high and suitable houses for working men are scarce". The following year it was predicted that new housing starts finally might begin to "reduce the high cost of housing". Amherst workers' perception that their earnings were not providing them with "a living wage" because of inflation was an important factor in most industrial disputes.<sup>21</sup>



Though the large majority of the workers moving to Amherst were rural Maritimers, the town's population was not ethnically and racially homogenous. Those of English origin were most numerous in Amherst (47 percent in 1910)\*, although significant French (19 percent) and Scottish (18.5 percent) minorities were also present. Irish backgrounds accounted for only eight percent of the population, which also included a small black community (2.7 percent). The history of these ethnic and racial groups is beyond the scope of this study though some information of their development is required to establish the social context from which the Amherst labour movement emerged. Amherst's French Acadian population grew from 230 in 1880 to over 1,700 by 1910. Many settled in the area south and west of the huge Rhodes and Curry shops where their community life centered around the "French Societies" and the Catholic Church. Catholicism, the traditional religion of the Acadians, was the largest single denomination in Amherst (27 percent of the population)\* and statistically the Acadians could have accounted for over 71 percent of this Catholic population. Many Acadians found semi-skilled and labourer jobs in the local factories, though an important minority were skilled working men. The Artisans' Club, about which little is known, was part of the Acadian skilled workers' associational life and from it emerged several prominent trade unionists.<sup>22</sup> Ethnic relations between the French and the English workers appear for the most part to have been amicable and, by 1910, Acadian working-class leaders were becoming increasingly

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\* See Table II, p. 173.

prominent in the labour movement. Relations were not always harmonious, however, especially during election campaigns. In 1904, for example, a group of young Conservatives disrupted a Liberal meeting when the speaker attempted to address the crowd in French.<sup>23</sup>

There was no general xenophobia in Amherst primarily because the town had so few non-British immigrants. This did not stop politicians from trying to improve their popularity by appealing to the workers' general feelings of insecurity in the workplace. Hance Logan, an Amherst lawyer and member of parliament from 1896 to 1908, heartily endorsed a proposed "Alien Labor" law in 1904. He demanded that parliament impose greater restrictions on those applying to enter Canada. Denouncing the "anarchists, hoodlums, and Dagos, the rough-scuff and off scourings from all parts of the world" who, Logan claimed, were flooding into Canada, he stated that the "honest Canadian workingman" should not be expected to suffer low wages "simply because a lot of Dagos may be had to work at fifty cents a day".<sup>24</sup>

Amherst's black population did not fare as well in Amherst because racial tensions were more pronounced than ethnic divisions. The town's expansion attracted a small black community that reportedly reached 500, though official census returns from 1910 placed it closer to 300.\* Blacks, as an historian of their community has observed, "came from all over Nova Scotia, many came up from Halifax". They were unwelcome in many areas of Amherst and were segregated into a poor neighbourhood on East Pleasant Street, on the outskirts of town.<sup>25</sup>

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\* See Table II, p. 173.

Here a vigorous black community evolved around the Baptist church to include all-black sporting teams, bands, and other forms of associational life. At the workplace, black males were under represented in the skilled trades, as they were elsewhere in the region, and most occupied labourers' jobs. Many women did "day work", or house cleaning for the town's wealthier citizens. Blacks were not completely excluded from skilled occupations, as mason Clarence Halfpenny's involvement in the bricklayers and masons union before World War One testifies.<sup>26</sup>

Though the general state of relations between black and white workers remains a mystery, there is evidence that racial tension on occasion fragmented the workers. An important organizing drive in the carshops in autumn 1910, for example, withered away partly because of the race question. The union's constitution barred blacks from membership and local workers divided over whether to proceed or halt the organizing drive.<sup>27</sup> Racial tension and conflict seemed to be more common away from the workplace. Fights between white youths and those from "nigger hill" were not infrequent and blacks were barred from a number of restaurants and other establishments. Racial tensions most often flared over social conditions along Union Row and Electric streets, known euphemistically as "Ram Cat Alley". Located close to the I.C.R. station, this area was the center of prostitution, gambling, and intemperance. It was where men went "down for their desires" on payday and was carefully skirted by the town's more virtuous citizens. The predominantly black and Chinese population of "Ram Cat Alley"

became a target for moral reformers in the early 1900s, especially the temperance advocates.<sup>28</sup>

The Acadians and blacks were small though significant minorities in a town in which almost 80 percent of the residents had British backgrounds in 1910.\* An observer sensitive to the class and ethnic shadings of Amherst's population would have noticed the I.C.R. tracks provided an approximate demarcation line between the British neighbourhoods and those of the Acadians and blacks. British working-class neighbourhoods grew up east of the I.C.R. around Robb Engineering and towards the central area nearest the railway line. Class residential patterns among the British were not rigid, though separation of the living quarters of the manufacturers and their workers was observable before World War One. The Rhodes, Curry, and Robb families continued to live in an older area of town centered on Church, Robie, and Havelock Streets, but many of their business associates, including the Hewsons and the Douglasses, built impressive homes on East, or Upper, Victoria Street. Geographically situated in the area farthest removed from the industrial and Acadian working-class neighbourhoods of the central and western parts of town, Upper Victoria Street was perceived as the conclave of the wealthy. As one worker remembered, Upper Victoria was "where all the rich people lived . . . [they] all lived up there . . . by themselves".<sup>29</sup> This impression of residential patterns is, of course, not definitive and would require

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\* See Table II, p. 173.

more exhaustive research into neighbourhood reconstruction. On the other hand, the description presented here does portray popular perceptions of the differences between various districts in the town as borne out by interviews with local residents.<sup>30</sup>

The church was a key social institution of British life in Amherst, as it was for other members of the population. In 1910, 98 percent of Amherst's residents were at least prepared to associate themselves with some religious denomination when asked this question by the census taker.\* The majority of the population (71 percent) was Protestant and this percentage was even higher among the British population when it was realized that the Acadians constituted a significant proportion of the Catholic population. , Catholicism did have a strong base among the small Irish population. In 1904, local Irish youths established a Young Men's Catholic Club that organized social and sporting events. The next year, 175 members celebrated St. Patrick's Day and unveiled baseball and lacrosse uniforms for their teams in the town's inter-denominational leagues.<sup>31</sup>

Among Amherst's largely British protestant population, the most popular churches were Baptist (22 percent),\*\* Methodist (21 percent), Presbyterians (16 percent) and Anglicans (12 percent).\*\*\* The Methodist, Presbyterian, and to a lesser degree the Anglican and Baptist churches were the religious homes for many of the Scottish and English workers and their families. In all of these churches it was

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\* See Table III, p. 174.

\*\* See Table III, p. 174.

\*\*\* See Table III, p. 174.

not unusual for the workers to encounter members of the business class during services and at social and recreational events sponsored by each of the denominations.<sup>32</sup> One association that brought the working-class members of the Baptist and Methodist congregations together with the elite was the temperance movement.

Temperance agitation in the area dated to the 1870s and had won some powerful advocates by the 1890s. It was a cross-class movement headed by H. L. Hewson, Nelson Rhodes, Nathaniel Curry, Charles Christie, and other prominent manufacturers.<sup>33</sup> Its membership also included popular trade unionists like moulder William Rackham and painter C. C. Hewson.<sup>34</sup> A Ministerial Association, formed by the ministers of the local churches, provided the temperance movement with strong leadership and organized an influential citizen's lobby to pressure the town council to enforce temperance legislation. Their greatest successes were recorded in the early 1900s when they forced the closure of two local hotels and pressured the police and town council strictly to enforce the Scott Act.<sup>35</sup> But the temperance movement was never successful in its bid to win the majority of trade unionists over to its position. On at least one occasion, for example, the Ministerial Association's offer to sponsor a combined labour-temperance town council reform slate was rejected by the unionists. In the pre-war period, the Ministerial Association and the labour movement appeared to have few other direct contacts beyond the discussions on temperance.<sup>36</sup>

The English and Scottish workers supported a vibrant associational life that was rooted in such traditional institutions as the Sons of

England, Loyal Orange Lodge, and the Oddfellows. Each of these associations attracted substantial memberships, especially the Orange Lodge. The 12 July celebrations were great festive events that brought industrial life in the town to a standstill. Our employees "insist on having their holidays, attending horse races, etc.", Nathaniel Curry lamented to the House of Commons Committee studying the hours of labour in 1910, and in Amherst the 12 July was definitely one such holiday.<sup>37</sup> From the 1870s through into the 1920s, the day was marked by a grand picnic. Celebrations typically began on the eve of St. George's Day when lodge members "attended the Presbyterian Church in body" and then, in a parade led by their band, they marched through the town. Up by 7:00 A.M. the next morning, as many as 900 lodge members and their families boarded the special excursion train to the Nova Scotian town hosting the annual gathering of the lodges. Here parades and sporting events were the order of the day.<sup>38</sup> Sectarian conflict between the Orange and the Green had subsided in Amherst by the 1890s, if it ever had been a problem in the town. Fragmentary evidence does suggest that, as in Hamilton and Toronto, the Orange Lodge was largely the preserve of skilled working men. But the lodge's relationship to the labour movement is even more ambiguous than it was in those centers. The fraternizing with other workers away from the pressures of work and family was probably one of its attractions but, unlike in Toronto or Hamilton, the Orange Lodge in Amherst was not a training ground for future leaders of the labour movement.<sup>39</sup> This appears also to have been the case for the other traditional fraternal organizations of English and Scottish workers. The explanation of this

apparent contrast between Amherst and the industrial areas of central Canada is perhaps one of periodization. By 1900, the Orange Lodge in central Canada had also receded in importance as a resource to the labour movement.<sup>40</sup>

Fraternal organizations like the Orange Lodge were creations of an earlier society that had been partly reshaped by their working-class members to meet the new conditions of an industrial society. But in responding to industrial capitalism, workers created new organizations and associations to meet the changing material conditions. The labour movement was the central component of this new institutional life and unions assumed many of the associational functions of the older fraternal and benefit societies, as well as their primary function of protecting their members in the workplace. But the workers' need of the material and associational support of early fraternal and benevolent societies was not always fulfilled by membership in their trade unions. In Amherst, two new associations emerged that had deep roots among the skilled workers most active in the labour movement after 1900. First was the Order of Owls, "a great society of men who love, laugh and enjoy life as it flies, who help the sick, bury the dead, brighten dark moments, light up gloomy places". Though the club's convivial atmosphere and promises to furnish "social advantages" were important attractions, the benevolent society emphasized the need to protect its members against the insecurities of industrial society. It provided sick, accident, disability, and death benefits, provided free physicians and an employment bureau, all of which freed members to "do good, speak kindly, shake hands warmly and respect the honor of



their women". An organizer for the American Society travelled the Maritimes and established branches in several Maritime locations in late 1910. The society he formed in Amherst was entirely working-class in its composition and clearly viewed as an organization in which trade unionists should become involved. Notices of meetings were posted in the Eastern Labor News, a regional labour paper published in Moncton, and the Owls' Amherst Executive included many important unionists among its 100 members, including moulders John Logan and Joseph Kirkpatrick, tailors Dan McDonald and Joseph Higgins, and labourers Arthur Bobcock and Albert Collins.<sup>41</sup>

The Amherst fire company was the other local association that occupied a central part in the lives of many skilled workers and attracted the participation of the unionists among them. When it was formed in 1883, the volunteer fire company was not exclusively a preserve of skilled workers. They shared their membership with some of the men who were becoming prominent manufacturers, including D. W. and A. G. Robb and Dr. C. W. Bliss.<sup>42</sup> The association severed these direct links with the business class in the 1890s to become an organization of volunteer skilled workers until it was replaced by a permanent force in 1916. Between 1896 and 1916, the period for which statistics are complete, over 100 men joined the Amherst Fire Department and the occupations for 70 of these members are available for analysis. There were 16 machinists, ten carpenters, eight moulders, four boiler-makers, three each from among the millwrights, shoemakers, and teamsters, two engineers, and one painter, pipe fitter, and stonecutter. Three others were foremen (journeymen machinist and

plumber). There also were three clerks, four small shopkeepers (two livery stable proprietors, grocery store owner, a pool hall operator), and four labourers; E. E. Silliker, whose factory was burned to the ground in the early 1900s, was the only manufacturer in the group. Among the list of volunteer fire fighters were 20 men known to have been active in the labour movement of the period.<sup>43</sup>

Craftsmen joined the fire company in Amherst for much the same reason as they did elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> Fire fighters were held in high esteem because they served the town in time of crisis. Fire companies also provided their volunteers with numerous social and recreational opportunities. They enjoyed the intense competition with companies from other Maritime centers in the numerous area and regional tournaments. Rivalries among the various towns attracted as much interest as intercity baseball, lacrosse, or hockey. Amherst's town council regularly voted funds to support the entry of the local "firemen-athletes", as the newspapers referred to them, in annual tournaments in Sydney, Charlottetown, Fredericton, and Saint John. In 1910, the Amherst fire company hosted the tournament as part of the Old Home Week celebrations. Competitions included the 50 yard ladder race, the hose reel race, and other activities related to their volunteer work. Other athletic competitions were also incorporated into the fire company's program including track and field events and hockey in the winter.<sup>45</sup> The fire company provided an alternative to the church and manufacturers' sports leagues that were active in these years. Thus the importance of the fire company to the emerging labour movement seems less ambivalent than that of the traditional fraternal

societies. It did foster ideas of equality and co-operation among the skilled workers who led the struggle to create a labour movement in Amherst before World War One.<sup>46</sup>

From this evidence on the social and economic context of working-class life in Amherst before 1910, a composite of the worker should include the following information. The worker was likely to be male. He was probably Maritime born and of British origins, though to have a French background was not uncommon. If he was British, the worker was also likely to be protestant, probably Methodist or Presbyterian, or maybe Baptist or Anglican. A French worker, on the other hand, was equally likely to profess Catholicism. Except for the small minority of skilled workers immigrating from the British Isles, a worker in Amherst was probably not far removed from the experiences of rural life. His rural background and being forced to secure employment in a region with a large labour surplus made him cautious and perhaps a little suspicious of those expounding the principles of trade unionism. Indeed, if he was not a skilled worker, the labour movement before 1910 had little to offer him. It was in this context that the first attempts to create a viable labour movement in Amherst were taken in the late 1800s. The history of this struggle now begins with an analysis of the institutional origins of the labour movement and its ideological currents that included paternalism, labourism and after 1910, Marxian socialism.

III

Employees at the Amherst Boot and Shoe were the first group of workers in the town to pursue collective organization. This process began in January 1890, when shoemaker Ed. E. Walsh wrote to Terrance Powderly, General Master Workmen, Knights of Labor, in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Advising Powderly that Amherst shoemakers wished to establish an assembly of the Knights, Walsh requested that an organizer be dispatched to Amherst to assist local workers in their task. Powderly informed Walsh that the matter was being turned over to A. W. Wright, his "advisor on all matters pertaining to the Dominion and Provinces". In a letter to Powderly, Wright expressed pleasant surprise with the news from Amherst. In the past, he had found Maritime workers difficult to organize, and speculated that an assembly in Amherst would provide a footing from which an organizational drive could be launched in Saint John and Moncton. The central Canadian organizer's initial enthusiasm was never translated into decisive action. In mid-February, a very concerned Walsh asked Powderly why Wright had not contacted the Amherst shoemakers. "The men are in the right humour for union", Walsh explained, and immediate action was required.<sup>47</sup>

Powderly was at a loss to explain Wright's absence from the scene, but chose not to inform Walsh of this fact. He ignored the question of Wright's whereabouts in his reply and instead informed Walsh that he should consider himself the Knights' special representative in Amherst. "I see no better way than to ask of you to take the

organization in hand," Powderly told Walsh, and then gave him "full instructions on how to proceed".<sup>48</sup> Powderly learned later that Wright's journey east has ended in Montreal due to the organizer's ill health. By the time Wright was well enough to continue his journey, Powderly had decided that the Amherst shoeworkers would have to go it alone. Citing high expenses and poor prospects for a significant breakthrough in the Maritimes, Powderly instructed Wright to cancel his eastern tour. Amherst workers were never advised of this decision that left them standing alone against the town's employers.<sup>49</sup>

Walsh and several other shoemakers took it upon themselves to organize a local assembly. In March and April, before manager M. D. Pride was alerted to the union's presence, they secretly initiated approximately 50 shoemakers into Local Assembly 2209, Knights of Labor.<sup>50</sup> Pride's response to this unwelcome news was decisive. He convened a meeting of local manufacturers and merchants, including members of the Robb, Rhodes, Curry, Christie, and other prominent Amherst families. In a display of solidarity the manufacturers issued a strongly worded statement that thoroughly denounced the Knights of Labor. The document, which was discussed in Chapter One, portrayed the Knights as agents of disharmony who were undermining the "mutual confidence and good feeling between the employers and employed" in Amherst.<sup>51</sup> Unionization, the document warned, threatened the town's very existence as a manufacturing center. The manufacturers concluded their statement with a stern warning to all Amherst workers. "In order that there may be no doubt in the minds of those few who are agitating" for a union, the manufacturers stated categorically their intention

"not to employ any person whom we know to be a member of the Knights of Labor or any other Society which proposes to come between us and our workmen".<sup>52</sup> The united front of the manufacturers against the Knights did not intimidate the shoemakers into abandoning their union. On 1 May, M. D. Pride decided that since persuasion had failed more decisive action was required. He fired the union's leaders and the following day dismissed the remaining members of the assembly, until 50 men found themselves locked out. Pride assumed that this action would dampen the shoeworkers' interest in unionization but instead it precipitated a dispute that continued unresolved for many months. The Knights' solidarity, in light of the manufacturers' moral and economic pressure on them, was remarkable. One commentator, observing that "conflict between capital and labor" in Amherst was without precedent, declared that the new combatants were "beginning the war in good shape".<sup>53</sup>

Although the manufacturers and newspaper editors emphasized the spontaneity of the workers' action, the grievances behind the formation of the Knights were more deeply rooted than first reports indicated. Though difficult to document thoroughly, two issues with broad significance for the workplace appeared to influence the shoemakers' activities. First, the changing organization of the work process was bringing increased mechanization and greater numbers of labourers and semi-skilled workers into the factory. Second, the Amherst Boot and Shoe's contracting-out policies worried many employees. The changes occurring at the shoeworks demonstrated that the era of the craftsman was quickly passing. In 1890, the shoeworks, employing 163 workers,

relied increasingly on semi-skilled workers and labourers. Handicraft production receded quickly in the 1880s and was replaced by an increasing division of labour that often included mechanization. The division of labour among cutting, fitting, sole, lasting, bottoming and finishing departments, and the gradual mechanization of each of these processes was giving rise to the "machine-made boot" with its "standard sizes and shapes".<sup>54</sup> Mechanization was most advanced in the cutting department where the initial pattern of the boot was stamped out, while "work by hand" predominated in the finishing room.<sup>55</sup> Some longtime employees, like laster Clifford Tower, still considered themselves "all around hands", but most workers were not "full fledged mechanics"; indeed, the company clerk observed that "we do not teach the boys to make a complete boot, only to work different machines", and each in only one department. Foreman Rufus Hicks confirmed the clerk's comments when he noted that in the sole leather department boys were assigned a "single task only". Thus the company's designation of "skilled men" for 100 of its employees was misleading.<sup>56</sup> These men were the highest paid employees, however, averaging eight dollars a week. Depending on their particular task, they were paid on either a piece rate or hourly wage system. Wages of the women employees were substantially lower than those of the men. A woman's average weekly wage totalled two dollars and sixty-five cents, while children averaged almost a dollar less than the women.<sup>57</sup>

The shoework's practice of contracting-out business appeared, however, to be the issue of immediate concern in 1890. A. D. Munro, "boss of the team", had for several years prior to the strike

contracted with Pride to take work out and had hired his own staff to complete the undertaking. Pride's decision to extend, or somehow alter this arrangement sparked the decision to unionize. In the only extant statement concerning the specific cause of the 1890 conflict, the workers expressed "grievances owing to the way in which the Amherst Boot and Shoe management was conducting its outside business". The apparent absence of specific grievances was in itself not particularly surprising. Pride had moved quickly and attacked the Knights when they were in an early organizational stage; the dispute was technically a lockout, not a strike. And, even if the shoeworkers had not been forced into the confrontation, the formulation of non-wage workplace grievances in a society in which "wage demands, unlike aspirations for workers control, are culturally defined as legitimate" was difficult under any circumstances.<sup>58</sup>

M. D. Pride's dramatic dismissal of the Knights on the 2 May was an obvious attempt to intimidate the union members. But he miscalculated the impact of his actions and after three weeks of confrontation, was forced to adopt a new tactic in his assault on the Knights. He declared that his opposition to "the American Order" should not be construed as a rejection of all trade unions. Pride feared what he perceived as the Knights' militancy. Over the previous two decades, the Knights had gained considerable notice throughout North America for its successful organization of thousands of workers and the numerous strikes, sanctioned and otherwise, that its members undertook.<sup>59</sup> Thus the manufacturers reasoned, if local workers could not be prevented from organizing altogether, then perhaps some compromise had



to be found to keep the Knights out of Amherst. Pride "offered material assistance" to the shoemakers if they agreed to establish a lodge of the Provincial Workmen's Association (P.W.A.). The P.W.A. was a Nova Scotian miners' organization led by Robert Drummond, a union leader who was decidedly shy when it came to workplace militancy.<sup>60</sup> Pride perceived the P.W.A. as the lesser of two evils and assumed, as it turned out correctly, that relations with the P.W.A. would be more amicable than those with the Knights. Pride's gesture to the workers was praised by the editors of the region's newspaper, who predicted "an early settlement" to the dispute.<sup>61</sup>

The shoeworkers allegiance to the Knights, however, was not easily shaken. Support in Amherst for the manufacturers' position on the Knights was not unanimous. A delegation, whose composition is unknown, did approach the shoeworks' management to request that Pride reconsider his stand against the Knights. A likely member of this delegation was moulder William Rackham, a staunch advocate of the Knights of Labor. Rackham was associated with the local Knights' assembly through union shoemakers like J. D. Ross, another staunch temperance advocate. Rackham thus was a good source of information on the Knights though other factors contributed to the shoemaker's interest in the American based union. The very aura of the Knights as a resourceful and militant organization, the prevailing perception of the union that accounted for the employer's hostility, made it an attractive vehicle for working-class protest. There also appeared to be no immediate alternative to the Knights because the P.W.A. was a miners' union that had not demonstrated any firm interest in organizing other workers.

Throughout the strike, in fact, the P.W.A. ignored the shoemakers' call for a boycott of Amherst Boot and Shoe products. Support for the boycott, a typical tactic of the Knights, did come from Halifax where the Amalgamated Trades' Union condemned Pride's "tyrannical conduct". In Philadelphia the Journal of the Knights of Labor, the union's official organ, publicized the boycott but other organizational demands prevented the union's headquarters from extending further help to the Amherst shoeworkers.<sup>62</sup> A rather desperate request from the shoemakers for an organizer to debate publicly with M. D. Pride the merits of the Knights was acknowledged but not acted on by Powderly.<sup>63</sup>

Left entirely to their own resources, the shoemakers were no match for the powerful employers. Pride's constant harassment of the Knights and his use of strikebreakers recruited from the surrounding area ultimately defeated the strike. The Knights' failure in Amherst had important consequences for the future of the local labour movement. It meant that an effective shoeworkers' organization would not emerge for almost another three decades and that the wages and working conditions of these workers likely declined relative to those elsewhere in the country. The strike also identified the principal strategies that the business class would employ in its confrontations with labour. Employers recognized that local workers were almost held hostage to their jobs because of the area's surplus labour supply. When workers contemplated protesting their working conditions they faced the grim reality that the manufacturers would not have to search far afield for strikebreakers. This was a potent force against working-class militancy. The manufacturers would also continue to associate labour's

demands with the potential destruction of Amherst's economy, a tactic that met with varying degrees of success over the next several decades. Finally, the shoeworkers' struggle raised the problem of fragmentation and isolation among the workers themselves. The Canadian centers of union activity before World War One were far from Amherst and the resources available to workers in these localities were not as readily available in Amherst. If a viable labour movement was to emerge in Amherst, it would have to rely almost entirely on local initiative and community support would have to be won away from the employers.

In January 1891, the final episode of the Knights intervention in Amherst featured the formation of Concord Lodge, P.W.A. Pride, convinced that he had little to fear from the P.W.A., stated that he "would be content should his men become members of the society". The P.W.A. also attracted the support of other manufacturers, though as a union for the shoemakers, not for their own employees. Liberal M.L.A., T. R. Black, another P.W.A. advocate, chaired Concord's first public meeting in June at which M. D. Pride and Robert Drummond spoke on the virtues of the P.W.A. over other labour organizations.<sup>64</sup> Concord Lodge was never an effective organization for the shoeworkers, although on several occasions it did try to address problems facing this group.<sup>65</sup> In 1895, after four years of little activity, Concord successfully pressed the P.W.A. to open its membership to women. This action was prompted by the Amherst Boot and Shoe's increasing reliance on women who could be employed more "cheaply" than the men. If women were going "to obtain wages more equal to the value of work given", it

was argued, they needed to join the union. The required amendment found acceptance within the P.W.A. but it is unlikely that women joined Concord Lodge. The union never did press the shoeworks' management on this demand. Concord Lodge almost collapsed in the years following its failure to win concessions from the company. In 1899, it revived briefly to request that the Amherst Boot and Shoe adopt the union label but this request was ignored.<sup>66</sup> Because the union was not prepared to press its demands through industrial action, management felt no compulsion to concede to the workers' inquiries.

Concord Lodge was in many respects more akin to a friendly society than a trade union. It emphasized fraternal aspects of the P.W.A., including visits with lodges in the Cumberland coal district and, on one occasion, organized a special sports' day with these lodges. The five to ten committed Concord Lodge members proved to be fiercely loyal to the P.W.A. In the late 1890s, when many miners temporarily abandoned the P.W.A. for the Knights of Labor, Concord was, ironically in light of the 1890 strike, one of the P.W.A.'s staunchest defenders.<sup>67</sup> In 1904, when Concord attempted one last revival in Amherst, the News and Sentinel in praising the union unwittingly identified its major weakness. Concord's affairs, the newspaper observed, have "been conducted on conservative lines that are beyond criticism".<sup>68</sup>

The defeat of the Knights in 1890 marked the end of an important episode in the history of the Amherst labour movement. Bitter memories of the dispute remained with many of its participants and the struggle would even be recalled during the days leading up to the 1919 general

strike. It also challenged the credibility of the paternalist ideology emanating from the employers' quarters. Finally, the strike brought to an end local workers' first experiment with industrial unionism, as William Rackham and other skilled workers turned for protection to the strengthening national craft union movement. This decision initially lessened the possibilities for the emergence of a broad working-class unity because it excluded from the unions the hundreds of semi-skilled workers and labourers locating in Amherst. The skilled workers interest in craft unions by the late 1890s was not an exceptional development in Amherst. It was a pattern consistent with the history of the labour movement in the region and across North America.<sup>69</sup> As historian Ian McKay had observed, in the early 1900s Maritime workers in the coalfields and major port cities responded with an "unprecedented militancy" to the effects of the consolidation of industrial capitalism within the region. Resistance though was not limited to the coal miners' and longshoremen for, as McKay had demonstrated, workers in most industrial towns pursued some form of collective action.<sup>70</sup> In Amherst, this resistance was led by the skilled workers who struggled under tremendous difficulties to establish a craft union presence in the town.

The Amherst moulders were the first group of workers to take a hand at organizing a craft union. Rackham and several of his contemporaries chartered Local 253, I.M.U. in 1897, though the union made little headway during its first three years.<sup>71</sup> When organizer Frey stopped in Amherst in 1900, he reported that about 50 Amherst moulders "pluckily held to their charter occupying an isolated outpost where

trade unionism is little known". Frey's visit to the town and his subsequent chartering of locals in Sackville, Moncton, Saint John, Halifax, and Sydney helped to invigorate the union in Amherst.<sup>72</sup> A general upswing in the business cycle after 1900 and in particular the operation of the new Sydney steel complex improved the labour situation for all Maritime moulders. Frey found in Sydney that the steel company had to "import all their molders and as a result wages are fair". The availability of work in Sydney, Frey speculated, improved the bargaining position of other moulders in the region.<sup>73</sup> Conditions in Amherst partly bore out Frey's predictions because the shortage of moulders forced Rhodes and Curry to go to England and Scotland in search of skilled men.<sup>74</sup> Even in this period of temporary labour shortages, the Amherst moulders found it difficult to force the manufacturers to recognize I.M.U. The moulders exercised considerably more control over wage schedules, apprenticeship rules, and general working conditions in the Amherst Foundry than in the larger industries. As historian Wayne Roberts discovered in his study of Toronto metal workers, moulders in the smaller shops often proved more successful in their struggles with management.<sup>75</sup> A similar situation existed in Amherst where, as we shall see, moulders in the carworks and at Robb Engineering found themselves isolated and less able to insist upon their traditional workplace prerogatives.

The upward swing in the business cycle that brought a surge in membership of craft unions throughout most of Canada in the early twentieth century affected other Amherst workers as well as the moulders. Conditions in the local labour market between 1900 and 1907

were more favourable to unionization than anytime in the previous decade. In trying to take advantage of the situation, the skilled workers were only partly successful. Carpenters, railway carmen, painters, and tailors managed to establish locals in this period. The carpenters, under pressure from the employment of unskilled workers, were most anxious to unionize. In 1905, the carpenters, who had maintained a local organization for several years, sought a charter in the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. The Amherst request for assistance was sent to American Federation of Labor Secretary Frank Morrison whose reply shocked the Maritimers. Morrison denied the request because, he argued, the time and expense involved far outweighed the possible results to be achieved in "just one little town". Eighteen months later Morrison turned down a second appeal for help from Amherst carpenters.<sup>76</sup> In the absence of outside help, the carpenters maintained the unchartered local until 1908. Little is known about the union's membership or its success in negotiating grievances with the manufacturers. Wages did increase between 1900-1907, though the relative importance of the economic expansion and the union's presence to this upward movement of wages remains a mystery.<sup>77</sup>

The institutional structure of the craft union movement in Amherst received an important boost in 1905 when local tailors joined the Journeymen Tailors' Union of America. In October, the union caused a minor stir in the town because it struck several local shops for higher wages and a reduction in the 10 hour day. The "miniature labor war" ended after several days with a victory for the tailors, who secured a

standardized wage schedule throughout Amherst and the nine hour day. Though the strike was hardly dramatic, it did confirm the union's presence in the town and its leaders, Dan McDonald and George McLeod, quickly emerged as two of Amherst's most important working-class leaders.<sup>78</sup>

The building of a viable craft union based labor movement in Amherst had by necessity to include workers at Robb Engineering and Rhodes and Curry. Although Robb Engineering moulders gave some support to the I.M.U., the company never recognized the union in this period. Other Robb Engineering employees expressed little interest in unionization, an attitude that was eventually changed by the 1908 recession and the company's financial problems in 1909. The labour movement received a more enthusiastic response among the skilled workers in Rhodes and Curry. Between 1900 and 1906, the carworks expanded its facilities more rapidly than ever before in its history. Elsewhere in Canada, "the impulse toward efficiency was expressed most directly in new plant layouts" during this period and Rhodes and Curry adopted aspects of these modern designs into its new shops.<sup>79</sup> The galvanization of the workers' protest around the issues of the piece-rate system and workplace safety gave witness to concerns with the changes. In 1905, the piece-rate system that tied wages directly to production sparked a strike among the passenger carmen. It was an issue that had been causing concern for carmen across North America for sometime prior to this date. As early as 1900, the Journal of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America was alerting carmen across North America to the dangers inherent in the piece-rate system.



Employers tried to persuade carmen to accept the piece-rate system, the Journal warned, because they considered it more "prompt and efficient" than other wage systems. In reality the new system was simply another method devised by the employers "to reduce the wages of the carmen as a whole" by forcing workers into competition with one another. This programme had to be resisted because "no honourable workman should allow himself, at the expense of his fellow workers to accomplish a greater amount of labour under the piece-work schedule than he would under the day-work system". Such an attitude, explained the Journal, "would assist in keeping the piece-work schedule on an equitable basis". In other words, it would defeat the intent of the piece-rate system.<sup>80</sup>

Wage schedules were not the only issue that concerned the carmen. They were angered and frightened by the deaths of William Allen in 1904 and Phillip Belliveau in 1905 in accidents that the carmen felt resulted from company negligence. Allen died from injuries inflicted when the furnace he fired exploded. His widow launched a \$5,000 negligence suit against Rhodes and Curry, which she lost when the courts ruled that Allen had not taken the proper precautions in conducting his work.<sup>81</sup> Belliveau's death from unstated causes the following year brought renewed demands for improvements in working conditions at the carworks. Fellow carmen attended his funeral "en mass" to display their grief and "to register vigorous protest against the dangerous conditions" at Rhodes and Curry. In a letter published in the News and Sentinel by a spokesman for the carmen, the workers complained that Belliveau's death could "hardly be called an

accident". They warned that other men would die if the company did not immediately make improvements in the working conditions, and they demanded a general investigation of conditions in the carworks as well as compensation for Allen's widow and children.<sup>82</sup>

The tension in the carworks resulted in the first successful unionization of Rhodes and Curry employees. In March 1905, they applied to the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America for a charter and were inducted into the union as Amherst Lodge, Number 302. The Railway Carmen was a logical choice for the Amherst workers for several reasons. First, it was already established in the Maritimes with lodges in Halifax, Saint John, Moncton, and McAdam and it was interested in further bolstering its Maritime membership.<sup>83</sup> Second, the structure of the Carmen's Union suited the particular requirements of the Amherst workers. It was almost exclusively a railway shop union with a quasi-industrial structure that accommodated carmen, upholsters, painters, and cabinet makers and, as steel became increasingly important in car production, steel carmen, welders, pattern makers, and other groups of semi-skilled workers. In most shops though the union did not challenge the jurisdiction of other craft unions over machinists, pipe-fitters, and men making wheels and axles.<sup>84</sup>

At the Amherst carworks, it was primarily the carmen who joined the union in 1905, which left some skilled workers unorganized and excluded all the labourers in the shops. During the spring and summer months, the union established sickness and disability programmes in order to protect its members from the desperate financial situations that had befallen the families of the two workers killed in the shop. In May,

tension rose in the carworks when the union's president, Ora Lamy, and several other members were arrested for obstructing police who had been called to the plant to arrest a carworker for being drunk. Lamy worked in the passenger car department and in August led in a strike against an adjustment in the piece-rate schedule. The strike lasted only several days and the men returned to work apparently convinced that their wages were not being eroded. They had not, however, forced Rhodes and Curry to recognize the Union.<sup>85</sup>

By the summer of 1907, a small, struggling craft union movement existed in Amherst. The movement did not include all the town's skilled workers and by its very nature excluded vast numbers of semi-skilled workers and labourers from its membership. On the other hand, the existence of the movement within a hostile economic and social context was important. In joining these unions the skilled workers began slowly to break down their isolation from other members of their trades. Amherst moulders paid fraternal visits to Sackville and Moncton, and kept in touch with developments in their trade across North America through their participation in the I.M.U. The tailors and the carmen engaged in activities similar to that of the moulders, especially the tailors who kept a close watch on the state of their trade throughout the region.<sup>86</sup>

On a local level the unions took a critical step toward reducing the fragmentation among skilled workers in the town when they formed a labour council. Uniquely designed to meet the specific problems faced by Amherst unionists, the labour council quickly emerged as a central institution of the labour movement, a function it fulfilled at times

informally until 1914. One of the labour council's primary tasks was to encourage greater workplace organization among skilled workers. To this end, it sponsored Amherst's first Labor Day rally in 1904, which "packed to the doors" the large Winter Fair Building.<sup>87</sup> But the labour council was not organized in the typical fashion for such central bodies. Rather than serving as a central organization to which local unions sent delegates, the Amherst council's deliberations were open to all union members. More interestingly though, the labour council provided a home for the unorganized skilled workers like machinists, cabinet makers, and masons. The structure of the labour council represented the attempt of the nascent labour movement to cope with its continued isolation and small numbers in Amherst.<sup>88</sup> Another important function of the labour council was its attempt to unify workers around local political issues. In this activity it met with mixed success over the next several years. Beginning in 1904, the labour council organized a slate of candidates for the annual February civic elections, provided forums in its "club rooms" to debate public issues, and sent delegations to civic council to address labour grievances.<sup>89</sup>

The labour council contested every civic election between 1905 and 1909, except in 1907; and in 1905 and 1906 half the civic council carried labour's support.<sup>90</sup> During these five elections, including the members of an informal labour slate in 1907, the labour council sponsored 11 men in 15 attempts to secure seats on the Town Council. Eight candidates were skilled workers (cabinet maker, painter, plumber, machinist, moulder, carman, stone cutter, and carpenter), another was

the director of the newly formed Amherst Co-operative Society, and one other candidate was a clerk closely identified with the Co-operative Society. Dr. McKinnon, a popular physician, was the only non-working class candidate to appear on the labour council's slate. Some of these men already were emerging as the town's labour leaders.<sup>91</sup> Carpenter John Ball and cabinet maker William Lowerison were beginning long careers as union agitators in the carworks, Co-operative Society members, and as activists for an independent labour party. Moulder James Duxberry was a member of the I.M.U. executive and the Co-operative Society, as well as being an advocate of independent labour politics. And though they were not candidates in this initial thrust into civic politics, tailors Dan McDonald and George McLeod were instrumental in the organization of the labour slates. Moulder William Rackman, the labour movement's clearest link in the 1890s, played a similar role in the process.

In the February 1905 election, two of the three seats available on the six-person town council were won by labour candidates. A labour victory in a by-election that autumn meant that labour controlled half of the positions on town council. Labour spokesmen used the situation to raise such issues as the removal of the \$100 deposit for candidates, the introduction of the nine hour day, and early store closing legislation.<sup>92</sup> The most controversial issue though was the labour's support for the purchase of a poor farm. This poor farm was supposed to replace the ad hoc provision of relief payments, though the existing policy was considerably less expensive. Representatives of the manufacturers denounced the proposal as an example of labour's

"extravagant demands" and the daily newspapers launched a stinging attack on the labour councillors. The labour council refused to reverse its position and in the midst of the controversy convened a special meeting to confirm its position.<sup>93</sup> On this issue the labour town councillors received the support of mayor T. P. Lowther who was elected with the labour council's tacit support in 1905.<sup>94</sup> A local auctioneer, Lowther and the labour council maintained an ambivalent relationship. Because Lowther's origins were not those of the business elite, labour leaders found him an attractive mayoralty candidate. Lowther also won labour's support because he usually sided with the positions staked out by the labour town councillors. On the other hand, Lowther's emphasis on moral reform, especially his zeal for temperance, worried many labour council members. Temperance advocates were in the minority within the labour council even though leadership on the issue came from William Rackham and several other influential leaders. But the labour temperance advocates could not overcome the association of temperance with the interests of the employers. The linking of the employers with temperance had a very practical dimension because it was manufacturers like N. Curry, N. A. Rhodes, Alexander Christie, H. L. Hewson, and G. W. Cole who led the temperance delegations before the town council. In 1908, a petition from the "Employers of Labor" demanded the rigid enforcement of the Canada Temperance Act.<sup>95</sup>

The increasing visibility of the labour movement in the workplace and in civic politics created considerable concern among the manufacturers. In 1906, they resisted the further development of

labour's influence in the town through a strenuous denunciations of the labour council's "extravagant demands" and by rallying their political forces. "Unions led by agitators and demagogues are a menace to any community", the citizens of Amherst were warned, and in this "age of competition, with narrow margins for the producers" unreasonable demands from labour could destroy the town's economy. The labour council was attacked for introducing "factions and classes" into the affairs of the civic government. Labour accused anyone unwilling to vote for its candidates of being "anti-laborite and an enemy to the working class", charged the editor of the News and Sentinel, yet they could not point to one instance

where the business or professional men united their strength to defeat a candidate solely on the ground that he was a workingman.<sup>96</sup>

The manufacturers' slate in the contest coalesced around contractor and manufacturer C. J. Silliker. A Liberal, Silliker had served on council in 1902 and 1903, and in his 1906 search for the mayoralty received support from the manufacturers irrespective of their political allegiances. The council contestants included Conservatives A. G. Robb and contractor J. M. Fage, and Liberals T. A. Cates, a restaurant owner, and Alfred Allen. Described as an "enterprising mechanic" and "well known as an exponent of labour principles", the shoemaker and P.W.A. supporter, Alfred Allen, was placed on the slate to split the labour vote. The labour council's slate was composed of Lowerison, painter C. C. Hewson, and J. C. Carter, a recently arrived plumber. It was also the single occasion in the period when the labour council formally endorsed T. P. Lowther for mayor. After a brief but

acrimonious campaign, labour was able to elect only one of its candidates. Labour's vote did not significantly decline but a higher voter turnout and the reduction of the number of candidates representing business interests, which reduced the splitting of its vote, brought Sillicker and his supporters into office.<sup>97</sup> It would take labour another four years of campaigning before it could again win seats on the town council.

Contrary to the protestations of the business class, the presence of labour council members on the town council did not bring any radical policy shifts. No far reaching review of assessment rolls was undertaken, though the fairness of the tax system had been under question for a number of years.<sup>98</sup> Labour councillors supported industrial development and did not block legislation providing concessions on taxes and services to industry. In 1906, for example, J. C. Carter seconded a motion granting a water rate exemption to the newly opened Amherst Malleable Iron that received the unanimous approval of council.<sup>99</sup> It would be a mistake though to assume that independent labour participation on council had no policy consequences. When labour had meaningful representation on council, these men did offer leadership on a number of social issues that otherwise might have received less favourable consideration. Labour councillors were more willing than others to extend services into working-class neighbourhoods and to undertake expenditures like that of the poor farm. And, on issues like the protection of the local labour market by means of by-laws taxing transient labour, for example, the presence of labour councillors<sup>100</sup> was critical to its passage. In



another respect the nomination of labour candidates and their electoral success limited as it may have been was symbolic of a unity, at least among skilled workers, that did not exist in the 1890s.

The third central institution component of the early craft union experience was the Amherst Co-operative Society. Formed in 1904, the society's membership was firmly based in the labour movement. Among the society's 15 incorporators were six carpenters, five moulders, a machinist carriage maker, clerk, and an insurance agent. At least one half of these men found a place on the labour council's slates for town elections, and all except the clerk and insurance agents were union members.<sup>101</sup> Typical of the leadership of the labour movement, co-operative members included long time residents and more recent arrivals to Amherst. Moulders William Rackham and James Duxberry and carpenter William Lowerison had resided in the town since the 1890s. But many, perhaps even a majority of the labour movement's leaders, arrived in town with the era of expansion. Carpenter John Ball, tailors Dan McDonald and George McLeod, plumber J. C. Carter and moulders Arthur McArthur, John Logan, and Tom Godfrey are but a few of the men in this category. The nucleus of the leadership cadre that occupied a central role in the development of the Amherst labour movement for the next 25 years was created in this early period. It was not, however, an ideologically unified group and by the early 1900s it was already possible to detect tensions within the movement.

When studying the formative years of the Amherst labour movement, it is important to recall that its leadership and general membership was drawn exclusively from among the town's craft and skilled working

men. An expanding body of literature is available that analyses the significance of the central role skilled workers have occupied in the emergence of working-class social and political movements in industrial capitalist societies.<sup>102</sup> Beyond the general agreement among historians that the skilled working man's role was critical to the development of the labour movement, interpretations diverge on whether this contribution facilitated or negated the possibilities for greater class awareness among all workers. This debate in the extremes tends towards the concept of the "culture of control" advanced by Bryan Palmer in A Culture in Conflict and the notion of a labour aristocracy advanced most recently by British historian John Foster.<sup>103</sup> In Amherst, the record of the skilled working men is ambiguous because some of these men provided considerable leadership for other workers in the search for new workplace structures and in the articulation of the need for independent working-class political action. On the other hand, before 1910 a sizeable number, likely a majority, of the skilled workers clung to the exclusionary institutions and ideas of their craft traditions. These tendencies were evident in Amherst from the earliest days of the craft union movement and the tension between them continued into the 1920s. Forces of circumstance, in particular the constantly fragile nature of the Amherst labour movement, often made co-operation between advocates of the two positions essential. In the early 1920s, the hostility of the exclusionists among the skilled workers to the alliance forged in 1919 between the more progressive skilled workers and other workers fractured the movement's response to the final throes of underdevelopment.

British historian John Saville's notion of the emergence of an ideology of labourism that accommodated itself within the hegemony of capitalist ideas is a helpful explanation of the political and social tension among Amherst's skilled workers.<sup>104</sup> Saville argues that in England

labourism as it developed through the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was a theory and practice which accepted the possibility of social change within the existing framework of society; which rejected the revolutionary violence and action implicit in Chartist ideas of physical force; and which increasingly recognized the working of political democracy of the parliamentary variety as the practicable means of achieving its own aims and objectives. Labourism was the theory and practice of class collaboration; it was a tradition which in theory (always) and in practice (mostly) emphasized the unity of Capital and Labour, and the importance of conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes.<sup>105</sup>

Saville noted that union leaders' public pronouncements on the need for co-operation between capital and labour were undercut by the realities of factory life. Unions by necessity stubbornly insisted "upon bargaining rights at the point of production" and resisted "any threat to the legal status of trade unions, and what were regarded as its traditional rights". On the other hand, labourists came to accept that "'fair' dealing was available and obtainable in bourgeois society" which on a political level brought acceptance of the values of parliamentarianism and an alliance with the bourgeois parties. The underpinning of this labourist ideology, Saville argues, was the "real possibilities of piecemeal reform" encouraged the "acceptance of a modest, evolutionary approach to politics and social change".<sup>106</sup> These were, as Saville observes, essentially defensive attitudes.

The popularity of labourist ideas among Amherst's early working-class leaders is found first perhaps in the very decision to

create craft unions to defend skilled workers against initiatives by the manufacturers in the area of wages and working conditions. As Saville argues, the doctrine of self-help and movements of personal amelioration, of which the temperance and co-operative movements were examples in Amherst, tended to stress the unity of classes. The objective of the Amherst Co-operative Society, for example, was to provide for the "general improvement of the material means of its members, and for the promotion of the moral advancement of the members of the society by encouraging habits of thrift and economy".<sup>107</sup> Thus the emergence of the craft union movement in Amherst had contradictory effects on the local working-class. On the one hand, it encouraged greater unity among skilled workers, particularly on economic issues arising in the workplace. The union locals, the labour council, and the Co-operative also were the only local institutions entirely dominated by working men. On the other hand, the ideological underpinning of this movement was restrictive and reformist, thereby limiting the possibilities for greater working-class unity in the years ahead. The challenge to the labourist ideology would eventually come from both within and outside the craft union movement itself. Such developments can best be understood in the political context of working-class life during the period.

#### IV

The labourist ideology of Amherst's skilled workers found its political expression in the Liberal party. By the mid 1890s, many

workers were voting for and taking part in the deliberations of the Liberal party, and this trend continued into the early twentieth century.\* In 1904, for example, the Young Men's Liberal Club listed 45 members, 35 of whom can be classified by occupation. Twenty had working-class occupations, including seven shoemakers, four machinists, two tailors, two carpenters, and a blacksmith, carman, harness maker, painter and labourer.<sup>108</sup> The affiliation of the shoemakers was not surprising because at least four of them were definitely associated with the P.W.A., which in turn had been closely identified with the Liberal party since the late 1880s. Several other prominent trade unions were also found in Liberal ranks during this period. Painters C. C. Hewson, a labour council candidate for the civic government, Co-operative Society member, machinist George Chamberlain, and Ora Lamy, active in the carmen's union, were all members of the Young Men's Liberal Club. The composition of the club's executive reflected the influence of skilled workers in the organization as at least three of its six vice-presidents (carpenter Dennis Collins, painter James Corney and shoemaker J. D. Ross) were working men, its secretary and meeting chairperson R. H. Bell was a machinist, and treasurer Fred Blair was a carpenter. Other skilled workers associated with the Liberal party in Amherst were shoemaker Alfred Allen and machinist James Hogan, both of whom would run against the labour slate in civic elections, and carpenter Howard Ripley, who offered as a labour council candidate in the 1906 town elections but later ran in opposition to the slate.<sup>109</sup>

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\* See Table IV, p. 175 and Table V, p. 176.

The Liberal party in Amherst was quite prepared to make accommodations to secure the working-class vote in Amherst and the larger Cumberland constituency. At the local level the chief architect of this strategy was Amherst lawyer Hance Logan.<sup>110</sup> Born at Amherst Point in 1869, Logan spent his early childhood in Amherst until he left to study at the Pictou Academy. He later graduated from Dalhousie University with a law degree and in 1892 joined the Amherst law firm of W. T. Pipes. The former Liberal premier of Nova Scotia took Logan under his wing and encouraged him to take an active interest in party politics. Logan needed little prompting from Pipes and in the 1896 federal election became the first Liberal from Cumberland to take a seat in the House of Commons. He won re-election in 1900 and 1904, but for health reasons chose not to contest the 1908 election. Logan was back in politics in 1911 but was unable to unseat E. N. Rhodes who again defeated Logan by the slimmest of margins in the 1917 conscription election. Though Logan nurtured his popularity among Amherst businessmen by serving on the Board of Trade and securing patronage contracts for local manufacturers, he never wooed them away from the Tories.<sup>111</sup> Thus he projected himself, with considerable sincerity on his own part, as the working man's friend. Logan's speeches often rang with populist rhetoric. Celebrating his re-election in 1900, for example, he promised his working-class supporters that he "would try to always be worthy of that confidence" which brought their votes to him because

labour is the foundation of capital, and whatever tends to favour labor tends to make more secure the state in which we live.<sup>112</sup>

Logan credited the Liberals with the development of local manufacturing which was creating hundreds of jobs in the area.<sup>113</sup> But the explanation for the Liberals' popularity was more than Logan's presence in the town. In the 1904 provincial by-election in Cumberland the Liberals came forward with "a workingman who should have the workingman's support" when Springhill miner E. B. Paul received the nomination. A former P.W.A. Grand Master, Paul was portrayed by the Liberal press as the defender of "the rights of labor" who promised to resign from the Assembly if the Liberals strayed from their position of "sympathy for labor".<sup>114</sup> From a labourist perspective the Liberal party deserved a sympathetic hearing. At the local level it encouraged the participation of skilled workers and was perceived nationally as the party most attuned to the interests of skilled labour. During the 1890s and early twentieth century, significant support for the Liberals was apparent in the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (T.L.C.) and many skilled working men initially welcomed the move of the Liberal governments in Ottawa and Halifax toward conciliation and arbitration legislation to govern industrial disputes.<sup>115</sup> Liberal campaigns in Amherst continually stressed the advantages to labour from such legislation and listed the party's endorsement by T.L.C. officials. When D. J. O'Donoghue, a veteran Ontario unionist and fierce Liberal supporter, praised Logan before the 1905 T.L.C. convention for his advocacy of labour legislation, the Liberal press in Cumberland ensured that the speech received special coverage.<sup>116</sup> Thus the Liberal party benefitted from its national and provincial association with labour, although this relationship was gradually weakening. In Amherst workers

joined the Liberal party because it encouraged and accommodated itself to labour's participation.

In contrast to the Liberals, the Conservative party was often perceived as the political vehicle for the local manufacturers and merchants. Beginning with Charles Tupper's election in the 1860s, for example, every Conservative candidate in federal elections until at least 1926 was closely associated with Amherst's business class. This fact was not lost upon the Conservatives' opposition which regularly denounced the Tories as the party of the wealthy. A letter to the News and Sentinel by "a Socialist" that appeared during the 1908 federal election attacked E. N. Rhodes precisely on these grounds. "Watered stock", held in the majority by members of that "party presented by Mr. Rhodes and to whom Borden and the Conservatives would give more protection", the writer warned, was at the root of the country's economic problems.<sup>117</sup> The Tories in Amherst appeared to have placed less emphasis on maintaining a constituency organization comparable to that of the Liberals. Incomplete documentation gives the impression that few prominent working men sat on the executive of the Tories in this period. The Tories did, however, have some support in Amherst. In 1904, moulder James Duxberry, a prominent labour council member, reminded readers of the News and Sentinel that not all skilled workers voted Liberal. He remained a staunch defender of the National Policy. "As a mechanic, I know that we have not enough protection", Duxberry warned his federal workers, and the country needs the Tories' high tariff policies. "I am for 'Canada for Canadians' everytime", Duxberry concluded in his appeal for Tory votes.<sup>118</sup>



At the very time when Liberal popularity in Amherst was strongest, the first signs of potential problems for the party appeared on the horizon. The interjection of labour slates into civic elections caused the Liberals some concern because they feared the extension of this interest into other levels of political activity. The Liberals were right in this regard because the offering of labour candidates did not represent a subtle shift in the skilled workers' perception of their political interest. Labour activists certainly did not restrict their interest to local politics and regularly gathered to discuss broader political issues. In some instances these meetings were sponsored by an organization known as the "Workingmen's Club"<sup>119</sup> whose membership was for the most part interchangeable with that of the labour council; indeed, the records of the period frequently used the names of the two organizations interchangeably. Though the club rooms on Havelock Street were used for fraternizing, the activities which occurred there were explicitly political in their orientation. During elections, whether civic, provincial, or federal, the members heard from representatives of both the Liberals and Conservatives. The 1906 civic election saw Conservatives N. A. Ackles, a prominent real-estate agent, and C. T. Jamieson, editor of the Telegram, entertain 40 club members one evening in an attempt to win labour's endorsement of Ackles for mayor.<sup>120</sup> The gala affair chaired by tailor Dan McDonald did not bring the desired results as the labour council stuck by its decision to support T. P. Lowther. Liberal and Conservative speakers also extolled the virtues of their respective parties before the Labour Day

rallies of 1904 and 1905, though they had to share the platform with Adolf Landry, a young advocate of independent labour politics.<sup>121</sup>

Landry had deep roots in the Cumberland working class. His father was a railway worker in Amherst, and the young Landry received his initial schooling in the town. While still a youth he found employment in the Springhill mine. After surviving the 1891 mine explosion, he returned to Amherst where he apprenticed as a carpenter. Toward the end of the 1890s, Landry moved to Halifax and apparently attended Dalhousie University for three years, where he undertook a "thorough study of labour problems" in New Zealand, Australia, and England. Little is known about his life in Halifax or how he financed his university years. It was in the provincial capital, however, that Landry became a socialist and independent labour advocate; in 1899, Landry spoke at several socialist rallies on behalf of the Socialist Labour Party. The failure of the S.L.P. to gain support in Halifax may have precipitated Landry's return to Amherst around 1902.<sup>122</sup> He quickly emerged as a leading spokesman for the labour movement in his hometown. As well as his appearances at the Labour Day rallies, Landry spoke to meetings of the local unions and in 1905 was the spokesman for the carworkers during their protest over the death of Phillip Belliveau.<sup>123</sup> During the next few years, several of which Landry spent in Moncton representing International Correspondence School, the labour orator shared the speakers' platform with British independent labour party agitator, Keir Hardie, Wilfred Gribble, an Ontario organizer with the Socialist Party of Canada, and on numerous other occasions with local labour and socialist personalities. In 1909,

Landry ran on an independent labour platform in a provincial by-election in Cumberland and several years later was hired as an organizer by the fledgling Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, of which he eventually became the Deputy Grand President.<sup>124</sup>

Landry's participation in the Workingmen's Club political discussions strengthened the hand of Dan McDonald, George McLeod, John Ball, William Rackham and other unionists interested in independent labour politics. Events in 1908 further strengthened their position and forced many skilled workers to consider independent political action for the first time. The economy slumped badly that year and the workers could do little to prevent wage reductions of as much as 20 percent. It also halted any further workplace organizing as companies shut down for weeks on end and unemployment soared.<sup>125</sup> The workers' frustration with the local Liberal party was increasing because even the "workingmen's" M.L.A., E. B. Paul appeared to be hedging on his election promise to guard labour's interests in Halifax.<sup>126</sup> Alienation from the Liberals reached the point that a motion to support the Conservatives in the 1908 federal election received the labour council's endorsement.<sup>127</sup> But for McDonald, McLeod, Ball, and some other unionists, this was only a temporary move because they were already engaged in discussion to form an independent labour party in Cumberland. Enthusiasm for this idea received a boost in October 1908 when in the midst of the federal election campaign they brought Keir Hardie to town. The fiery Scotsman thundered that there was "no difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives" and exhorted his

audience of over 1,000 to create their own independent labour party.<sup>128</sup>

The possibility of independent labour advocates in Cumberland joining forces to create a party was raised on the 27 June 1908 when "a delegation of Amherst workmen" took the morning train to Springhill and, at the miners' invitation, passed the day discussing the subject. They quickly came to the conclusion that neither of the traditional parties were predisposed "to legislate the rights and just properties of the working class".<sup>129</sup> Consequently, work was immediately to begin to organize the Cumberland Labor Party (C.L.P.). Miner William Watkins and Amherst moulder William Rackham were delegated the task of raising the concept of a labour party in Cumberland with "every working man whether organized in Labor unions, or not, and every P.W.A. Lodge".<sup>130</sup> Such overtures to Cumberland workers continued through the summer and autumn of 1908. Miners in the area became increasingly receptive to the idea as the bitter jurisdictional dispute between the P.W.A. and the United Mine Workers of America (U.M.W.) deteriorated toward the 1909 confrontation.<sup>131</sup> Dissident Nova Scotian miners abandoned the P.W.A. and formed U.M.W. locals because they were convinced that the new organization would press their demands for better wages and working conditions with the coal companies and the government. The strike that began in August and continued until May 1911 in Springhill pitted the U.M.W. miners against the combined forces of the P.W.A., the provincial Liberal government, and the powerful coal companies. This struggle tested the miners' allegiance to the bourgeois parties, especially the Liberals, and it was not surprising

that C.L.P. supporters in the mining district were almost exclusively drawn from among the U.M.W.'s membership.

The C.L.P.'s founding convention opened on 1 May 1909 in Amherst to elect an executive, nominate candidates for the next provincial election, and to unveil a statement of principles.<sup>132</sup> Amherst and Springhill provided the core of the C.L.P.'s leadership and the 50 delegates elected an executive that reflected this fact. Positions divided evenly between representatives from the two centers: from Amherst came Dan McDonald, first vice-president, John Ball, treasurer, and James Duxberry and William Rackham, members of the executive council. From among a choice of three Springhill miners and Adolf Landry and T. P. Lowther, Landry and miner Seaman Terris received the C.L.P.'s nominations for the Assembly. The support for the C.L.P. emanating from Amherst marked the infusion of a new ideological dimension into the labour movement's political context. Interest in independent labour politics by its very nature represented a questioning of the emphasis on class collaboration implicit in the traditional labourist position. The C.L.P.'s Statement of Principles adopted a critical stance toward capital and its political representatives. "We should cease to trust our destinies to those who but use the masses as stepping stones to lives of indulgence for themselves", the document argued, and concluded that "the masses have the power in their own hands. Why not use it?"<sup>133</sup> This call to action was addressed to "every workingman, to the farmers of the country, miners, men in the factories, and railways", which reflected a deepening class awareness among the C.L.P.'s membership. But

undertones of an earlier moralism remained, as "all classes of society" were urged to join in the campaign to change society so that "all men will be just as well off in this world's goods, and experience greater pleasures in the knowledge that they are living a little nearer the ideal towards which civilization is going".<sup>134</sup>

The emphasis among the C.L.P. members though was on working-class co-operation. They established 1 May as the date for annual conventions because it was "recognized as Labor Day by unions throughout the world".<sup>135</sup> C.L.P. supporters stressed that participation in the organization was open to all workers and not restricted by skill or other divisions that set workers apart. Such an attempt to unite local workers on political issues had obvious implications for the organization of the workplace and within the next several years the theoretical consistency of McDonald, Ball, McLeod, Rackham, and moulder John Logan was apparent in their support of industrial unionism. These were class conscious workers who soon would be identifying themselves as Marxian socialists. But theirs was likely not the majority position among C.L.P. activists in early 1909, nor was it a position that the party's general supporters would have accepted. Furthermore, the C.L.P. represented a minority position in Amherst even among the skilled working men from whom it drew its leadership. And though the C.L.P. urged greater unity upon all workers and the building of a new society, it continued to accept the labourist emphasis on parliamentarianism that projected a programme which suggested that amelioration was possible under capitalism.<sup>136</sup> Both these points became clear in November 1909 when the C.L.P. decided to contest a

provincial by-election in Cumberland which had been necessitated by the death of Amherst's W. T. Pipes. Adolf Landry was the unanimous choice of a special C.L.P. nomination meeting to represent the party in the election.<sup>137</sup>

Much of the C.L.P.'s election programme was borrowed from the platforms of the Canadian Labor Party and from the various regional independent labour formations which were springing up across the country. Demands included a minimum living wage, abolition of child and female labour, legal recognition of trade unions, workmen's compensation, the abolition of property qualifications for public office and voting and improved factory inspection legislation. Several specific items related to the coal industry also were added, notably the election by the miners of safety inspectors and the introduction of measures to encourage coal production.<sup>138</sup> The C.L.P. wanted stricter control over the leasing of coal and timber reserves in the area, which were "being exploited by the government", Landry argued at an Amherst meeting, "against the interests of the people". Improper government planning, Landry continued, meant that even an area like Cumberland, with "all those valuable assets" in natural resources, was facing an uncertain economic future. For a solution to these problems, Landry drew the voters attention to New Zealand, "an ideal country", where a government sympathetic to labour was nationalizing the railways and public utilities, and introducing other "sensible legislation".<sup>139</sup> The bitterness of the continuing U.M.W.-P.W.A. struggle, genuine interest in the C.L.P.'s programme, and a good dose of curiosity brought out good crowds for the party in Amherst, Springhill,

Parrsboro, and several of the smaller mining villages. When the party's membership reached 100 shortly before the election and a Springhill rally attracted over 1,000 people, C.L.P. secretary, miner William Watkins, declared that the party's development was "an object lesson in solidarity and an inspiration to the workers".<sup>140</sup>

The interest being generated by the C.L.P. for independent labour politics created concern in the ranks of the Conservatives and Liberals. Rather than trying to dismiss the C.L.P. as being of little importance, they attacked the party's programme and leadership. The Amherst Daily News, for example, scoffed at the party "for borrowing ideas from the United States". Social progress must be achieved through "the slow growth of evolution", the editor cautioned local workers, and not through "violent denunciations against men [capitalists] that are as eager for change for the better as the labor party".<sup>141</sup> The central strategy of the Liberals and the Conservatives in the election campaign was to challenge the C.L.P.'s assertion that it best represented the interests of Cumberland's working class. Conservative candidate T. S. Rogers claimed in one speech that Landry did not represent the interests of organized labour, let alone the unorganized workers. On another occasion, he petitioned workers to "think of the community at large and to support the Conservatives".<sup>142</sup> Liberal officials proved even more adamant in their campaign against the C.L.P. J. H. Livingston, the Liberal candidate for Wentworth, referred to himself as "a practical Labor man while Mr. Landry was only one in Theory". A self-described manual



labourer, the Wentworth farmer was referring to Landry's position with a correspondence school.<sup>143</sup>

The results of the 20 November election were bittersweet for the C.L.P.\* In the rural areas, including most of the smaller mining villages, Landry drew very poorly and this largely accounted for his third place finish in the election with only 17 percent of the vote. On the other hand, significant breakthroughs were recorded in the county's two largest industrial towns. At Springhill, the center of the U.M.W. struggle, Landry scored a resounding victory, polling 54 percent of votes, which represented 50 percent of his total vote in the county. In Amherst, the returns were not as dramatic, but were still significant. Landry drew 359 votes, or 25 percent of the Amherst vote which accounted for 28 percent of C.L.P's total support in Cumberland. Labour party support in Amherst was won at the expense of the Liberals. Though Livingston took 40 percent of the vote in the town, this marked an 18 percent or 133 vote decline from Pipes' victory in 1906. Over 200 additional votes were cast in the by-election than in the 1906 provincial election, which makes the erosion of Liberal support even more dramatic. In poll three, where the Liberals traditionally did well, Landry drew 29 percent of the total of 514 votes cast; Livingston won 39 percent, down from the 62 percent secured only three years earlier. The Conservative vote in Amherst declined much less dramatically than that of the Liberals, for though Rogers

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\* See Table VI, p. 177.

drew seven percent fewer votes than in 1906, this represented an absolute decline of only 11 ballots.

There was no need for the C.L.P. to feel embarrassed by the vote it received in Amherst. Winning 25 percent of the vote in its first outing in Amherst was a respectable showing in the town where there was no tradition of independent labour politics. In its leadership and rank and file support, the C.L.P. in Amherst was decidedly a working-class organization. Skilled workers provided the party with leadership and what little financial help was available. During the election the moulders' and tailors' unions, the only Amherst locals that survived the 1908 recession intact, donated funds to the C.L.P.'s campaign.<sup>144</sup> The men who struggled to build the party's organization in the town were prominent in the union movement and in the Workingmen's Club. Though they were skilled workers their interest in the C.L.P. suggested that many of them were beginning to reconsider their traditional exclusivism to pursue new alliances with other workers. But these new alliances were not simply contained within the boundaries of Amherst for the C.L.P. was one feature of what historian Ian McKay has described as "the emergence of a limited class consciousness" in the Maritimes.<sup>145</sup> The C.L.P. looked to Cape Breton and other areas of union solidarity across the country in an effort to find workplace and political structures and ideas that could be adapted to the particular needs of Amherst.

In 1909, the supporters of the C.L.P. constituted a minority position among Amherst's skilled workers and received limited support from other workers in the town. The labour party movement was fragile

but destined to play an important role in the history of the Amherst labour movement. Its emergence represented a critique of the most conservative aspects of labourism, especially the ideology's defence of the bourgeois parties. Most labour party advocates though still accepted parliamentarism as the road to social change. This commitment was about to be challenged by the rise of the Marxian socialist movement.

Table I.

Birthplaces of Population of Amherst, Nova Scotia in 1881 and 1911

<u>Birth Place</u>	<u>1881</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>Absolute Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>	<u>Absolute Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
British Isles				
England and Wales	45	1.0	315	3.6
Ireland	65	1.5	17	0.2
Scotland	31	0.7	93	1.0
Sub-total	141	3.2	425	4.8
Canada				
Prince Edward Island	68	1.5	379	4.3
New Brunswick	619	13.9	2,183	24.6
Nova Scotia	3,526	79.1	5,624	63.4
Other	8	0.2	76	0.9
Sub-total	4,221	94.7	8,262	93.2
All Other	95	2.1	180	2.0
TOTAL	4,457	100.0	8,867	100.0

Source: Calculated from the Census of Canada, 1881 and 1911.

Table II

Origins of the Population of Amherst, Nova Scotia in 1881 and 1911

<u>Origin</u>	<u>1881</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>Absolute Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>	<u>Absolute Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
African	131	2.9	294	3.3
English	2,611	58.6	4,240	47.4
French	230	5.2	1,721	19.2
German	140	3.1	107	1.2
Irish	654	14.7	819	9.1
Scottish	468	10.5	1,661	18.5
Others, including "Not Given"	233	5.0	121	1.3
TOTAL	4,457	100.0	8,973	100.0

Source: Calculated from the Census of Canada, 1881 and 1911.

Table III

Religion of the Population of Amherst, Nova Scotia in 1881 and 1911

<u>Religion</u>	<u>1881</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>Absolute Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>	<u>Absolute Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
Roman Catholic	550	12.3	2,420	27.0
Presbyterian	570	12.8	1,441	16.0
Methodist	1,288	28.9	1,886	20.8
Baptist	1,286	28.9	1,987	22.1
Anglican	678	15.2	1,102	12.3
Other	38*	0.9	125**	1.4
Not Given	47	1.0	32	0.4
TOTAL	4,457	100.0	8,973	100.0

\* Includes 28 Salvation Army

\*\* Includes 75 Salvation Army

Source: Census of Canada, 1881 and 1911.

Table IV

Election Returns for Amherst and the Constituency  
of Cumberland in Federal Elections, 1896 - 1926

		Liberal		Conservative		Progressive	
		<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>
1896	Amherst	345	46.0	402	54.0		
	Cumberland	3,462	51.1	3,307	49.9		
1900	Amherst	504	58.0	360	42.0		
	Cumberland	3,742	52.8	3,345	47.2		
1904	Amherst	767	52.0	621	48.0		
	Cumberland	4,535	54.2	3,829	45.8		
1908	Amherst	922	49.8	930	50.2		
	Cumberland	4,310	51.5	4,800	48.5		
1911	Amherst	915	45.0	1,111	55.0		
	Cumberland	4,442	48.1	4,780	51.9		
1917	Amherst	1,482	51.0	1,405	49.0		
	Cumberland	5,459	49.1	5,655	50.9		
1921	Amherst	3,004	68.0	1,254	28.0	188	4
	Cumberland	9,762	56.5	4,407	25.5	3,094	18
1925	Amherst	1,297	44.0	1,675	56.0		
	Cumberland	6,234	42.5	8,404	57.5		
1926	Amherst	1,414	49.5	1,441	50.5		
	Cumberland	6,564	44.7	8,105	55.3		

NOTE: Column A = Number of Votes Polled  
Column B = Vote as a Percentage of Total Vote (1) for Amherst  
and (2) for Cumberland

Table V

Election Returns for Amherst and the Constituency  
of Cumberland in Provincial Elections, 1897 - 1925<sup>1</sup>

		Liberal		Conservative		Progressive	
		<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>
1897	Amherst	921	64.4	508	35.6		
	Cumberland	6,729	56.2	5,230	43.8		
1901	Amherst	747	52.1	685	47.9		
	Cumberland	5,877	50.9	5,666	49.1		
1904*	Amherst	437	52.0	403	48.0		
	Cumberland	3,256	54.9	2,666	45.1		
1906	Amherst	1,441	59.3	987	40.7		
	Cumberland	7,206	52.9	6,414	47.1		
1909*	Amherst	590	40.4	508	34.4	359	24.6
	Cumberland	2,918	39.4	3,200	43.2	1,278	17.2
1911	Amherst	1,946	57.2	1,452	42.8		
	Cumberland	8,322	52.1	7,647	47.9		
1916	Amherst	2,859	53.9	2,327	43.8	117	2.2
	Cumberland	11,467	49.4	10,983	47.3	727	3.1
1920	Amherst	2,770	41.0	1,493	22.1	2,490	36.8
	Cumberland	10,360	33.6	6,048	19.6	14,416	46.7
1925	Amherst	3,262	42.0	4,496	58.0		
	Cumberland	15,059	36.7	25,904	63.3		

1. Cumberland was a two member constituency until the number was raised to three for the 1916 election. This table records the total vote for all candidates of each party in Amherst and in Cumberland.

\* Denotes by-Election

NOTE: Column A = Number of Votes Polled  
Column B = Vote as a Percentage of Total Vote (1) for Amherst and (2) for Cumberland



Table VI

Cumberland Constituency Poll Returns for  
the 1909 Provincial By-Election

	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Cumberland Labor Party</u>
Amherst	590	508	359
Fort Lawrence	34	31	0
Amherst Hill	62	26	10
Nappan	55	38	9
Hasting	110	48	3
Amherst Head	60	52	2
Linden	74	77	1
Tidnish	94	99	1
Pugwash	107	99	5
Doherty Creek	61	39	2
Pugwash River	53	87	8
Wallace	83	63	0
Wallace Ridge	72	56	1
Wentworth	118	33	2
Malagash	71	53	1
Westchester	104	85	0
Conn's Mills	67	78	1
River Phillip	86	103	7
Oxford	100	116	20
Little River	59	73	1
Southampton	99	72	3
Springhill and Springhill Junction	238	303	641
River Hebert	125	111	41
Minudie	28	22	9
Joggins	113	60	37
Shulee	29	25	1
Advocate	55	41	6
Port Greville	100	121	6
Parrsboro	257	270	60
Chignecto	71	72	31
Apple River	25	57	0
Total	3,200	2,918	1,268

Source: Nova Scotia. Journals of the House of Assembly, Appendix  
No. 25, 1909

Footnotes - Chapter III

1. This biography is compiled from many sources, including notices in the daily newspapers and the labour press. Specific references to Rackham's participation in the labour movement are provided throughout the text.
2. John Saville, "The Ideology of Labourism", pp. 213-226.
3. Nova Scotia. House of Assembly. Journals of the House of Assembly, Appendix No. 15, 1911, p. 59.
4. Ibid.
5. Labour Gazette, November 1905, October 1910.
6. Ibid., August, October 1906.
7. This description is compiled from a variety of sources. Labour Gazette, November 1905, January 1909. H. A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada; Their Development and Functioning (Toronto, 1948), pp. 144-145. "Agreement Entered into Between the Canadian Car and Foundry and Their Employees in Amherst", P.A.C., R.G. 27, V. 313, 19 (144).
8. Labour Gazette, June, September, October, 1907.
9. For a general discussion of population movements in the Maritime Provinces see Alan A. Brookes, "The Golden Age and the Exodus: the Case of Canning, Kings County", Acadiensis, XI (1981), pp. 57-82 and his "The Exodus: Migration from the Maritime Provinces to Boston during the second half of the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1979).
10. Robert McKay Interview, 1976. Thaddie Gould Interview, 1977. Winnifred Bulmer Interview, 1977.
11. Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital; Nova Scotia Evidence (Ottawa, 1889). Nathaniel Curry, manufacturer, Amherst, N.S., pp. 310-313, F.B. Robb, manufacturer, Amherst, N.S., p. 322-324.
12. Labour Gazette, September 1907.
13. Canada. House of Commons, Journals, V. 45 (1909-10), Appendix, Part III, pp. 486-488.
14. Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914", unpublished manuscript, 1981, Halifax, p. 1-95, provides an excellent analysis of the regional labour market and its relationship to working-class struggle.

15. Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital; Nova Scotia Evidence, N. Curry, pp. 310-313.
16. Iron Molders' Journal, October 1900, April 1904.
17. Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital; Nova Scotia Evidence, N. Curry, pp. 310-313.
18. A general appreciation of the labour market is available in the Labour Gazette's monthly reports on Amherst. For example, see the reports for late 1907 through the winter of 1910, which describe massive layoffs of months duration at Robb Engineering, Rhodes and Curry, and other shops. In October 1909, the Eastern Labor News (henceforth E.L.N.), commented on the Amherst situation. "Some of the younger men thrown out of employment went west", the paper reported, while "others were absorbed by the other manufacturing plants and many are idle without any prospect of work". Extensive unemployment during 1907-1910 brought the workplace organizing of the previous decade to a halt.
19. Canada. House of Commons, Journals, V. 45 (1909-10), Appendix, Part III, p. 531.
20. Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes", p. 8.
21. Labour Gazette, June, July, December 1907; January, June, December 1912; June 1913.
22. Thaddie Gould Interview, 1977. D.Ns. 2 February, 30 May 1918; 22 February, 29 April 1919. Frank Burke, a carpenter at Rhodes and Curry, was beginning to assume his role as a principal figure in organizing the carshops. In autumn 1910, he was elected president of a new industrial union of 550 men in the carworks. E.L.N., 18 February 1911.
23. N. & S., 7 October 1904.
24. N. & S., 12 August 1904.
25. John Davidson Interview, 1977.
26. Ibid., Thaddie Gould Interview, 1977; N. & S., 28 July 1905; D.Ns., 22 June 1967. In 1905, the Royals Baseball team from Amherst won the "coloured championship" of the Maritimes. N. & S., 28 July 1905.
27. R. A. Fillmore, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, Dalhousie University Archives (henceforth Fillmore, manuscript). Gould reported that black and white workers for the most part "got along okay" in the workplace, Thaddie Gould Interview, 1977.

28. John Davidson Interview, 1977; Thaddie Gould Interview, 1977; Reports on conditions in the area appeared periodically in the local newspapers. Topics varied from the arrest of "coloured women" for drunkenness to police quelling "disturbances" between blacks and whites, and the laying of police charges against "ladies who preside over the destinies of certain houses in this town, which possess rather unsavoury reputations". N. & S., 16, 23 May, 17 November 1905; 30 March 1906. Attempts to control the sale of liquor and prostitution along these streets was led by the temperance association and employer dominated Amherst Town Improvement Association. Besides stricter enforcement of the Scott Act, these groups tried to close the area by forcing landowners to make improvements in the housing conditions. This debate continued at the town council level for several years and centered on public demands to widen the street, which first required the removal of some of the worst housing. See, for example, Amherst, Minutes, 17 July 1905; 30 July, 13 August, 10 December 1906; 18 February, 29 April 1907; 27 April, 31 August 1908.
29. Thaddie Gould Interview, 1977.
30. For example, see Winifred Bulmer Interview, 1977; Thaddie Gould Interview, 1977; Graham Hennessey Interview, 1977; Robert McKay, 1977.
31. N. & S., 4 August 1904; 21 March 1905. The association was still active in the post World War One period. D.Ns., 5 December 1918.
32. For the religious affiliations of the business class, see Chapter I.
33. Amherst Gazette, 21 November 1873; N. & S., 14 March 1905; Amherst, Minutes, 27 May 1907, 21 December 1908.
34. D.Ns., 29 July 1980.
35. In the early 1900s, the temperance movement was continually appearing before town council and raising its arguments in the local newspapers. See, for example, N. & S., 17 June 1904; 13, 17 January, 14 March 1905 and Amherst Minutes, 27 February, 31 July 1905; 3 March 1906; 27 May 1907; 21 December 1908.
36. N. & S., 3 January 1914. The relationship between the temperance and labour movements receives further analysis later in this chapter.
37. Canada. House of Commons, Journals, V. 45 (1909-10), Appendix, Part III, p. 487.
38. D.Ns., 25 April, 13 July 1909; N. & S., 8 July 1904, 10 July 1905.

39. Albert Collins, a janitor who helped organize the activities of the Socialist Party of Canada, was a staunch supporter of the Orange Lodge. But as far as it can be determined, he was only one of a very few lodge members active in the socialist and labour movements. For a discussion of the Orange Lodge, see G. S. Kealey, Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892 (Toronto, 1980), pp. 98-123; Bryan Palmer, A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario 1860-1914 (Montreal, 1979), pp. 42-46.
40. Bryan Palmer, A Culture in Conflict, pp. 45-46.
41. E.L.N. 4, 18 February, 18 March 1911.
42. D.Ns., 22 June 1967.
43. Ibid.; Occupations were gathered from local directories.
44. Bryan Palmer, A Culture in Conflict, pp. 46-49.
45. D.Ns., 22 June 1967.
46. Amherst supported the full spectrum of sporting teams found elsewhere in the region's industrial centers. Churches organized baseball, basketball, and lacrosse leagues, and local industries helped finance a Manufacturers' Baseball League. Inter-city teams competed in baseball and hockey by the early 1900s and the Ramblers, as the inter-city teams were known, had a solid local following. Sports was an important dimension of the worker's life in Amherst but it was only in the volunteer fire company activities that they exercised almost total control of these events. D.Ns., 22 June 1967.
47. Ed. E. Walsh to Clarence V. Powderly, 1 February 1890; Powderly to Walsh, 4 February 1890; A. W. Wright to Powderly, 8 February 1890; Walsh to Powderly, 14 February 1890. All in Powderly Papers. (Henceforth PP).
48. Powderly to Walsh, 24 February 1890, PP.
49. Powderly to Hayes, 23 February 1890; ibid. 25 February 1890; ibid., 27 February 1890; Hayes to Powderly, 27 February 1890. All in PP.
50. Knights of Labor, Report of Proceedings of the General Assembly, 1891, p. 25; Halifax Herald, 1 May 1890.
51. "Employers of Amherst to Their Employees", Sir John Thompson Papers, V. 106, P.A.C.
52. Ibid.

53. Halifax Herald, 1 May, 26 May 1890.
54. The Busy East, January 1918.
55. Report of the Royal Commission on The Relations of Labor and Capital, Nova Scotia Evidence, Rufus Hicks, foreman, p. 327; John Ross, heeler, p. 319.
56. Ibid., Clifford Tower, laster, p. 320; S. W. Steele, clerk, p. 316; Rufus Hicks, p. 327.
57. Ibid., S. W. Steele, pp. 313-315; George Evans, foreman, p. 321.
58. Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital, Nova Scotia Evidence, A. D. Munro, "boss of the team", p. 329; Halifax Herald, 1 May 1890; Richard Hyman, Strikers (Glasgow, 1977), p. 125. Hyman's study of the sociology of strikes, especially Chapter Five "The Rationale of Industrial Conflict", is an excellent presentation on the nature of industrial disputes.
59. For a general description of the Knights in Canada, consult Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902 (Toronto, 1982), pp. 138-166. A more analytical approach is G. S. Kealey and Bryan Palmer, "Dreaming of What Might Be": The Knights of Labor in Ontario (New York, 1982). The Knights, according to Forsey, had no presence in the Maritimes before 1890. Why the Knights, or indeed other unions, were not popular in this early period still requires further study. The region's late industrial start and the geographical isolation of Maritime workers from developments in central Canada may be an explanation. See Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes", passim, for more on this subject. His "Class Struggle and Mercantile Capitalism: Crafsmen and Labourers on the Halifax Waterfront, 1850-1902", in Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting, eds., Working Men Who Got Wet (St. John's, 1980), pp. 287-319 also explores this problem.
60. Halifax Herald, 26 May 1890. For an analysis of the P.W.A. see Joe MacDonald, "The Roots of Radical Politics in Nova Scotia: Robert Drummond, The Provincial Workmen's Association and Political Activity, 1879-1891", unpublished manuscript, 1976, Ottawa and Sharon Reilly, "The Provincial Workmen's Association of Nova Scotia, 1878-1898", (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1979).
61. Halifax Herald, 26 May 1890.
62. Journal of the Knights of Labor, 3 July 1890.

63. Knights of Labor. Records of Proceedings of the Grand Assembly, 1890, Document 191. The Amherst Daily News was generally quiet on the strike, though on 3 July 1890 it published the following notice. A recent meeting of the Employees Relief and Protective Association of the Amherst Boot and Shoe asked that the boycott against the company be rescinded because the strike was "more blameable in our judgment upon those starting the movement than upon our employers". It was signed by the association's president, A. D. Munro and C. S. Sutherland, Munro contracted-out from the shoeworks and Sutherland was an assistant to M. D. Pride and would eventually replace him as manager.
64. Trades Journal, 21 June 1891.
65. Membership in Concord Lodge was usually less than 10, though in 1891 it reached 30 and in 1895 it soared to 68, then quickly declined. Source: Provincial Workmen's Association of Nova Scotia (Henceforth P.W.A.) Minutes of Proceedings of the Grand Council (Henceforth Minutes), 1879-1917.
66. Ibid., 5 September 1895, p. 299; 6 September 1899, p. 353.
67. P.W.A., Holdfort Lodge, Minute Book, 23 February, 16 March 1894; 29 April 1895; 23 May 1896, 16 August 1900. I would like to thank Ian McKay for sharing his research on the P.W.A. with me, especially his notes on Holdfast Lodge.
68. N. & S., 22 November 1904.
69. For the decline of the Knights and the emergence of craft unions, see Kealey and Palmer, "Dreaming of What Might Be, passim., There is a growing literature on this period; for example see Robert Babcock, Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War (Toronto, 1974); Stuart Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-1966. (Ottawa, 1968); Bryan Palmer, A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914 (Montreal, 1979); Michael Piva, The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921 (Ottawa, 1979); Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1920 (Kingston, 1968).
70. Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes", p. 5. Perhaps because McKay focused his research on strikes, his study understates the important role craft and skilled workers played in the struggle to build a viable Maritime labour movement. In Amherst the skilled workers occupied crucial positions in the local movement, including the Amherst branch of the revolutionary Socialist Party of Canada.

71. Labour Gazette, November 1900; October 1901.
72. Iron Molders' Journal, October 1900.
73. Ibid., Patrick Dwyer, a Sydney moulder, confirmed Frey's observations on the importance of the steel mill to the moulders trade. Ibid., April 1904.
74. Labour Gazette, September 1907.
75. Wayne Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution, 1889-1914", Labour/Le Travailleur, V. 6 (1980), pp. 49-72.
76. Robert Babcock, Gompers in Canada, p. 120.
77. N. & S., 13 December 1904; 3 November, 1 December 1905. Labour Gazette, August, October 1906.
78. N. & S., 13, 17 October 1905; Labour Gazette, November 1906.
79. Wayne Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution", p. 59.
80. Journal of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America (henceforth Carmen's Journal), July 1900.
81. Industrial Canada, March 1906.
82. News and Sentinel, 5 April 1905.
83. Carmen's Journal, November 1904, March, August 1905.
84. H.A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada (Toronto, 1948), p. 144.
85. N. & S., 10 March, 30 May, 4 August 1905.
86. N. & S., 9 September 1904.
87. Ibid.,
88. N. & S., 13 December 1904; 3 November, 1 December 1905.
89. N. & S., 10 February 1905.



90. Labour Council Representatives Elected to Amherst Town Council, 1905-1909.

1905	Mayor Councillors	T. P. Lowther W. McCallum W. A. Lowerson E. F. Coates
1906	Mayor Councillors	W. McCallum E. F. Coates J. C. Carter
1907	Mayor Councillors	T. P. Lowther J. C. Carter
1908	No representation	
1909	Mayor	T. P. Lowther

91. These biographies are compiled from directories, local newspapers, trade union documents, and interviews. No personal papers from Amherst trade unionists were found for any period of this study.
92. N. & S., 6, 10, 13 January; 3, 10 February; 7 April, 3, 7; 10 November 1905.
93. Ibid., 3, 7, 10 November; 1, 5, 12 December 1905.
94. Lowther's ambivalent relationship with the labour council brought official union endorsement of only his 1906 campaign, fought on the poor farm issue. In 1905, 1907, and 1909, Lowther was not an official member of the labour council's slate.
95. Amherst, Minutes, 27 May 1907, 21 December 1908.

The temperance question in Amherst was extremely complicated and almost impossible to study adequately, given the dearth of information. Though Lowther campaigned specifically on the issue, the trades and labour council never took up the issue in a consistent manner, nor did any significant numbers of its leaders ever appear in the temperance associations. As C. Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton, 1895-1930" (Ph.D. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1981) observes, temperance became of decreasing importance to the craft union movement after 1900. This very well may have been the case in Amherst.

96. N. & S., 9, 19 January 1906.
97. Ibid., 9, 16, 19, 26, 30 January; 2, 6, 9, 13 February 1906.

98. Amos Purdy, Quotations from the Town's Incorporation Act and Assessment Laws and Criticisms on the Rate Roll For Amherst, February 1904. (P.A.N.S., Vertical File, Amherst, N.S., No. 4). Purdy cited examples of unequitable assessment procedures that favoured the business and personal interests of the manufacturers. A reading of the Amherst, Minutes for this period gives no indication that the labour councillors tried any serious revisions in the assessment statutes.
99. Amherst, Minutes, 5 June 1906.
100. Ibid., 27 February, 26 March, 4 June 1906.
101. Nova Scotia, House of Assembly, Journals, "An Act to Incorporate The Amherst Co-operative Society", 1906.
102. For an introduction to this literature, see David J. Bercuson, "Through the Looking Glass of Culture: An Essay on the New Labour History and Working-Class Culture in Recent Canadian Historical Writing", Labour/Le Travailleur, 7 (1980), pp. 95-112; G. S. Kealey, "Labour and Working-Class History in Canada: Prospects in the 1980s", Labour/Le Travailleur, 6 (1981), pp. 67-94; Ian McKay, "History, Anthropology, and the Concept of Culture", Labour/Le Travailleur, 8/9 (1981/82), pp. 185-241; Bryan Palmer, "Classifying Culture", Labour/Le Travailleur, 8/9 (1981/82), pp. 153-183.
103. Bryan Palmer, A Culture in Conflict, passim; John Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns (London, 1974), passim.
104. John Saville, "Ideology of Labourism", pp. 213-226.
105. Ibid., p. 215.
106. Ibid., p. 216, 222.
107. Ibid., p. 216; Nova Scotia, House of Assembly, Journals, "An Act to Incorporate the Amherst Co-operative Society", 1906.
108. N. & S., 4 October 1904.
109. Ibid.
110. The Canadian Directory of Parliament (Ottawa, 1968), p. 341.
111. D.Ns., 13 October 1900.
112. Ibid., 10 November 1900.
113. Ibid., 20 October 1900; N.&S., 7 October 1904.

114. N. & S., 29 November, 6 December 1904.
115. For discussion of labour's political allegiances see, G. S. Kealey, Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, pp. 254-273; Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, pp. 19-91; Michael Piva, "The Toronto District Labour Council and Independent Political Action: Factionalism and Frustration, 1900-1921", Labour/Le Travailleur, 4 (1979), pp. 115-130. Little information is available on the Maritimes for the pre-World War One period. See, Joe MacDonald, "Roots of Radical Politics in Nova Scotia", *passim* and S. Reilly, "The Provincial Workmen's Association", pp. 86-100.
116. N. & S., 12 August 1904; 7 November 1905.
117. Ibid., 13 October 1908.
118. Ibid., 1 December 1905; 7 October 1904.
119. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict, pp. 61-62, analyzes the importance of such clubs to Hamilton's skilled workers.
120. N. & S., 16 January 1906.
121. N. & S., 9 September 1904; 15 September 1905.
122. David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916", Labour/Le Travailleur, V. 4 (1979), p. 100.
123. N. & S., 5 April 1905.
124. Frank and Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes", p. 100; W. E. Greening and M.M. Maclean, It Was Never Easy: A History of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers, 1908-1958 (Ottawa, 1961); pp. 37, 55.
125. Labour Gazette, August 1908, June 1909.
126. N. & S., 4 April 1904; 15 June 1906.
127. Ibid., 13 October 1908.
128. Ibid., 2 October 1908.
129. William Watkins to Daniel Coleman, Springhill, 2 July 1908, (Miners' Museum, Glace Bay, Nova Scotia).
130. Ibid.,

131. This description of the U.M.W.-P.W.A. confrontation is taken from the following sources: Paul MacEwan, Miners and Steelworkers' Labour in Cape Breton (Toronto, 1976), p. 23-38; Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes", pp. 23-24 and "Workers' Council Control in Springhill, 1882-1927", unpublished manuscript, Halifax, 1981, p. 38.
132. E.L.N., 24 April, 8, 9, 15 May 1909; D.Ns., 28, 29, 30 April; 3 May 1909
133. E.L.N., 15 May 1909.
134. Ibid.
135. D.Ns., 3 May 1909.
136. E.L.N., 15 May 1909.
137. Ibid., 6 November 1909.
138. Ibid., 15 May 1909.
139. Ibid., 6 November 1909.
140. Ibid., 20 November 1909. The importance of the Eastern Labor News to the C.L.P. was exemplified in this issue of the weekly newspaper. Its coverage of the election included four articles detailing the C.L.P.'s programme and activities throughout the county.
141. D.Ns., 26 May 1909.
142. E.L.N., 20 November 1909. When attacked by the Conservatives C.L.P. representatives accused the Tories of ignoring their own policy statements. At a recent conference in Truro, the Conservatives apparently declared a willingness to co-operate with independent labor candidates. In a debate with T.S. Rogers, Landry agreed to withdraw from the election in favour of the Conservative candidate and president of the Amherst Boot and Shoe, if Rogers would grant his workers a 35 percent wage increase. "The Workingmen", Landry argued "had earned the dividends and deserved a greater share of profits." E.L.N., 20 November 1909.
143. N. & S., 12 November 1909.
144. N. & S., 20 November 1909.
145. Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes", p. 45.

## Chapter IV

### Labour Organizations and Labour

Politics, 1910 - 1915

"Though not apparent to the superficial observer", reported a correspondent for the Eastern Labor News, "there is in Busy Amherst a strong undercurrent in favour of a more general organization of labor in that town".<sup>1</sup> This was the situation in Amherst by late 1909. Economic conditions showed signs of improving and the labour movement was united in the C.L.P. campaign to elect A. F. Landry to the provincial legislature. The by-election and the Springhill miners' strike drew attention to Cumberland County and attracted the likes of Keir Hardie, Bill Haywood, the champion of the Industrial Workers of the World, and Wilfred Gribble, the indefatigable Socialist Party of Canada (S.P.C.) organizer, to Amherst during their tours of the Maritimes. Though Landry did poorly in the election, solace was taken in his respectable showing in Amherst and Springhill, the county's most highly industrialized centers. These events fostered a renewed optimism among unionists that conditions were ripe for another foray into workplace organizing. While such action was contemplated by the unionists, important structural changes were developing in the Amherst

economy. These new forces in the economy brought important modifications to the world of work in which the unionists operated.

It was somewhat ironic that the first overt sign of the town's shifting economy came in the midst of the C.L.P. election campaign. In October, as electioneering intensified in those final four weeks before the vote, Montreal newspapers reported the formation of the Canadian Car and Foundry Company. Nathaniel Curry later confirmed the news in Amherst. The fact that the decision was made in Montreal and relayed to Amherst probably caused little concern in Amherst in 1909. But as this incident evolved into the standard procedure of the Canadian Car and Foundry, many residents, especially the carworkers, rebelled against it. The Rhodes and Curry merger symbolized in a profound way the integration of the Maritimes into a national structure of monopoly capitalism. The immediate consequence of this centralization and concentration of capitalism for Amherst's working class had several dimensions. By the time of World War One the majority of workers negotiated with local managers who acted on instructions from corporate executives in Montreal and Toronto. Second, de-industrialization and the region's absorption into a national labour market made the struggle of the Amherst working class to protect the labour market more pressing than ever before in its history. On the other hand, the difficulties of the task became increasingly enormous.<sup>2</sup>

The working-class response to these changing social conditions was embodied to a significant measure in the shifting institutional structure of the labour movement. In the workers search for power amid the new corporate structure emerging around them, many skilled working

men sought refuge in their traditional craft unions. Other craftsmen rejected the exclusivism of craft unionism and joined semi-skilled workers and labourers in experimentation with newer forms of industrial organization. One aspect of this response was the willingness among workers, especially those employed by Canadian Car and Foundry, to use strike action in support of their demands. Ideologically, socialist ideas began to influence the thought and actions of a prominent minority among the labour movement's leadership. In the pre-war years, socialism offered the working class an alternative understanding of contemporary society to that of the evolutionary parliamentarianism of labourism. The growing awareness of the necessity of collective action among Amherst workers was reinforced by the gradual overcoming of their isolation from other working people in the region, a problem evident during the labour movement's formative years. By 1914, Amherst workers had the sense that they were part of a regional working class. These themes are explored in this study in sections on the institutional history of unionism, the emergence of the socialist movement, and the tensions between labourists and socialists in labour party politics before 1914. The final segment of this chapter analyses the 1914 machinists' and carmen's strikes, and the town council election of that year, which together represented the culmination of pre-World War One trends in the Amherst labour movement.

I

The working men and women of Amherst were not in a position to challenge the 1908 round of wage reductions and layoffs at Robb Engineering and Rhodes and Curry. As many as one half of the employees of these companies found themselves out of work, while the others faced reductions in their wages of 10 percent or more. Most other companies followed the lead of the town's two largest employers in shaping their response to the prevailing business recession. Building tradesmen fared even worse than factory employees. Masons and carpenters found it almost impossible to obtain employment and wages in the building trades were reduced across the board by 20 percent. By the end of the year, the unions of all but the tailors and moulders had disappeared.<sup>3</sup>

The tailors' union suffered the least and these workers moved quickly to take advantage of improving economic conditions in late 1909. By April of the next year, the tailors' local was heralded by the Eastern Labor News as a triumph of international unionism, the tailors won major concessions from their employers. A new wage schedule was unveiled and the union label adopted in all the local shops. The new agreement reportedly placed the wages of Amherst tailors "far in the advance of those paid their fellow craftsmen in Moncton".<sup>4</sup> In autumn of 1910, the tailors' union took another significant step forward with the announcement that the women in the shops had joined the organization. Union tailors now considered themselves in the "vanguard of progressiveness" and called on tailors throughout the region to rally to the Journeymen Tailor's Union of



America.<sup>5</sup> Though an organizer for the international union assisted in the 1910 negotiations, the tailors' success resulted from the persistent agitation of Dan McDonald and George McLeod. They carried the ideas of industrial unionism to other workers in the town and led a group of craftsmen in the fight for a broader based labour movement. The moulders, though their local survived the recession, did not achieve the same degree of success over the next few years as did the tailors. Canadian Car and Foundry and Robb Engineering remained open shops in the pre-war years for reasons to be discussed later. It was only in the Amherst Foundry that the moulders exerted a significant degree of control over their wages and working conditions. The small size of the factory favoured the moulders' retention of control. As found elsewhere in the country, workers' control was often the "result of benign neglect or a technological backwardness, not workers' power per se". This was especially found to be the case in smaller foundries, where technological change proved less profitable to introduce than in the larger factories. Employers also found that their small shops often lacked the resources to sustain prolonged strikes and were more cooperative with unionized metal workers.<sup>6</sup>

Labour-management relations in the Amherst Foundry did proceed on a more harmonious footing than it did in the larger moulding shops. At the Amherst Foundry, the moulders were centrally placed in the productive system. Management could not work without them and, if the moulders struck, all work halted in the foundry. C. A. Lusby, manager of the company, accepted this situation and normally concluded the annual spring settlement of wage schedules quickly. In 1913, when

Lusby decided to test the solidarity of the union members by hesitating in negotiations, the moulders immediately struck the plant. They returned to work the next day but only when Lusby met their demands. The moulders solidarity on the shop floor was reinforced by strong fraternal ties within the association. Recreational and entertainment events with Sackville and Moncton moulders occurred more frequently than before 1908. And, the local took an active interest in the affairs of the I.M.U. Amherst delegates attended union conventions and, with other Maritime moulders, pressed the I.M.U. to place a permanent organizer in the region. Though I.M.U. representatives now passed through Amherst each spring to help with negotiations, the moulders wanted a man readily available to deal with grievances and organizational problems throughout the year.<sup>7</sup> Moulders in the Canadian Car and Foundry and at Robb Engineering did not enjoy the same privileges as moulders working at the Amherst Foundry. The presence of non-union moulders working alongside union men demonstrated the ineffectiveness of craft unionism in relatively large and modern factories.

Other skilled metal workers faced a situation similar to that of these moulders and, of these men, the machinists left the most complete historical record. Robb Engineering employed 50 journeymen machinists in its modern machine shop. In August 1909, a correspondent for Canadian Machinery, the trade journal of the metal industry, marvelled at the highly mechanized operations of Robb Engineering. He went on to describe the large machine shop built in 1904 in which

economy had been observed in the interior arrangements. The new machine shop is so arranged that the castings come

directly from the foundry into one side of the erecting floor, and are distributed by the electric crane to any part of the shop where they are to be machined or fitted, and finally assembled and tested. A branch of the railway siding passes through one end of the shop for convenience in loading. Machinery to be loaded for shipment can simply be picked up by the crane from the testing department or any part of the shops and dropped in the cars.<sup>8</sup>

The company's "well systematized" workplace extended to all aspects of manufacturing. Such special care was "exercised in the establishing of these systems", the reporter observed, "that they are almost automatic in their workings". David Robb supervised the operations of the factory from "executive offices" resting on a gallery overlooking the machine shop. Each division in the plant was connected to Robb's office by a telephone and a 30 minute internal mail service. The emphasis on efficiency and productivity stretched from the organization of the factory to the workers pay pocket. In a search for "some scheme which would increase output, accuracy, quality", Robb Engineering time and motion study experts rejected straightforward piece-work and premium systems. Neither method worked effectively because in the manufacture of boilers and engines many different designs were used, thus making it difficult to standardize pay rates.<sup>9</sup>

By 1909, management had settled on a hybrid of the two systems that was based on a "percentage" system. It applied to all tasks for which a standard time rate was not applicable. In work that was particularly complicated or time consuming, the machinist was assigned a percentage on completion of the job. If the foreman, "in his opinion", decided that the machinist was fast, a percentage over 100 was assigned; a slow time conversely received a number below 100. This percentage was then

converted to a time credit or debit. Additional credit points were awarded for quality craftsmanship and regular attendance, the latter measure being one of the company's techniques to encourage work discipline among its employees. The manager met each machinist individually at three month intervals to balance the time credit ledger. Depending on the balance in the manager's book, the machinist's wages were adjusted upward or downward for the next three month period when the situation was again reviewed. Considerable arbitrary power rested with the foreman and the manager. The premium bonus system, as it was known, rested on continuing good faith between management and the employees.<sup>10</sup> In prosperous times, like those before 1908 when the programme was introduced, the machinist found the system to their liking. But, in the summer of 1909, the combination of the recession and the internal financial problems of Robb Engineering led to grumblings about the system.<sup>11</sup>

This was the situation that greeted Mr. Beuloin, Second Vice-President of the International Association of Machinists, when he stopped in Amherst in July 1909. In the carworks, where trade was slow, "the men were not in a mood to join our association just at the time", Beuloin reported to the readers of the Machinists' Monthly Journal. Robb Engineering machinists though, were more predisposed to the organizer's message. They told Beuloin that the premium bonus system "that they fostered in the past" was no longer advantageous to them because of declining orders. It now was "impossible for the men to make a living wage" and the machinists referred disparagingly to the bonus programme as the "skinning systems". Beuloin, as a warning to

other machinists contemplating such agreements, chided the Amherst men. He believed that had they contacted the I.A.M. before locking themselves into the "damnable sweating systems", they might not have found "themselves in a bad mess". Beuloin left Amherst after a few days with the understanding that the machinists would contact the I.A.M. when they were prepared to charter a local. Because Beuloin's report transmitted a sense of urgency among the Amherst machinists, it was surprising to discover that little was heard from them until 1913. The initiative for unionization, in this instance, came from among machinists at the carworks, though Robb Engineering workers did help in the chartering of the local. The reluctance of the Robb Engineering employees to pursue unionization is analyzed more fully elsewhere, but it can be noted that the company's financial ill-health weighed heavily in the machinists deliberations. In 1909, Robb Engineering failed to declare a dividend for the first time in its history and for several years thereafter teetered on the brink of bankruptcy; in 1912, the company finally fell into receivership.<sup>12</sup>

Canadian Car and Foundry began rehiring many of its workers in 1910, the year after Beuloin's description of the depressed conditions at the carworks. The company's marginalization of its Amherst division would ultimately threaten the livelihood of its employees. But this did not emerge as a central issue among the workers until the end of World War One though the problem surfaced periodically as an uneasiness among the workers over rumours of local departments being moved to Montreal and the company's decision to close the malleable iron division. In the meantime, the question of the carwork's future

remained submerged beneath more immediate issues, such as wages and working conditions. Between 1910 and 1914, it was Canadian Car and Foundry's drive to increase its profit margins in Amherst through wage reductions that brought the carworkers into the vanguard of the labour movement. They experimented with craft and industrial unionism, and led four strikes against the company, including three in 1914. Though skilled workers played a principal role in this agitation, semi-skilled workers and labourers also took leadership roles for the first time.

As background to this situation, it should be noted that jostling at Rhodes and Curry between management and workers over the piecework system had earlier brought the B.R.C.A. to Amherst in 1905 and sparked a brief strike in the passenger car shops. During the recession, Rhodes and Curry took advantage of its employees' weakened bargaining position to reduce wages by at least 10 percent. In autumn 1910, Nathaniel Curry, the first president of the new Canadian Car and Foundry, agreed to a corporate plan to lower piece rate prices in the freight car shop. When the new schedule arrived from Montreal and was posted in the carworks, the 138 employees in the freight car shops protested immediately. They launched the town's first major strike since the dispute at the shoeworks two decades earlier. In November 1910, freight car shop workers inaugurated what was to become over the next decade, a popular protest against the regional expressions of monopoly capitalism. N. Curry, signee in the 1890s of the manufacturers' condemnation of the Knights, in 1910, had moved to Montreal and in doing so personified the shifting objective relationships within the town.<sup>13</sup>

The strike in the freight car shop was spontaneous, the carmen's union not having survived the recession. Solidarity among all the workers in the shop strengthened the position of the men's bargaining committee that met with the local manager. After a ten day work stoppage, the company agreed to the committee's demand that the new wage schedule be withdrawn, if the system was shown to mean a loss of wages. The confrontation in the freight car shop which many viewed as a labour victory, fostered renewed interest in unionization among the majority of the employees at the carworks. In February 1911, they officially chartered Fairplay Lodge, B.R.C.A. This "monster Carmen's Union" reported 550 members and was greeted by the Eastern Labor News as the largest local of an international union in the Maritimes. Fairplay Lodge adopted an semi-industrial structure that overcame the segmentation of the workers by skill. Recognition of this fact was displayed in the selection of the union's executive: moulders, machinists, carpenters, tinsmiths, and three labourers made up the 13 person committee. The leadership combined experienced unionists John Ball and A. W. Jackson with others new to the movement, such as carpenter Frank Burke, axle maker Zabred McLeod, and labourer Clarence Babcock. David McCallum, son of James McCallum, a former labour councillor and Amherst co-operative Society activist also sat on the executive.<sup>14</sup>

Fairplay Lodge quickly became engaged in a variety of local political issues. In the municipal elections of February 1911, union members campaigned in a losing effort for the labour slate that included Frank Burke. Moulder John Logan, the union's secretary,

petitioned the council in March on the carworkers behalf to relax franchise restrictions in local elections. And, when discussions arose over the selection for a labour party candidate for the June provincial election, the carworkers sponsored the meeting in their hall. Just as the carmen's union began to assert itself in the town, a damaging revelation was made. The constitution of the international union included a race clause that restricted membership to whites only. A small number of black labourers worked in the company's foundry and were technically barred from union membership. The issue was not easily resolved because the international union was not about to rescind its race restrictions. Socialists in Fairplay Lodge led the attack against the clause. John Logan and another moulder, Tom Godfrey, refused to retain their membership in the union and the popular local S.P.C. organizer, Roscoe Fillmore, "refused point blank to speak to a Union meeting unless the colour ban was dropped". Although little more is known of the details of the union's internal strife, the anti-racist members apparently won the struggle. They paid a high price for the victory, though, as it brought about the collapse of Fairplay Lodge late in 1911.<sup>15</sup> The dissolution of Fairplay Lodge left the carworkers without representation. No clear alternative union appeared on the horizon and, as a result, some skilled workers turned to a craft union for protection.

In 1912, efforts to revive the craft union movement of the earlier period began to meet with some success. Amherst was busy again and labour in demand. These conditions continued into the summer of 1913 and were partially responsible for the upsurge in organizing activity.



By the beginning of World War One carpenters, painters, bricklayers, machinists, blacksmiths, shoemakers, tailors, and moulders supported locals of their respective international craft unions. Henry Feltmate, a machinist and unpaid American Federation of Labour (A.F.L.) organizer, reported from his Amherst home in 1914 that labour was "making good headway" in the east. There were a number of motivational factors behind the surge of craft unionism in Amherst. First, Amherst craftsmen were influenced by the general resurgence of unionism in the region and across the country. Union organizers from many craft unions passed through Amherst on their periodic tours of the Maritimes and in nearby towns like Moncton, organized labour offered Amherst workers assistance in forming locals and extended fraternal ties to them. The movement toward craft unionism in Amherst also resulted from increased economic pressure faced by the workers.<sup>16</sup>

A major problem that drew complaints was the price of housing. More pressing grievances arose over wages and working conditions. The building trades employees, who had suffered wage reductions of as much as 20 percent in 1908, still had not recovered from their losses. There was a general complaint among skilled workers that their wages and benefits were falling behind those of their organized brothers in neighbouring towns. Skilled workers, especially building tradesmen, also were deeply worried about skill dilution and the related problem of protecting the labour market. This concern became so intense for the painters that they organized a local of the International Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators, and Paperhangers in Spring 1914.

The history of this campaign was typical of the experience of other skilled workers in the pre-war years.<sup>17</sup>

Readers of the Industrial Banner learned in May of the problems involved in chartering the painters' union in Amherst. Irvin McGinn, secretary of the local, explained in a letter that, though Amherst painters nursed longstanding grievances, they were reluctant to organize. The painters "felt particularly ticklish on the proposition" of unions, McGinn noted, because the manufacturers would "dismiss a man immediately on finding out that he was a worker in one of the labour unions". The skilled workers' failure to organize and a crowded labour market, McGinn added, permitted the employers to dilute the painters' trade and force wages downward. "It got to be so bad that a green hand was supposed to be as competent as a jour[neyman], who had learned the trade", the painter observed with disgust. Moreover, the "tradesmen and laborers of all classes 'mixed in'". Because the painters were not organized, McGinn felt that they were "powerless to remedy or make a decided stand against the evil". The visit of A. E. Scott, an organizer for the international union, to Amherst in November 1913 initiated the local organizing drive. In a meeting with McGinn and two other painters arranged by the tailor's union, Scott encouraged the men to unionize, though he left the following day convinced that Amherst was probably "a hopeless venture".<sup>18</sup>

The difficult task of actually building the union fell on the shoulders of McGinn and the two others who had met with Scott. Over the next two months, much to McGinn's surprise, 22 charter members joined the union. McGinn at first believed that the lot of the town's

painters would improve substantially but he soon discovered that the union was too small to assert effective control over the labour market. Union members were thinly spread across the "carworks, piano factory, automobile and carriage works, and a casket manufactory". McGinn did not realize the full extent of this problem in May 1914; indeed, he bubbled with optimism for the future of the local labour movement. As we shall see, the manufacturers did not willingly concede unionization to the workers. Almost simultaneously with the publication of McGinn's story, Canadian Car and Foundry launched an attack on the machinists union. As I.A.M. Vice-President McLelland reported after visiting with the striking machinists, "the men of all crafts are ready for organization, which speaks well for the moral effect of our difficulty". The demonstrative effect of the strike moved other skilled workers towards organization.<sup>19</sup>

Irvin McGinn, in his short history of the painters' union, drew the readers' attention to another significant development in Amherst. He proudly reported that for the past year the craft unions had been supporting a "hustling trades and labour council that is exercising a healthy influence on the community". The Amherst Trades and Labor Council (A.T.L.C.), formed in September 1913, was a chartered member of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (T.L.C.). Membership in the A.T.L.C.'s executive reflected its craft orientation: machinists, moulders, tailors, carpenters, bricklayers, masons, and shoemakers occupied positions in the organization. Some members such as Dan McDonald, George McLeod, and moulders E. T. Carter, J. A. Arnold, C. E. Carter, H. Hill, and V. B. Crossman, were veterans of the unchartered

trades and labour council formed in 1904. They shared power in the A.T.L.C. with a new group of leaders, including machinists George Sutherland and Henry Feltmate, building tradesmen C. J. Halfpenny and William Tibbits, and shoemakers Thomas Carr and J. Legere. Machinists performed a vital role in the A.T.L.C. throughout its history. As the atmosphere in the town's machine shops became increasingly tense, the machinists became more militant and extended their newly found solidarity in the workplace to the A.T.L.C.<sup>20</sup>

The broad base of the A.T.L.C. looked impressive compared to the first trades and labour council. It reflected a genuine solidarity among skilled workers that had never previously been achieved in Amherst. The effectiveness of the craft unions and subsequently the A.T.L.C. was, however, tempered by the exclusion from the movement of most semi-skilled workers and labourers. McGinn painters' union represented such restrictiveness but, on the other hand, not all A.T.L.C. activists supported this policy. The tailors' representatives to the A.T.L.C., Dan McDonald and George McLeod, and the shoemakers' leaders, Thomas Carr and J. Legere, represented a quasi-industrial form of organization. All four men also belonged to the S.P.C. and, as socialists, pursued less restrictive forms of unionization. The A.T.L.C. drew inspiration from the strengthening labour movement beyond the boundary of the town. Contact was maintained with the T.L.C. through the union organizers passing through Amherst and by sponsoring delegates to T.L.C. conventions. George Sutherland carried the additional responsibility of serving on the T.L.C.'s, Provincial Executive for Nova Scotia, in 1914 and 1915. T.L.C. representatives

made periodic stopovers in Amherst to give encouragement to local labour supporters. John T. Joy, a prominent Halifax craft unionist and staunch advocate of independent labour politics, was well known to Amherst unionists. Perhaps the most celebrated T.L.C. spokesman to visit the town in 1914 though was the association's president, J.W. Walters.<sup>21</sup>

The A.T.L.C. sponsored a special evening "Smoker" in honour of Walters' speech on the problems confronting the Canadian labour movement, in which he urged Amherst workers to organize as quickly and effectively as possible. John T. Joy's similar appeal to the meeting served to emphasize Watter's call to action. When the meeting drew to a close late in the evening, an enthusiastic group of local unionists headed for their homes. The visit of Watters reinforced the A.T.L.C.'s sense of being as part of a movement with regional and even national dimensions. Unionists read and contributed articles and letters to the publications of their internationals like the Machinists' Monthly and the International Molders' Journal. Correspondence also appeared in the Eastern Labor News and the Industrial Banner, and frequent reports from Amherst were printed in the socialist newspapers, the Western Clarion and Cotton's Weekly, of which more will be said later in this chapter. The A.T.L.C. reinforced this growing solidarity with the regional labour movement by strengthening fraternal ties with labour councils in nearby towns through the sponsorship of Labor Day celebrations and other such activities.<sup>22</sup>

Unionists created the A.T.L.C. for two specific reasons: first, to assist all craftsmen to organize; and second, to co-ordinate labour's

political activities. As one A.T.L.C. correspondent explained in the Eastern Labor News, the organization's ambitious objective was to "build up the trade union movement in this locality to such an extent that it will be a power to be reckoned with in the future".<sup>23</sup> The A.T.L.C.'s structure was designed to accommodate the goals of the unionists. Patterned after other trades and labour councils, the committee structure of the A.T.L.C. touched on all dimensions of the craft union experience. Industrial, political, and fraternal interests and obligations were divided among six committees that did everything from helping workers to unionize, to organizing athletic events, and ensuring that unionists attended the funerals of deceased members. Often the busiest committees between the A.T.L.C.'s by-weekly meetings were those responsible for education and political lobbying. They kept members informed on regional and local political issues. On one occasion, for example, the education committee distributed copies of the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Factory Act among A.T.L.C. members to familiarize them with the legislation and to encourage them to consider revisions to it. At another point the A.T.L.C. enquired of the federal department of labour as to whether the union could obtain a subscription to Hansard, "as we understand it is had for the asking". Municipal politics did not escape the scrutiny of the A.T.L.C. When a contract was awarded to a Montreal firm for police uniforms, the A.T.L.C. successfully protested the deal. And, for a number of years prior to this conflict, unionists undertook a campaign to elect labour party candidates to the town council.<sup>24</sup>

The craft base of the A.T.L.C. was both its source of strength and, ultimately, one of its essential weaknesses. On the one hand, the skilled workers drew on the customs and traditions of the craft experience as the basis for their organizations. In this respect the A.T.L.C. bore witness to the breaking down of sectional barriers among skilled workers separated by craft in the workplace. The A.T.L.C. provided a forum for the discussion of common needs among skilled workers and the organizational framework required to assist other craftsmen to unionize.<sup>25</sup> However, the very success of craft unionism depended on the degree to which these organizations could protect their own labour market. Craft unionism, by definition, was rooted in exclusionism, defending the craft, if necessary, by sacrificing the interests of other workers. But the economic reality of the period made craft exclusivism an increasingly archaic form of workplace organization. The power of corporate capitalism, with its massive financial resources and factories employing hundreds of workers, increasingly marginalized the effectiveness of craft organizations. The machinists' strike in 1914 at Canadian Car and Foundry served as a lesson in this reality for the company's skilled workers.

The exclusivism of craft unionism was not accepted uncritically by all Amherst's skilled workers. A small group of moulders, machinists, tailors, and other workers - how many it is impossible to know - did question the restrictiveness of craft unions. Ideologically, these were the skilled workers allied with the socialist movement. Socialism emphasized class struggle and revolution, in contrast to labourism's

commitment to parliamentarism and piece-meal reform.<sup>26</sup> The socialist presence in Amherst before World War One fostered industrial rather than craft unionism and broadened the parameters of the debate on the political strategy the working class should pursue to protect its interests. The institutional presence of the socialist movement was established in 1909 with the founding of a branch of the Socialist Party of Canada. It is to the growing socialist influence in Amherst in the pre-war years that this study now turns.

## II

The marxist Socialist Party of Canada, (S.P.C.) formed in 1905, quickly achieved ascendancy within the socialist movement in Canada. This was the case in the Maritimes as well, where socialist formations present since 1899 rallied to the new party. By 1908, the S.P.C. was reporting branches in Fredericton and McAdam, New Brunswick, and in industrial Cape Breton. The socialists quickly realized that the main challenge to their hegemony over the left in the Maritimes was working-class interest in independent labour formations. H. H. Stuart, a tireless socialist organizer living in Fredericton, was worried by the rise of the I.L.P. in Saint John, Moncton, Fredericton, and Halifax. Calling the I.L.P. "half-baked and side tracking", he chastized labour party spokesmen for emphasizing "a long string of immediate demands" that failed to go to the root of the problems of capitalism. Only by "demanding the nationalization of the land and machines of the country", Stuart argued, could the working class



improve its position. Stuart was careful not to include the C.L.P. in his condemnation of the I.L.P. He was convinced that only the absence of a socialist organizer in the area had prevented the C.L.P.'s early affiliation to the S.P.C. Stuart found evidence for this claim in the preamble to the C.L.P.'s list of specific demands, which he interpreted as a call for the ultimate collectivization of "all the means of production, distribution and exchange".<sup>27</sup>

As events during the next year demonstrated, Stuart's reflections were based on more than wishful thinking. At the May 1909 meeting of the C.L.P., Springhill's Jules Lavenne introduced a resolution calling on the C.L.P. to affiliate with the S.P.C. Delegates decided to put the question to a general membership referendum. When the vote was counted the members had declared themselves two to one in favour of Lavenne's position. In a meeting held shortly thereafter, the C.L.P. shelved the question until after the 1909 election and the matter did not come before the C.L.P. until May 1910.<sup>28</sup> Over the preceding 12 months, labour strife and vigorous S.P.C. organizing made the final decision academic. First, the long and bitter miners' strike continued into the new year and, as at least one socialist recognized, the company's and government's intransigence "is helping them [S.P.C.] not a little bit". The S.P.C. militants tried to use the general working-class unrest in the area to the greatest advantage. In Amherst they made an impressive debut in the spring and summer of 1909 when janitor Albert Collins took the initiative and formed an S.P.C. branch in Amherst. Writing to the Western Clarion, the party's official organ, Collins explained that he and ten other comrades had raised

among themselves the five dollar charter fee. "We have slipped our moorings and set out sails for what may prove to be a stormy voyage." In March, Collins updated his report with the information that party membership now approached 40. He was overwhelmed by the response: "it is surprising to find so many people who have for years been nursing the principles of Socialism within their thinking chambers", Collins mused, "and have never made a move till [sic] now". He predicted that the Amherst S.P.C. branch would soon be larger than that of Glace Bay, the stalwart of the Maritime socialist movement.<sup>29</sup>

The fortunes of the Amherst socialist movement improved further with the arrival of Roscoe Fillmore in the area. Fillmore, an inspiring speaker and seemingly tireless organizer, was already emerging as the most influential socialist in the Maritimes outside of Cape Breton. Born in rural Albert County, New Brunswick in 1887, Fillmore became acquainted with socialism while working in Portland, Maine and during his trips to western Canada on the harvest excursions of the early 1900s. In 1908, already a member of the Socialist Party of America, Fillmore joined the S.P.C. and set off from his Albert County home on what he later described as "missionary expeditions" across the Maritimes. His trade as a nurseryman allowed Fillmore to spend extended periods of time in Amherst in the pre-war period. Fillmore's uncle, W. A. Fillmore, opened a nursery near Amherst and hired his nephew to supervise its planting. The young man was delighted about the prospect of locating in industrial Amherst. "I was in Amherst a great deal and that pleased me mightily", Fillmore

reminisced in his autobiography, "as I was never happier than when in contact with wage workers and expounding my doctrines".<sup>30</sup>

Fillmore joined the S.P.C. campaign to win the allegiance of the C.L.P. Through the letters' column of the Eastern Labor News, he appealed to C.L.P. supporters to drop their list of immediate demands, or "sops" as he called them, and to "insist on the absolute emancipation of your class from wage slavery". Finally, Fillmore urged Cumberland county workers to attend the socialist rallies planned for the summer months, to better inform themselves on the principles of socialism. Collins, Fillmore, and other local socialists convened many of these meetings themselves, distributing literature and making speeches whenever the occasion permitted. On 2 July 1909, Fillmore held an impromptu rally at the Amherst bandstand, lecturing to a crowd assembled to hear a concert by the military band. When the concert began, the S.P.C. cadre and 100 others marched off to the S.P.C. headquarters to continue their meeting. On this the eve of Wilfred Gribble's planned week-long stay in town, Fillmore announced with unbridled optimism that Amherst "is seething with revolt".<sup>31</sup>

The arrival of Gribble, an S.P.C. national organizer, in late July 1909 added to the already growing interest among the Amherst working class in socialist ideas. Reports of his week-long stay in Amherst shed considerable light on the S.P.C.'s message and on its recruitment and educational tactics. Gribble presented workers with an introductory course on socialism during his time in Amherst. In the 13 different lectures he delivered over seven days, Gribble condemned the capitalist system, spoke on the futility of independent labour

politics, and issued a clarion call for socialist internationalism. A typical evening in Gribble's programme began at 7:30 p.m. in Victoria Square. Robert Jones, a woodworker in Canadian Car and Foundry, spoke first and his booming voice soon attracted a large crowd. Victoria Square, one observer noted, suddenly took on the appearance of London's Hyde Park. Gribble then addressed the gathering on "Capitalism and Wage Slavery", a subject he pursued for over an hour. When the sun set and the evening air began to cool, the audience was invited to continue the educational meeting in the nearby S.P.C. "headquarters". Once inside the hall, the comrades and the curious were treated to another Gribble oration. "Socialism and the Socialist Movement" was the organizer's concern for the next hour or more. The last 30 minutes of the meeting were devoted to problems of the local socialist organization, which was followed by adjournment at 11:00 P.M.<sup>32</sup> Gribble's message, like that of all S.P.C. spokespersons, was seldom clouded with ambiguity. Capitalism was incapable of improving the condition of the working class, Gribble warned, and workers therefore had to prepare themselves

to use their political power to place themselves in possession of the means of production and so become masters of their product and become industrially free for the first time in history by the institution of a classless system of society in which all would be owners and all would be workers in some way useful to society in general.<sup>33</sup>

The zealous lobbying of the C.L.P. by Amherst and other Cumberland socialists convinced most observers that its May 1910 convention would endorse the S.P.C. Dan McDonald, George McLeod, and John Logan led the Amherst delegation to the convention and spoke in support of the

S.P.C. Seaman Terris captured the sentiments of the majority at the meeting by comparing the struggle between the U.M.W. and the P.W.A. with the decision facing the C.L.P. vis a vis the S.P.C. The C.L.P. "bears the same relation to the Socialist party", Terris reasoned, "as does the old sectional P.W.A. to the international U.M.W. It is obsolete". When the vote was finally called, the delegates dissolved the C.L.P. and transferred its assets to the S.P.C. Fillmore, who attended the convention to bolster the socialists' argument for the S.P.C., convened a socialist meeting as soon as the C.L.P. announced its decision. A Cumberland S.P.C. branch was founded with Fillmore as chairman and William Watkins as secretary-treasurer. Its primary purpose was to co-ordinate the electoral activities of the county's five S.P.C. branches. Fillmore expressed satisfaction with the day's events in a report to the Western Clarion. He also defended the Cumberland members against possible attacks on the sincerity of their recent conversion to socialism, an issue that was always a matter of concern to the S.P.C. "There are reformers in Nova Scotia, and in fact in the whole Maritimes lots of 'em", Fillmore acknowledged, "but dam [sic] few are to be found in the Cumberland movement".<sup>34</sup>

An analysis of socialist supporters in Amherst before World War One shows that the base and leadership of the movement was overwhelmingly working class. Among the almost 50 socialists identified in Amherst, the majority were skilled or semi-skilled working men. Moulders, machinists, tailors, millmen, carmen, and shoemakers predominated within the movement. Unskilled workers also joined and several, like labourers Albert Collins and Clarence Babcock, and letter carrier G. W.

Walsh, filled important leadership roles. Hillman Farnell, a payroll clerk at Canadian Car and Foundry, and bank worker Rockwell, son of a tailor also active in the S.P.C., also were prominent in the socialist movement. Information on women's participation in the S.P.C. is scarce, though Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Godfrey, who together with their husbands had immigrated from Scotland, were active in the organization. Several other women who appeared on socialist lists after 1914 probably were involved in the pre-war movement. In 1915 a Mrs. Zora Richardson corresponded with the Western Clarion on behalf of the Amherst S.P.C. It is likely that she owned the boarding house for itinerant socialists that was used as the union headquarters during the 1919 general strike.<sup>35</sup> Close links existed between the socialists and the local labour movement, in which several occupied key leadership positions. Tailors Dan McDonald and George McLeod, shoemakers Thomas Carr and John Legere, and machinist R. Feltmate were prominent in the A.T.L.C. Many other socialists participated in the unionization struggles in their shops, including carworks employees blacksmith Zabred McLeod, carmen John Ball and William McInnis, moulders John Logan and Thomas Godfrey, and labourer Clarence Babcock. The carworks was the center of the socialist movement in Amherst and a conservative estimate places 50 percent of the socialists in the carworks before World War One. Gribble remarked favourably on this situation because it ensured stability in the local S.P.C., even if some members were forced to leave town to find work. The close links between the socialists and the union movement stood in contrast to official S.P.C. policy. Gribble's declaration that unions were of "no use to the

working-class because they stood for the present system of industry" was not heeded in Amherst or elsewhere in the Maritimes. Workers recognized the pressing need for workplace organization and ignored the S.P.C.'s stated position on the subject. It was the shop floor experience, in fact, that brought many working-class residents to approach socialist ideas sympathetically.<sup>36</sup>

One common feature shared by the majority of the early socialists was that their recruitment to the socialist cause occurred after their arrival in Amherst. This was true of the skilled workers like McDonald, McLeod, and John Ball, as well as semi-skilled workers and labourers. Labourer Joseph Mitchell, son of a British blacksmith, for example, moved from England to Cumberland County with his wife and their family in the early 1900s. He first found employment in the Chignecto Mines but a layoff forced him to take a position at the carworks. Though the Mitchell family relocated in Amherst, Joseph Mitchell spent much of his time between 1908 and 1918 living elsewhere in the county. Like other labourers with little job security, Mitchell faced unsteady work in the carshops and sought temporary employment around the mines. Mitchell became a socialist while an employee at the carworks, joining the S.P.C. in about 1909. He quickly established himself as a valued member of the local socialist movement, remaining active until his death many years later. Another typical biography of the pre-war socialists was that of Arthur McArthur. He left his rural Albert County home to find employment as a carpenter in the carworks during Amherst's great expansionary period in the early 1900s. McArthur participated in the 1911 founding of the Carmen's Union and

was likely already an S.P.C. member. Some influential party members did arrive in Amherst thoroughly committed to socialism. Roscoe Fillmore was one such individual, but there were others; moulders John Logan and Tom Godfrey and their wives for example, learned their socialism in Scotland before emigrating to Nova Scotia. Local socialists shared another characteristic in addition to their working class origins and conversion to socialism while living in Amherst. They were typically Anglo-Saxon in ethnic origin, though Maritime born. It is important to note, however, that this was not true of all Amherst socialists. John Legere, for example, who was prominent in both the shoeworkers' union and the S.P.C., was Acadian. Frank Burke, who shared Legere's origins, worked as a union organizer among the carmen in 1911 and also was associated with the S.P.C.<sup>37</sup>

Local socialists sustained interest in the movement through a variety of activities. During the long months between the visits of prominent S.P.C. personalities, Amherst members held their own agitational and propaganda meetings. The Western Clarion and Cotton's Weekly kept the local socialists in touch with the theoretical debates and institutional developments current within the national movement. Hustling subscriptions for these two movement newspapers received high priority and Thomas Carr, John Ball, Dan McDonald, George McLeod, and Clarence Babcock were among Amherst's leading "sub-hustlers". Local socialists adopted many of the customs of the international socialist movement with which they identified themselves. On Sundays and holidays they wore red neckties or scarves, celebrated the First of May, signed their correspondence "Yours in Revolt", and established



libraries containing many of the socialist classics of the era.<sup>38</sup> Thus by the spring of 1910 the growing socialist cadre in Amherst appeared ready to offer a meaningful challenge to the labourist domination over the ideology and institutions of the working class. The arena for this struggle was to be in the union movement and the labour party.

The craft orientation of the pre-war trade unions limited the socialist influence within them. McDonald, Carr, Feltmate, and other socialists in the A.T.L.C. represented a minority position on the central labour body. Their desire to overcome the exclusionary practices of most A.T.L.C. affiliates met with limited success. Feltmate found that even the machinists within his own union were not particularly flexible on the subject. Most socialists were excluded from the deliberations of the A.T.L.C. by virtue of the fact that they were not skilled workers or were not unionized. The carmen's union, which because of its very size could have wielded considerable power, had collapsed by the time the A.T.L.C. was formed. The debate between the socialists and labourists proved to be a much more evenly weighted contest in the political sphere. That, at least, was the attitude of the working men attending a meeting in May 1911 to discuss labour's participation in the forthcoming provincial election. The 100 men at the event engaged in a lively and lengthy discussion on how the labour movement could effectively influence the election's outcome. Positions had polarized since 1909 when a similar meeting had endorsed the C.L.P. The contrasting positions apparent in the speeches at the May 1911 meeting went to the crux of labourist dilemma in Amherst. First,

the S.P.C. had recruited the staunchest advocates of labour party politics in 1909. And those leaders now urged Amherst's working-class voters to support S.P.C. nominees, Landry and Terris.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, the more conservative trade unionists, who had been uneasy with the C.L.P. experiment from the very beginning, proposed to return to the bourgeois parties. T.P. Lowther, for example, abandoned his flirtation with the labour party and offered to campaign for the Liberals. James Duxberry, a C.L.P. charter member, also returned to the Liberal fold in 1911. Prominent working men spoke on the Conservative's behalf; indeed, the Tories had recruited a number of popular unionists to their party. Well known A.T.L.C. leader George Sutherland, I.M.U. spokesmen Charles Carter, and Clarence Josie, a carmen's union activist, politicked enthusiastically for the Conservatives. A vote at the conclusion of the evening decided against offering independent labour candidates in the election. Both the advocates of the bourgeois parties and the socialists considered the outcome a victory. The socialists were particularly elated because they had triumphed over their arch rivals, the I.L.P. sympathizers. As the provincial election of June 1911 approached, the S.P.C., represented by its two popular candidates, readied itself to make a serious intervention into the campaign. A five-person committee appointed from the S.P.C. branches in Cumberland had been preparing for the election for almost a year.<sup>40</sup>

Before the June election, however, a number of factors intervened to dampen the socialists' prospects in Cumberland County. The Springhill miners' struggle no longer remained a source of

working-class solidarity because the miners were by now thoroughly demoralized by their 21 month strike. Their return to work in May on the company's terms was a defeat of such magnitude that the miners never fully recovered from it in the years ahead. The S.P.C. had all but lost one of its two most important bases in Cumberland.<sup>41</sup> Divisiveness among the Cumberland socialists and within the national party also played a role in the S.P.C.'s demise in the election. In western Canada, the S.P.C. fell prey to factional disputes as early as 1910. Though Maritime socialists escaped much of this conflict, they found themselves part of a weakened socialist party. A much more serious problem for the Cumberland S.P.C. than these national developments, though, was its own internal political bickering.<sup>42</sup> The controversy centered on the candidacies of Landry and Terris. Landry was not an S.P.C. member and the party's Maritime Executive refused to accept his nomination until after he joined the organization. When Landry apparently refused to do so, a divisive debate concerning the "ideological purity" of Landry and his supporters erupted. The struggle raged through the spring and summer of 1911 and forced the S.P.C.'s withdrawal from the June provincial and September federal general elections.<sup>43</sup>

The first hint of the developing controversy appeared not in the pages of the Western Clarion, as might have been expected, but in a May issue of the Daily News. Jules Levenne, a staunch Landry supporter, was accused by the newspaper's Liberal editor of secretly pursuing a "merger" between the socialists and the Conservatives. Fillmore investigated the charge and delivered a report to the S.P.C.'s Maritime

Executive that accused Lavenne of "occupying the same political couch as Mr. N. Curry". Landry also felt the sting of Fillmore's pen, which identified Landry as "one of the shining lights of Canadian Queer Hardieism, as a representative of the I.L.P.". The charges against these two prominent labour leaders left the Cumberland S.P.C. confused and disorganized. When the provincial and federal elections were held the S.P.C. failed to offer candidates in either campaign.<sup>44</sup> The absence of either a socialist or labour candidate in the elections left the situation open to the Conservatives and Liberals to campaign in their pre-1909 styles. The Liberals retained the provincial seats with few problems having regained much of the Labour vote lost to the C.L.P. in 1909. In the federal contest, the incumbent M.P., E.N. Rhodes, found himself in a potentially difficult campaign to keep the seat for the federal Conservatives.<sup>45</sup>

Rhodes' opponent in the October federal election was the formidable Hance Logan, who had decided to re-enter politics. Logan, drawing on his previous popularity among working-class voters, emphasized labour issues in the campaign. T.P. Lowther, Amherst's "labor mayor" criss-crossed the county with Logan, and the News and Sentinel published a full reproduction of a letter sent to Logan by A. B. Lowe, President, International Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. Lowe appealed to local "wage earners" to elect Logan, "who has done so much to increase the comforts of the homes of our people". Logan also tried to revive his populist image by portraying the election as a campaign "between the people and the Big Interests". The Liberals in Cumberland could not, however, overcome Rhodes' popularity and their

government's advocacy of reciprocity. In 1911 working-class voters opted for the Conservatives and protectionism. Logan lost in all three Amherst polls but the desertion of his working-class support in poll three was the most revealing of his problem. Logan received only 49 percent of the votes cast in poll three, a decline of ten percentage points since his last election.<sup>46</sup>

The divisions between the socialists and labourists in national politics did not preclude co-operation in municipal matters. In Amherst council elections between 1910-1914, the labour movement displayed an admirable degree of unity. Issues that came before the town council provided labour with a common set of objectives. Collaboration among the various forces in the labour movement proved beneficial to labour on questions like the protection of the local labour market, extension of the franchise, and the expansion of utility services into working-class neighbourhoods. In 1910-1912, the municipal independent labour party, which included the socialists, offered a "labour ticket" in the February town council elections. The next year the labour party withdrew from the election but returned in 1914 with a campaign sponsored by the Amherst Socialist Debating Society. During the four years that the labour party formally intervened in the elections, it nominated 12 candidates for 15 positions and won six of these seats. The labour party nominees represented a wide variety of working-class occupations: two each from among machinists, carpenters, and labourers; and one each from among the moulders, tailors, painters, cabinet makers, and carmen.

In February 1911, the labour party enjoyed its strongest representation on town council since 1905. Carpenter John Forsythe's election to council gave labour three seats on the six member board because the two labour councillors elected in the previous year each had one year remaining in their term of office. The victory of T.P. Lowther over J. M. Curry also meant that labour was assured of a sympathetic hearing in the mayor's office.<sup>47</sup> Labour took advantage of its political influence to bring two questions with special symbolic significance before council in 1911. The first addressed the restriction of the municipal franchise to ratepayers whose taxes were not in arrears. John Logan, an S.P.C. member and secretary of the carmen's union, raised the issue on his union's behalf in March. Logan explained that the restriction disenfranchised working-class voters and should be removed from the elections act. Because this change first required an amendment to a provincial statute, the carmen demanded that the town council petition the House of Assembly to pass such enabling legislation. Labour councillors Henry McCleave and John Forsythe introduced a motion to this effect, which the council eventually accepted. The town council's declaration on this matter did not sit well with the business opposition. When they later recaptured control of council, the motion was rescinded.<sup>48</sup> Another controversial issue that pitted labour against business was T.P. Lowther's request that the mayoralty become a salaried position. Middle-class ratepayers opposed the idea and rallied their forces to defeat the motion at a town meeting called to discuss the request.<sup>49</sup>

The issue of the mayor's salary, the franchise questions, and several other factious labour proposals heightened interest in the 1912 town council elections. The labour party was determined to retain its influence in municipal affairs and mounted an aggressive campaign. Dan McDonald and William Lowerison, a veteran of the 1905 labour slate, chaired meetings to nominate a labour ticket. When agreement on the slate was finally reached, its composition clearly deferred to the political and ethnic variances within the Amherst working class. Labourer Edward Chandler, the secretary of the International Order of Odd Fellows and the Sons of England, joined socialist Clarence Babcock on the labour party's ticket. Frank Burke, a carpenter and leader of the carmen's union, filled out the slate. Burke was the first working-class labour spokesman to emerge from within the Acadian community. Though sympathetic to the socialist cause, Burke felt most comfortable with more traditional independent labour party position and his presence on the slate balanced that of Babcock's.<sup>50</sup>

Burke's popularity extended beyond the boundaries of the Acadian community. Admired among many labour people because he was "a real agitator for things like better wages and hours", Burke's militancy did not endear him to business opposition. In his nomination speech to the labour party, the Acadian unionist "brought down the house" with his defence of working-class participation in municipal politics. Charges against him and other working people that the financial wizardry of town government was beyond their comprehension, Burke argued, were silly in the extreme. Any working-class citizen "who lived in Amherst on \$1.50 per day, continued honest and paid all his bills", Burke

assured his audience, "knew more about financing than the men," who enjoyed the luxuries of wealth.<sup>51</sup> Despite the labour party's best effort, it was no match on election day for a rejuvenated business opposition. The results of that February's polling swept the labour party off the town council and so demoralized its members that they did not contest the 1913 elections.<sup>52</sup> But several events during the course of the year re-awakened labour's interest in the policies of the town council and, by late 1913, plans were afoot to launch a labour party ticket in the 1914 municipal contest.

### III

The year 1914 proved to be one of paradox for Amherst workers. On the one hand, the local labour movement entered the year enjoying a degree of popularity among the working-class that it had never before experienced. Real organizational breakthroughs were being made in Amherst and more workers were unionized than ever before. A vigorous trades and labour council pestered reluctant tradesmen to organize and labourists and socialists co-operated in the labour party, working together to establish a forceful working-class presence in local government. Though skilled workers dominated the unions, the voices of the semi-skilled workers and labourers were being heard more and more often in the deliberations of the labour movement. Finally, the Acadian working-class community was now represented within the labour movement's leadership. On the other hand, this working-class solidarity was being forged in an atmosphere of increasing



desperation. In 1914, three protracted wage disputes occurred between the workers and management of the carworks. The strikers were not seeking substantial wage increases but rather were defending themselves against planned wage reductions. Other workers soon faced similar attacks on their working conditions, as the pre-war depression worsened. By the end of 1914, despair had replaced the earlier optimism of Amherst working-class leaders, and the labour movement once again was in retreat.

Political debate in Amherst intensified in October 1913 when the town council signed a contract for police uniforms with a Montreal company. The decision angered local tailors and Dan McDonald raised the issue with the A.T.L.C. An ad hoc committee was struck to investigate the actions of the town council. When it reported to the A.T.L.C. on the circumstances surrounding the decision, the committee was further delegated to meet with the town council. At the next town council meeting, the A.T.L.C. delegation, led by Dan McDonald, "put up such a strong fight" that the councillors reversed their earlier decision and awarded the uniform contract to the local tailors. Afraid that the town council might try such action again sometime in the future, the A.T.L.C. undertook efforts to win direct representation on council in the next year's election. The A.T.L.C. worked within the labour party to prepare a labour slate that included A.D. Landry, Howard Ripley, a union carpenter and former councillor, and Doctor B. Goodwin. Overtures from the Moral and Temperance League to organize a coalition for the election were rejected as they had been in the pre-1908 period. Division rose within the labour party between the

labourists and socialists over the candidacy of Landry and Goodwin. When the two factions could not agree on a compromise, a divided labour party withdrew from election.<sup>53</sup>

The Amherst Socialist Debating Society announced soon afterward that it intended to proceed independently of the labour party and offer a socialist slate in the election. Machinist Leon Knowlton sought the mayoralty and the three council nominees included Clarence Babcock, tailor A. C. Rockwell, and an Anthony Caine. The Debating Society adopted the platform of the Socialist Democratic Party of Canada and distributed 3-4,000 copies of their manifesto during the campaign. Addressing themselves to "the wage earners of the town of Amherst", the socialists declared their commitment to the "International Socialist movement". They called on all workers "to organize into a political party to seize the reins of government and transform all capitalist property into collective property of the working class". Appended to the document was a list of specific reform proposals that the socialists promised to enact. Public ownership of utilities, extension of public services into all areas of the town, single tax legislation, and free school textbooks, were among the items on the Debating Society's list. A final statement written by members of the Debating Society appeared in the Daily News on the eve of the election. Tomorrow, the address began, "you will be called on to vote for the suppression or continuance of the system that makes the rich richer and the poor poorer". Capitalism itself, the socialists argued, had to be destroyed because

our present social system puts profits ahead of human  
life and while it exists the Golden Rule is

impracticable. We are not making a personal canvass for votes. We are leaving it to the discretion of the workers themselves to vote for their emancipation.<sup>54</sup>

The socialists' clarion call to the working class spurred the business opposition into action. A well attended public meeting nominated a Citizen's Ticket of Dr. Avard, Dr. D. A. McCully, Peter Gordon, a commercial traveller, and R. K. Smith, a prominent lawyer. Avard and the three council candidates identified themselves as the "representatives of all citizens", unlike the socialists, whom the Citizens warned, were agents of "one class". The composition of this group defending the capitalist system in 1914 was interesting from several perspectives. Its professional middle-class origins contrasted with that of the system's defenders in earlier times. Before 1908, it was impossible to imagine a business slate whose ties with the manufacturing elite were so tangential as those of the Citizens in 1914. This shift in personnel was, of course, a reflection of the changes in the town's social structure that had been initiated by the integration of the Amherst economy into a monopoly capitalist system. In 1914, Avard and his supporters conducted what the Daily News described as a "very well organized" campaign and, under such circumstances, the election results were never in any serious doubt. The Citizens topped the polls for the town council seats and Avard became the new mayor.<sup>55</sup>

The working-class vote split in the election. Howard Ripley, running as "an independent" and promising to "work in the interest of all classes", out-pollled the three socialist town council candidates. However, the socialist support for Knowlton was not inconsequential.

He drew over 360 votes compared to Avar's 917, and on a revolutionary platform at a time when franchise regulations mitigated against working-class participation in elections.<sup>56</sup> Finally, the 1914 Socialist Debating Society intervention in Amherst politics was perhaps the only instance in the pre-war period that a straightforward socialist slate was offered in a town council election in the Maritimes. The Citizens councillors recognized the importance of their victory. In a symbolic act of its own, taken soon after the election, the new town council urged the provincial government to resist any demands aimed at broadening the municipal franchise. The professional middle-class individuals and small businessmen who now dominated the local political institutions had staunchly defended capitalism against the socialist attack. In this fight the lines were clearly drawn. But striking carmen soon raised issues for the middle class that did not allow for such ideological purity.

Attention shifted to the Canadian Car and Foundry shops in late March 1914. Over 125 employees in the rolling mill struck the company that spring in the first of three confrontations. By late 1913, Canadian Car and Foundry was sliding into a serious financial crisis as the pre-war depression slowed railway development across the country. The company's response to this exigency affected Amherst workers in several respects. First, the Montreal directors proceeded to rationalize the company's productive capacity, which tended to concentrate production in central Canada. Second, profitable operations in the Amherst carworks were to be made even more profitable through reductions in the cost of production. Management decided that

the quickest results in this respect could be achieved through wage reductions. Canadian Car and Foundry officials were confident that high unemployment in the area would force their workers to accept the company's demands. The men in the rolling mill were the first to feel the effects of Canadian Car and Foundry's new policy when their wages were reduced by 10 percent in late March. In opposition to what the company had predicted though, the mill workers struck when notified of the reductions. In so far as the mill men were not unionized in 1914, the two week strike was a spontaneous response to the company's announcement. On the other hand, tension had been building in the carworks since before 1910 and over this time the workers had established an informal leadership network to direct their union drives and strikes.<sup>57</sup>

The strikers' solidarity, in the face of adverse economic times, arose from their feeling that management had stepped well beyond the boundaries of fair play. The struggle had symbolic as well as economic significance for the strikers. First, the wage reductions represented management's breaking of a trust with the workers. Four years earlier, N. Curry had negotiated a wage reduction with the employees on the premise that it was to be the final reduction and Canadian Car and Foundry's disregard for this agreement angered the mill men in 1914. The workers were also upset by management's policy of ignoring what the strikers argued was the "regular wage scale" accepted across the continent. Amherst wages generally fell below this standard already, one observer remarked, and the carworks' schedule was the lowest among the local shops. Thus it was also a defensive strike. "The men were

not asking for an increase", a striker explained, "but merely to have the present rates maintained". One further explanation for the confrontation centered on a control question. Over the previous several years, the company had pressured the skilled workers, the heaters and roughers, to increase production. The skilled work men met their new quotas by taking on assistants, whom they paid out of their own wages. Output increased, the men argued, but wages fell because of the expense of paying for the help. The local manager's admission that, in Montreal, the company paid the helpers' wages further inflamed the Amherst workers' sense of the situation's injustice.<sup>58</sup>

The mill men's strike won widespread community support and in this respect contrasted with earlier labour struggles. Reports in the Daily News gave the strikers favourable coverage throughout the dispute. The "moderate and fair terms" of the men's demands, the editor commented, made it "a matter of deep regret that some basis of agreement could not be arrived at". Mayor Avaré intervened on the workers' behalf and ultimately played a critical role in negotiating a compromise settlement. Working-class support for the strike was also solid but less surprising than that emanating from within the middle class. The sympathetic hearing from those usually associated with the interests of capital raised a number of curious eyebrows in Amherst. By 1914, small businessmen, merchants, and professionals were beginning to share some of labour's suspicions about the sincerity of Canadian Car and Foundry's commitment to Amherst. Their relationships to the company became increasingly ambivalent because corporate decisions continually obtruded into local businessmen's efforts to stabilize the town's

economy. Avar's intervention helped the strikers to negotiate a favourable settlement. Canadian Car and Foundry agreed to halve its original 10 percent reduction and promised the full restoration of the pre-strike wage schedules in two months. The mill men's victory revived interest among the carworkers in industrial unionism and apparently discussions in this direction occurred over the next few months. Such an organization did not emerge, however, until after World War One.<sup>59</sup>

The advantages of industrial unionism were demonstrated to the car-workers in a different manner during the summer of 1914. On 11 May, the company posted news of more wage reductions but it obviously had changed its strategy in light of the March confrontation. This time management singled out small groups of less strategically placed production workers for the reductions. Only eight sheet metal workers and 18 machinists received reduction notices from the company, which announced wage cuts of as much as 15 percent. The announcement sparked an immediate strike by the affected employees and another 12-15 machinists launched a sympathy strike. Several days later, the sheet metal workers returned to work on the company's terms but the machinists held out, hoping that their action would force management to rescind the reductions.<sup>60</sup> The machinists were the only unionized employees in the carworks and the struggle soon became a test of will on the part of both sides to the dispute. It had been the fear of wage reductions that had led the machinists to join the I.A.M. in August 1913. When Canadian Car and Foundry finally imposed the reductions in May 1914, the union's existence was being challenged.

The machinists complained that the company was trying to make an already profitable operation even more profitable by decreasing wages. Machinists in Amherst already made less than those in other areas, the strikers argued, and the reductions meant that they would not be making a "living wage". Because "labour is plentiful", the machinists noted, the company thought that it could impose reductions at will, but, they said, this would not be "looked upon by the public as an act of justice". The local carworks' manager ignored the workers' appeals for justice and proceeded to hire non-union machinists. His strategy was simply to deny the very existence of the dispute. "There is not or has not been anything that might be termed a strike amongst our Machinists", the Department of Labour was informed, and "we have all the help required in this Work and are operating our Machine Shop". Under these circumstances the union's defeat was almost inevitable. The strike lasted for a year until the union finally stopped financial support for the few remaining strikers. Over the 12 months, some men enlisted in the army, others drifted out of town, and an unknown number abandoned the union and returned to work. Canadian Car and Foundry found itself listed as a "scab shop", which later became a problem when it decided to pursue government munitions contracts.<sup>62</sup>

The machinists' strike in spring 1914 frightened other craft workers, who feared that they would soon face similar circumstances. As has been shown, it motivated some to organize and take a greater interest in the A.T.L.C. "The spirit of unionism that is developing so rapidly" in Amherst, as an international organizer wrote to his headquarters, grew partially from these concerns. Labour could not,



however, sustain this momentum. As the strike progressed and the company's position remained unchanged, the struggle became increasingly demoralizing for labour. The general economic conditions of 1914 though was the single most important factor in retreat of unions from the workplace. The abundant labour supply in the area significantly weakened the unions' bargaining power and, by the summer of 1915, the A.T.L.C. had collapsed into the ashes of the union locals. Only the Amherst Foundry moulders union managed to survive the depression.<sup>63</sup>

The setback that the Amherst labour movement experienced was not solely a local phenomenon. Across Canada, the pre-war depression forced labour into retreat and, by 1915, the militancy of the previous few years had seriously waned.<sup>64</sup> Socialists had other reasons to feel disillusionment besides the decline in labour activism. The declaration of war in August 1914 divided Socialists on the issue of internationalism; in an article entitled, "Keep the Issue Clear", Roscoe Fillmore lamented the collapse of international socialism with the advent of the war and the resurgence of bourgeois nationalism within the working class. World War One, Fillmore argued, caused "the apparent breaking up of the Socialist movement as constituted for the past years, the apparent abandonment by the workers in many lands of every pretense of class-consciousness". Tired and demoralized, many socialists drifted away from the movement to await the coming of a time more receptive to their ideas.<sup>65</sup>

The decline of unionism in Amherst in the early war years, should not be permitted to obscure the significant advances of the pre-war years. It is reasonable to assume that by the outbreak of World War

One, the majority of local factory workers had come in contact with the labour movement, either through its workplace organizing or political activities. The advantages of industrial solidarity over craft segmentation were demonstrated in the different outcome of the carmen's and machinists' strikes of 1914. During these years, working-class leaders gained in organizational and political experience, and this would influence their response to the new wave of organizing that began in 1918. Socialist ideas achieved a not insignificant airing in Amherst and presented the first real challenge to the popularity of the ideology of labourism. Socialists took a prominent role in union organizing and, in their own organizations, demonstrated that skilled workers and labourers could work together effectively. The events of 1909-1915 demonstrated that without such solidarity, at least at the workplace, the working-class could achieve little. On the other hand, the advance of monopoly capitalism, with its consequences for Amherst and other Maritime towns, made working-class solidarity an even more pressing need. At the outbreak of World War One, an influential cadre of class-conscious workers stood among the leaders of the Amherst labour movement. But socialism was not the ideology of the working class, which despite a solidarity deepened and broadened by the struggles of the pre-war years, was not yet convinced by the socialists' call for revolution.

Footnotes - Chapter IV

1. Eastern Labor News (henceforth E.L.N.), 13 September 1913.
2. Wayne Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution, 1889-1912", p. 51 makes the important argument that "craft skills and organization were not defeated by technological innovation or scientific management, per se, rather they were defeated by the sheer economic power of new forms of corporate organization and by the development of a centralized, integrated capitalist class capable of outlasting and thereby withstanding the 'annoyances' of craft unionism".
3. Labour Gazette, April 1908, June 1908, June 1909. Amherst News and Sentinel (henceforth N. & S.), 8 January 1909.
4. E.L.N., 1 October 1910.
5. Ibid., 3 December 1910.
6. Wayne Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution", p. 53, 64.
7. E.L.N., 23 July 1911; 13 July, 18 September, 2 November 1912; 7 June 1913.
8. Canadian Machinery, April 1905; August 1909, pp. 29-34 provides an illustrated discussion of the Robb Engineering facilities.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Machinist Monthly Journal (henceforth M.M.J.), July 1909.
12. Ibid.
13. Labour Gazette, December 1910; Labour Organizations in Canada, 1912, p. 159.
14. Labour Gazette, January 1911; E.L.N., 18 February 1911.
15. N. & S., 10 February 1911; Amherst, Minutes, 21 March 1911; N. & S., 2 June 1911; R. A. Fillmore, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, Dalhousie University Archives (henceforth Fillmore, manuscript).

16. American Federationist, March 1914; M.M.J., July 1909; Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes" and Stuart Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66 (Ottawa, 1968) offer overviews of the period. Because both studies concentrate on strikes per se, they tend to distort the organizational development of the movement. L.G., December 1912, June 1913.
17. E.L.N., 13 September 1913; Industrial Banner, 1 May 1914.
18. Industrial Banner, 1 May 1914.
19. Ibid., M.M.J., August 1914.
20. Industrial Banner, 1 May 1914; E.L.N., 27 September, 11 October 1913; Report to Labour Organizations in Canada (henceforth R.L.O.C.), 1913, p. 6; 1914, p. 128; 1915, p. 119.
21. Ibid.; Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings, 1914, 1915.
22. M.M.J., November 1914; E.L.N., 30 August 1913.
23. E.L.N., 27 September 1913.
24. Ibid., 27 September, 11 October 1913; P.A.C., MG. 27, V. 303, Strike 14 (23).
25. M.M.J., November 1914.
26. John Saville, "The Ideology of Labourism", pp. 213-226.
27. Western Clarion (henceforth W.G.), 19 December 1908. For an overview of the socialist movement in the Maritimes, see David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916" Labour/Le Travailleur, 4 (1979), pp. 85-113.
28. W.C., 11 June 1910; E.L.N., 18 June 1910.
29. E.L.N., 18 June 1910; W.C., 30 January, 20 March 1909.
30. Fillmore manuscript.
31. E.L.N., 22 May 1909, W.C., 17 July 1909.
32. Cotton's Weekly (henceforth Cotton's), 12 August 1909; D.Ns., 27, 28, 30, 31 July; 2 August 1909.
33. D.Ns., 27 July 1909. For a more thorough discussion of the S.P.C.'s theoretical position, see Frank and Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes", pp. 105-110.

34. E.L.N., 18 June 1910; W.C., 11 June 1910.
35. Biographical material has been compiled on the 50 socialists and approximately 100 other working-class activists from a variety of manuscript, newspapers, interviews, and other sources.
36. Cotton's, 12 August 1909; E.L.N., 18 September 1909.
37. James Mitchell Interview, Amherst, July 1976; Fillmore, manuscript; Winifred Bulmer Interview, Amherst 1976; Robert Fillmore Interview, Amherst, 1976.
38. In 1910 Cotton's claimed 1300 subscribers in the Maritimes, 1100 of whom lived in Nova Scotia. Cumberland County (553) gave the newspaper its strongest support in the region followed by Cape Breton and Victoria Counties (334) and Halifax County (99). For further information on the popularity of the socialist papers and for a discussion of the theoretical debates and their implications for the Maritimes, see Frank and Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes", p. 96; James Mitchell Interview, Amherst, 1976; Robert Fillmore Interview, Amherst, 1976, Winifred Bulmer Interview, Amherst, 1976.
39. N. & S., 2 June 1911.
40. Perry Rafus Interview, Amherst, 1976; W.C., 11 June 1910; N. & S., 1 September 1911.
41. Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes", pp. 29-30. Also see his "Workers' Control in Springhill, 1882-1927", Paper presented to the Annual Meetings of the Canadian Historical Association, Halifax, 1981, p. 38.
42. Frank and Reilly, "The Socialist Movement in the Maritimes", pp. 100-101. See also, A. Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919 (Toronto, 1977). pp. 53-97; and, Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, pp. 104-118.
43. W.C., 22 April, 2 June, October 1911.
44. N. & S., 2 June 1911, W.C., October 1911.
45. N. & S., 20 June 1911.
46. Ibid., 1, 5, 11 September 1911.
47. Ibid., 25 January, 4, 5 February 1910; 10 February 1911.
48. Amherst, Minutes, 21 March 1911.

49. Ibid., 6 July 1911.
50. N. & S., 26 January, 8 February 1912.
51. Perry Rafus Interview, Amherst, 1976; N. & S., 3 February 1911.
52. N. & S., 8 February 1912; 7 February 1913.
53. Industrial Banner, 28 November 1913; Amherst, Minutes, 21 October 1913; D.Ns., 3, 16 January 1914.
54. Cotton's, 26 February 1914; D.Ns., 2, 3, 16 January, 2 February 1914.
55. D.Ns., 2, 14 January, 14 February 1914.
56. Ibid., 14 February 1914; Amherst, Minutes, 20 April 1914.
57. "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #1914 RG 27, V. 303, P.A.C.
58. D.Ns., 6 April 1914.
59. Ibid., "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #1915 (15), V. 303, RG 27, P.A.C.; Perry Rafus Interview, Amherst, 1976.
60. "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #1914 (15) V. 303, RG 27, P.A.C..
61. M.M.J., September, October 1913. As both McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes" passim; and, David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work Technology, and Labour Struggles (Cambridge, 1979), passim, argue, the question of union recognition is fundamentally a workers' control question.
62. "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #1914 (23), V. 303, RG 27, P.A.C.; M.M.J., July 1914, September 1915, p. 837.
63. M.M.J., April 1915, p. 340.
64. Jamieson, Times of Trouble, pp. 158-160.
65. International Socialist Review, V. 15 (1914-15), p. 339.

## Chapter V

### The General Strike of 1919

On 19 May 1919 news of the Amherst general strike spread throughout Nova Scotia. "So far as it can be learned", the Sydney Record declared, "it is on practically the same lines as the one which has been paralyzing the city of Winnipeg for several days past".<sup>1</sup> Another editor worried that this eastern "replica of Winnipeg labour troubles" might spread to other towns in the Maritimes.<sup>2</sup> Strike leader Frank Burke did little to alleviate these fears when he "championed the One Big Union idea" before a large meeting of local workers the next evening and predicted that "the time would be here speedily when the Union would have full power from the Atlantic to the Pacific".<sup>3</sup> By the time of this speech, striking workers in Amherst had already closed the town's eight largest industries and local mechanics and civic workers had also joined the strike. For the next three weeks the life of the community was dominated by the general strike. Throughout Amherst, "the new 'One Big Union' buttons" became "conspicuous not only on the streets, but also in many establishments, worn by the employees...in sympathy with the men".<sup>4</sup> Most of the town's workers and their families attended daily union meetings to discuss the progress of the strike. In speeches and petitions the strikers advanced their demands: recognition of the Amherst Federation

of Labor - popularly known as the One Big Union, improved wages and working conditions, and a shorter working day. At first the employers refused "to deal in any way or form with the One Big Union as a whole", but after several weeks of often bitter negotiations they granted some, although certainly not all of their employees' demands.<sup>5</sup>

Vying for public attention with more dramatic episodes of class conflict that occurred in western Canada in 1919, the Amherst events received scant notice outside the Maritimes. Most contemporary commentators viewed the Amherst strike either as a sympathy strike to support Winnipeg workers or as a spontaneous protest against low wages and poor working conditions. Historians have treated the general strike in much the same manner.<sup>6</sup> In part, this indifference stems from the highly specialized regional interests of Canadian historians. While there have been a number of studies of western Canadian radicalism, the writing of Maritime and central Canadian working-class history has lagged behind.<sup>7</sup> But recent work suggests that what David Bercuson and others have seen as western exceptionalism in the early twentieth-century history of Canadian working-class radicalism may well have been a more generalized phenomenon. The political and organizational form of this activity varied from region to region and the tendency to divide the country into radical and conservative groups of workers perhaps misses the variety of working-class responses to post-war industrial capitalism.<sup>8</sup>

The Amherst general strike resulted from the interaction of two broad historical processes which began prior to World War One. First, the impact of the de-industrialization that accompanied the



centralization of power and wealth in central Canada affected Amherst's working class in immediate terms as working conditions, wages, and living standards fell behind those of other Canadian workers. Particularly ominous for local workers were the signs pointing toward the complete economic collapse of the town. Second, the local labour movement, partly because of previous failures, began to move toward a more radical response to these economic developments. In 1919, the merging of these two forces forged a new working class solidarity in Amherst, which found expression in the rise of the Amherst Federation of Labor, the renewed interest in socialist ideas and, of course, the three week general strike.

The demands of World War One brought an artificial buoyancy to Amherst's economy. Unemployment declined as men enlisted in the army and factories shifted to wartime production. The railway carworks concentrated on munitions, Robb Engineering built marine boilers and manufactured shells, the piano factory provided shell boxes, and the woolen mill and shoeworks thrived on government contracts. The armistice of November 1918 brought an abrupt halt to this activity. Manufacturers warned of a prolonged "readjustment period" and prepared to lay off staff, as unemployment again became a serious problem with the return to Amherst of 500 war veterans. While many local residents worried about the ability, and in some cases, the desire of local business to make the transition to peace-time production, the most heated debates were reserved for speculation over the future of the crucially important carworks.<sup>9</sup> Before the war Canadian Car and Foundry had suspended operations at the Amherst Malleable Iron Co. and,

in 1919, it announced the closing of plants in Halifax and New Glasgow. These actions were integral aspects of Canadian Car and Foundry's policy to concentrate production in central Canada. Supervised by Nathaniel Curry, former president of Rhodes and Curry, this policy threatened the existence of the Amherst carworks. As one observer remarked, "the days of the wooden cars" built in the Amherst works were passing as surely as the days of "wooden ships and iron men" had slipped into a bygone era. If Amherst was to remain an important center of the rolling stock industry, it needed modernization, especially equipment to construct pressed steel rolling stock. But while Canadian Car and Foundry modernized its Montreal facilities and constructed a new plant in Ft. William, it retreated from car building in Amherst.<sup>10</sup>

In 1919, the declining importance of the Amherst shops within Canadian Car and Foundry's corporate structure created three pressing problems for local workers: irregular employment, poor working conditions, and wage differentials favouring the company's Montreal employees. Finding steady employment was a serious concern for Amherst carbuilders. During the winter of 1918, the company operated with fewer than 200 men. Although this number increased to 800 in the spring months, this was still far below the 2,000 workers employed in 1905. Given the erratic employment practices of the company, even the men hired in 1919 had few prospects for steady work. Canadian Car and Foundry often raised the hopes of Amherst workers with announcements of massive hirings, followed several months later by equally impressive layoffs. Persistent rumours of one department or another being removed

to Montreal further heightened the workers' anxieties.<sup>11</sup> Working conditions in the carworks also created tension. In 1919 moulder William Rackham complained to the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations of high gas levels in the foundry and claimed that the factory inspector refused to heed his complaints. The commissioners were urged to tour the plant and discover for themselves that conditions "were far from being what the law demanded".<sup>12</sup> Although such conditions were common, Canadian Car and Foundry's decision not to direct new investment into its Amherst facilities undoubtedly aggravated the problem. The most contentious issue in 1919 was Canadian Car and Foundry's decision not to extend to Amherst the agreement it reached with its Montreal employees. The Montreal contract recognized the International Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, and adopted the "Whitley Advisory Council idea", the nine hour day with 10 hours pay, five day week, overtime pay, and layoffs by seniority. Considered a "fair and reasonable settlement" by the Amherst press and most local workers, all agreed that the contract should be extended to the eastern carmen, but the company refused to grant any concessions to its Amherst employees, except the nine hour day with no provision for 10 hours pay.<sup>13</sup>

The marginality of the Amherst shops to the financial health of the Canadian Car and Foundry strengthened significantly the company's negotiating position. Concentration of railway car production in Montreal made it easier, and probably necessary, given the relative decline in productivity in Amherst, to resist the contract demands of eastern workers. Management believed that the long layoffs of the

previous year and the threatened closure of the carworks, which finally occurred in the 1920s, would make the carmen reluctant to strike. Canadian Car and Foundry's successful attempts to curtail union organizing in the years preceding the war, especially the 1914 defeat of the International Association of Machinists, further bolstered its determination to bargain hard in 1919.<sup>14</sup> But the carmen were equally determined to win a contract consistent with that of Montreal workers and partly because of their previous failures at union organizing, they began to move toward a broad-based industrial unionism.

The same pressures that prodded the railway carmen toward a new form of union organization also affected other Amherst working-class families. In 1919 none of the town's eight major industries appeared to have a particularly stable future. Managerial attitudes toward the employees of the Toronto controlled Dominion Manufacturing Co. and the Truro, Nova Scotia dominated Stanfield's Co. varied little from those of Canadian Car and Foundry. Both Dominion Manufacturing's 1914 purchase of Amherst's Christie Woodworking Co. and Stanfield's takeover of the Amherst Woolen Mill during the war were mergers to improve profits through reduced competition and were followed by a rationalization of productive capacity that detrimentally affected Amherst and brought the eventual closing of the facilities.<sup>15</sup> Next to Canadian Car and Foundry, Stanfield's was the most aggressive company in the pursuit of this policy. Stanfield's resisted any attempts to improve working conditions which were easily the most deplorable in Amherst and wages among the lowest in town. The employees' response was predictable; between 1918-1920 they fought

three bitter strikes and they were the last employees to return to work during the general strike.<sup>16</sup> In 1919 a number of important Amherst industries, including Amherst Boot and Shoe, and Amherst Foundry remained ostensibly locally owned and managed. These companies continued to struggle against the forces that had pushed other local industries into mergers, although the Amherst Foundry had proposed, but failed to complete, a union with a Port Hope, Ontario, company. After the war, competition with central Canada's large scale "specialized factories" and a freight rate structure that was beginning to push local manufacturers even from traditional regional markets worried Amherst businessmen and during the general strike, local owners resisted the demands of their workers with the same determination as Amherst's absentee employers.<sup>17</sup>

In one way or another, the impact of regional underdevelopment touched the members of all classes in Amherst. For some individuals of the business class, like Nathaniel Curry, it brought participation in a financially attractive industrial merger and the continuation of a lucrative business career in Montreal.<sup>18</sup> Other manufacturers, like David Robb, who lacked Curry's shrewdness in the ways of high finance and probably retained some commitment to the region, faced the collapse of their industries before fierce central Canadian competition. Underdevelopment also posed a threat to the livelihood of many small businessmen, since factory closings and a declining population represented lost business to local merchants. Finally, the working-class families attracted to Amherst during the 1898-1908 boom faced a

most uncertain future, since local industries offered little long term security and few immediate benefits.<sup>19</sup>

Amherst's deepening economic crisis prompted a remarkable upsurge of local working-class activity in the immediate post-war years. In November 1918, while the Amherst Board of Trade sponsored armistice celebrations, labour spokesmen made their first public appeals to "workers of every grade" to join in the building of a new labour council. They argued that collective working-class action won industrial disputes and predicted "that so long as the employers can keep you [workers] in your unorganized condition, just so long will you be at their mercy".<sup>20</sup> This call for organization struck a responsive chord among Amherst's working-class population. In late November they formed the Amherst Federation of Labor, which by the end of the year had 700 members, making it the largest labour organization in the town's history. By April 1919, its ranks had doubled and, in the early days of the general strike, its membership must have numbered over 3,000.<sup>21</sup> Although it drew its leadership from the town's skilled workingmen, the Amherst Federation of Labor's organization diverged significantly from that of the short-lived 1904 and 1913 labour councils chartered by the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. The Amherst Federation of Labor rejected the exclusivism which had characterized the craft orientated pre-war movement and emphasized the organization of unskilled workers, the majority of whom had little trade union experience prior to 1919. The commitment to the unskilled went beyond union membership to include a genuine effort to reduce the wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers. In essence, the Amherst

Federation of Labor was an independent industrial union that grouped the employees of Amherst's eight largest manufacturing concerns into one organization. The union also included building trades and civic workers, tailors, garage mechanics, the unemployed, especially the veterans, and even a restaurant owner, boarding house proprietor, and a local doctor. As former member Lester Doncaster recalls, it "was supposed to be One Great Union, just one Great Union of all factories in Amherst".<sup>22</sup>

The initial structure of the Amherst Federation of Labor was relatively simple. Workers paid a "one dollar fee", which brought them the right to participate in the election of officers and all other affairs that came before the union.<sup>23</sup> Membership gave the workers, at least theoretically, an equal hand in setting contract demands, initiating strike action, and the ratification of all agreements reached with individual manufacturers. During a general strike the approval of all union members was required before one group of employees could return to work. Yet, while the Amherst Federation of Labor functioned as a single body, special units were established in several of the factories. Dane Lodge, the first and largest of these units, was organized early and may, in fact, have been organized simultaneously with the larger body. This lodge served as a workplace unit, giving special attention to the problems of union members employed in the carworks.<sup>24</sup> In May 1919 the Textile Workers' Union, a committee similar in purpose to Dane Lodge, was organized among the predominately female work force in the Amherst Woolen Mills.<sup>25</sup> It is not suprising that these units emerged first among the textile and

carworkers since conditions in these shops made them the most militant in Amherst. In late summer 1918, before the formation of the Amherst Federation of Labor, both factories had experienced strikes of several days duration.<sup>26</sup> The presence of such organizations also accounts, in part, for the cohesiveness of these employees throughout the general strike. In June 1919 they were the last workers to reach settlements with their respective employers. Neither lodge, of course, had any independent status and they were bound by the decisions of the larger organization.

Although the Amherst Federation of Labor was the largest trade union organization in the town there were several locals of national and international unions. The railway freight handlers belonged to the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees and some tradesmen supported the International Association of Machinists and Iron Molders' Union of America. The relationship between these unions and the Amherst Federation of Labor remains ambiguous. In the carworks, for example, most metal-workers joined the Amherst Federation of Labor, probably while maintaining membership in their respective internationals. Throughout the general strike these skilled workers participated in the deliberations of Dane Lodge and other Amherst Federation of Labor activities.<sup>27</sup> A different situation existed in the Amherst Foundry where the moulders continued to support a strong I.M.U. presence. First organized in the 1890s, these moulders enjoyed the longest and most successful history of any Amherst union and, as recently as April 1919, had emerged victorious in a struggle over wage



schedules. But although the Amherst Foundry moulders did not join the Amherst Federation of Labor, they struck in sympathy with the union.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand the metal-workers at Robb Engineering showed less support for the Amherst Federation of Labor. Robb's employed the largest concentration of metal-workers in Amherst, approximately 350 workers, perhaps one-half of whom were machinists and the remainder largely moulders and boilermakers. During the months leading up to the May confrontation, these workers gave what appeared to be lukewarm support to the Amherst Federation of Labor. Though they participated in the initial stoppage on 19 May, the men broke ranks with other workers and returned to work the following day. The reluctance of the Robb employees to follow the lead of the Amherst Foundry moulders and maintain a sympathy strike was influenced by several factors. First, and most significantly, the company's history of paternalistic management fostered, at the very least, the grudging loyalty of the work force into the 1920s. In fact, until 1919, Robb Engineering could boast that the company had never experienced a strike since its organization in 1891. This was a remarkable achievement since elsewhere metal-workers struggled against technological change and managerial reorganizaion of the work process. As early as 1909, the metal trades journal, Canadian Machinery, carried reports on Robb's experimentation with piece-work and the premium system. Two important components of a mangerial programme condemned by labour as "making of men what men are supposed to make of metals: machines".<sup>29</sup> Robb's dependency on shell contracts during the war also should have created workplace tensions, since munitions work elsewhere often brought new

initiatives by the employers in the areas of mechanization and the introduction of semi-skilled workers into positions controlled previously by tradesmen. This process of skill dilution generated numerous confrontations between management and labour in Canadian, British, and American metal shops. But at Robb Engineering these tensions never gave rise to a strike.<sup>30</sup>

David Robb embodied the paternalism that guided the company's industrial relations policies. Son of the industry's founder, active in local political and social affairs, and manager of Robb's for almost 20 years, David Robb was Amherst's most respected businessman. While guiding the company, Robb was reputed by some of his former employees to have "paid a fair day's wage", sponsored a sick benefit association, and maintained an apprenticeship program that "gave local boys a chance to get a skill and stay at home".<sup>31</sup> The company's economic problems were also important in keeping the men at work. Pushed from its traditional steam engine markets by large central Canadian suppliers of electric motors, Robb Engineering faced financial ruin in the pre-war years. After 1914, generous munitions contracts from the Borden government "gave 'Robbs' a new lease on life", but the company's problems returned with the war's end and David Robb embarked on a new "staple line of production to fill the gap that must naturally follow the cancellation of shell orders". The Robb-Baker tractor was expected to be the industry's new source of riches and in 1919 it was ready for production.<sup>32</sup> The message for the employees was simple: only an immediate shift to tractor building could avert bankruptcy. This situation was well known to the workers because, as Robb told the Royal

Commission on Industrial Relations, he "showed his men his accounts, and demonstrated to them...the urgency of the contracts upon which it [the company] was working".<sup>33</sup>

The relatively harmonious state of industrial relations at Robb Engineering contrasted sharply with conditions at the Canadian Car and Foundry shops. To many Amherst residents, Robb's situation demanded the cooperation of management and labour to avoid the collapse of the company, which everyone feared. In the carworks the crisis seemed to be the creation of corporate policy makers, not uncontrollable economic forces, as the relatively financially secure Canadian Car and Foundry was preparing for a possible flight from Amherst in search of its profits elsewhere. Such a program did little to instill any sense of loyalty among the company's Amherst employees and the carworks' history was dotted with bitter confrontations between management and labour, especially after the 1909 merger, when the general improvement in economic conditions gave rise to an upsurge in labour organizing. In the autumn of 1910, the carworkers formed Fair Play Lodge of International Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America (I.B.R.C.). While over 500 workers were brought into this industrial union, company hostility and internal strife brought its demise in early 1911.<sup>34</sup> After the I.B.R.C.'s collapse conditions in the carworks steadily worsened, as Canadian Car and Foundry used the recession of 1913 to introduce significant wage reductions for the workers. The rolling mill and sheetmetal workers struck on separate occasions but were successful only in limiting and not reversing wage reductions of almost 30 percent.<sup>35</sup> Buoyed by these victories, the carworks' management

prepared for a major confrontation with its machinists, the company's only unionized workers, and in 1914 announced a 5 to 15 percent wage reduction for one-half of the company's 33 machinists. Rather than accept these changes, the members of the International Association of Machinists (I.A.M.) struck in a dispute that lasted for more than a year and that was never formally settled because the company continued production with non-union workers, forcing the I.A.M. to call off the strike.<sup>36</sup>

The growth of conflict in the carworks during the pre-war years represented more than "simply conflicts over the size of the pay packet".<sup>37</sup> After the turn of the century, it was the railway and metal-working industries in North America that sought to maximize profits through the assertion of greater control over the labour process. Management perceived the deeply held artisanal culture of their craftsmen and skilled workers as the major obstacle to the success of these plans and, in response to the artisans' resistance to the erosion of workplace autonomy, tried to introduce efficiency schemes and mechanization programs to weaken the power of craft unions. The railway spearheaded this drive in North America and some of these changes were introduced into Amherst's railway carbuilding shops at least as early as 1913. It is significant that the earliest strikes occurred in the metal-working divisions, which bore the brunt of management's new assertiveness. Sheetmetal workers struck in August 1918 to protest working conditions and the firing of a moulder in early May 1919, for protesting the assignment of his helper to another job, almost sparked a general strike.<sup>38</sup> It was not only the metal-working

trades in the carworks that felt these pressures. Writing to the Industrial Banner in 1914, painter Irvin McGinn asserted that attempts by Amherst employers to use semi-skilled workers had turned many craftsmen toward unionization.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately for these workers, their rate of organizational success was no better than that of the metal-workers.

The almost continuous conflict in the carshops after 1909, and the workers' inability to maintain an effective craft union presence were important factors behind the growth of industrial unionism. Clashes with management prior to 1914 had demonstrated the ineffectiveness of craft unions in a factory employing as many as 25 different types of tradesmen and hundred of semi-skilled workers and labourers. Appearing before the Mather Commission in June 1919, Frank Burke told the commissioners that the "all-grades principle" of the Amherst Federation of Labor was adopted precisely because "craft unions were too easily dismissed by the employers".<sup>40</sup> Another prominent labour activist in Amherst, C.M. Arsenault of Pictou County, agreed that "craft unionism clings to the old ideas which are not keeping abreast of economic lines and advanced ideas".<sup>41</sup> Tradesmen in the carworks responded enthusiastically to calls for a broad-based industrial organization. Eleven of the 13 men holding executive rank in the Amherst Federation of Labor between November 1918 and July 1919 worked for Canadian Car and Foundry; five of them were carpenters and four others metal-workers. The president of the Amherst Federation of Labor, Frank Burke, a carpenter in the carworks; the vice-president, William McInnis, a moulder; and the recording secretary, Alfred Barton, another

carpenter, had held executive positions in Fair Play Lodge, I.B.R.C. prior to the way. This continuity of leadership in the Amherst labour movement was a crucial influence on the emergence of the Amherst Federation of Labor and it was not limited to the carworks. Others among the leadership cadre, like tailors Dan McDonald and John McLeod, had even longer records of involvement in local labour activities.<sup>42</sup>

The conditions that pressured workers towards new organizational forms were reinforced by a renewed interest in socialist ideas. Before World War One, Amherst socialists maintained locals of the Socialist and Social Democratic parties, offered socialist candidates in civic elections, and joined other trade unionists in sponsoring a labour candidate in 1909 provincial by-election.<sup>43</sup> The fracturing of the international socialist movement during the war discouraged many Amherst socialists, but by 1919 they had started once again to distribute radical literature, conduct street corner debates, and sponsor public forums. In February, a group of S.P.C. supporters invited Roscoe Fillmore, a prominent local socialist, to speak on "The Truth About Russia". In two lectures Fillmore accused the "capitalist press" of misrepresenting the revolution "because it was a purely working class movement" that meant "capitalist downfall everywhere if it succeeded in Russia".<sup>44</sup> This Amherst audience knew "little or nothing of the Russian situation", Fillmore observed, "and they drank it in like milk". Convinced that this "Amherst bunch contains the best blood of any part of the Maritime movement", Fillmore committed himself to organizing a new S.P.C. local among the "about 40 young energetic Reds" already in Amherst. This socialist presence was strongest in the

carworks, where Fillmore found little difficulty in selling "a roll of Red Flags and Soviets".<sup>45</sup>

. In April 1919, the sudden explosion of daylight saving time into a class question and the Amherst Federation of Labor's attempts to affiliate with the One Big Union reflected the increasingly militant mood of the working class. Daylight saving first came to Canada in 1918 as a federal war measure. When the question of continuing the practice was left to the municipalities the next year, Amherst's town council convened a public meeting in April to discuss the issue. While merchants and manufacturers championed the idea, many workers, increasingly suspicious of any initiatives from the business people, opposed it. To demonstrate their opposition, 300 Amherst Federation of Labor members marched to the public meeting and "hooted down" daylight saving proponents. Roscoe Fillmore charged angrily that daylight saving was a capitalist plot to lengthen the working day. Other workers complained bitterly that because business people did not have to rise early in the morning, they were "not in a very good position to understand what the earlier time actually meant in the average workingman's home". As a result of this confrontation, and despite the best efforts of daylight saving proponents to revive the question, the issue, the Daily News reported, was squashed "flatter than the proverbial pancake".<sup>46</sup>

It was during this debate that the leaders of the Amherst Federation of Labor established contact with the western One Big Union movement. In a telegram to Victor Midgley, secretary of the O.B.U. Central Executive Committee, the Amherst workers inquired "as to what

steps we should take to unite with the One Big Union".<sup>47</sup> Midgley replied two weeks later that the Maritimes had jumped the gun. The Central Executive Committee was only authorized to conduct a referendum among western trade unionists to determine if they wished to leave the T.L.C. and form the O.B.U. Until then, the O.B.U. technically did not exist and had not "authority to issue or accept affiliations", although Midgley promised to keep his Amherst supporters in good supply with O.B.U. "leaflets and other propaganda".<sup>48</sup> In the western referendum held in May, approximately three quarters of the votes cast favoured replacing the T.L.C. with the O.B.U., whose supporters convened the new organization's founding convention on 4 June in Calgary. Several weeks later, the Amherst Federation of Labor voted 1185 to 1 join the O.B.U.<sup>49</sup> This decision in favour of the O.B.U. marked the final rejection with the T.L.C., which had been offered to the Amherst Federation of Labor in March 1919.<sup>50</sup>

The presence in Amherst of S.P.C. sympathizers may have provided the Maritimers with a link to the O.B.U. In the pre-war years Amherst socialists sustained an active S.P.C. branch that included such prominent Amherst Federation of Labor organizers as moulders William McInnis and Arthur McArthur, and Dan McDonald, a tailor. Although it is not clear whether these men remained S.P.C. members, the S.P.C. did experience a revival in Amherst after the war and its activities gave the town direct contact with events in western Canada, where a number of S.P.C. activists such as Victor Midgley, R.B. Russell, and W.A. Pritchard, were involved in organizing the O.B.U.<sup>51</sup> The overlap in S.P.C. and O.B.U. personnel in the west was apparent to Amherst



socialists and undoubtedly influenced them in the direction of the O.B.U. Yet, although this relationship may explain the Amherst socialists' interest in the O.B.U., it does not explain why the majority of Amherst union members followed suit. In fact, the decision of these Maritime workers to throw their lot in with a labour organization centered in western Canada is not as surprising as it may appear. First, similar to much of the west, Amherst lacked a strong craft union tradition. Except for the I.M.U., craft unions had been unable to protect skilled workers against the employers' assaults on their working conditions. Thus, in Amherst, the weakness of craft unions among skilled workers encouraged them to explore different forms of working-class organization.

Another factor in the Amherst Federation of Labor's decision to affiliate with the westerners was the initial ideological eclecticism of the O.B.U. Because no single political position dominated the O.B.U.'s early activities, various socialist and syndicalist tendencies found a home in the union. Although this would change over the next few years, in the spring of 1919 the union's flexibility on political and industrial strategies opened the O.B.U. to many workers who otherwise might have rejected it. This was important in Amherst where the Amherst Federation of Labor's leadership was not influenced by the syndicalist tendencies popular in the west. In March 1919, Frank Burke headed the Amherst delegation attending a Halifax meeting of provincial labour leaders, which established a provincial federation of labour and discussed forming an independent labour party to contest the next provincial election.<sup>52</sup> C.M. Arsenault, Pictou County labour

spokesman and editor of the Eastern Federationist, also advocated independent labour politics. In 1919, Arsenault spent many days in Amherst assisting in the Amherst Federation of Labor's organization and campaigning for the building of a labour party.<sup>53</sup> The industrial rather than craft emphasis in the O.B.U. also attracted local support to the union because the Amherst Federation of Labor was already an industrial union organized along the principles of One Big Unionism.

In the spring of 1919, local workers exhibited in their actions a solidarity that was unique in Amherst's history. Relatively minor issues exploded into hotly contested disputes. When a man was accused of stealing tools from his employer he was acquitted even though the judge in his charge to the jury "had no hesitation in saying that the accused was 'not a desirable citizen in the community'".<sup>54</sup> This episode and events like the daylight saving time dispute worried the editor of the Daily News because "though class consciousness has never been one of the particular manifestations of the workingman [sic] of this community, there is no question that it is showing a greater strength among them today than it ever did before".<sup>55</sup> On 1 May, events at the Canadian Car and Foundry almost precipitated a general strike when moulder Fred Reid was fired for protesting the assignment of his helper to another job. At a hastily convened meeting of the Amherst Federation of Labor, some members demanded a general strike to force the company to reinstate Reid. Although a majority of the workers at the meeting sympathized with Reid's plight, they decided to delay strike action since many of them had just returned to work after long layoffs. Another consideration of the membership was that Frank

Burke and William McInnis were scheduled to leave shortly for Montreal to open negotiations with Canadian Car and Foundry officials and many Amherst Federation of Labor workers felt that strike action should be delayed until the results of these general bargaining sessions were known.<sup>56</sup>

The two Amherst Federation of Labor leaders travelled to Montreal on 15 May and, after several days of fruitless negotiations, climbed aboard an east bound train for Amherst, where a delegation of workers met them at the station to protest recent measures adopted by the carworks' management. While Burke and McInnis negotiated in Montreal, the company directors had instructed their Amherst manager to introduce the nine hour day with a provision for ten hours pay. The company's unilateral action particularly infuriated the Amherst Federation of Labor officials because they perceived it as an attempt to circumvent the union.<sup>57</sup> On Monday, 19 May, the carworkers milled around the gates to the Canadian Car and Foundry shops. The employees refused to begin the day's shift and "formed in a parade marching through the principle [sic] streets" of Amherst to their meeting hall.<sup>58</sup> As the meeting commenced, many workers vented their frustrations with management but it was Burke who focused their anger onto two issues: union recognition and wage differentials between eastern and central Canadian workers. Burke argued that the company precipitated the crisis by refusing to recognize that the Amherst Federation of Labor had "a right to be consulted on any changes of hours, or rules of wages, affecting the men".<sup>59</sup> Burke also demanded that the company extend to Amherst its agreement with Montreal employees for fewer hours

with no decrease in take-home pay. After listening to Burke and several other Amherst Federation of Labor officials, the carworkers dispersed with a call for an emergency meeting of the union that evening.

News of the trouble at the carworks spread quickly throughout Amherst and the evening meeting was crowded with workers who "decided that employees of all industries in the town, including town employees cease work on Tuesday morning".<sup>60</sup> Although the strike was called to support Dane Lodge members the employees of each industry were directed to meet separately to prepare additional demands to be presented to the town's employers along with the basic proposals for recognition of the Amherst Federation of Labor and the eight hour day. On Tuesday morning, every factory remained closed, building trade workers struck, and the town's outside workers left their jobs. In the evening, the Amherst Federation of Labor staged the largest working class rally in Amherst's history. "Between two and three thousand workers met at the Labour Hall", reported the Eastern Federationist, "formed in a line and paraded to the square".<sup>61</sup> After speeches by local and visiting labour spokesmen, Frank Burke recounted some of the background to the dispute and proclaimed the union's determination to stand firm until its demands were accepted by the manufacturers.<sup>62</sup>

The Amherst Federation of Labor's swift action caught many employers by surprise. After recovering from their initial "shock", they gathered at the Marshlands Club to evolve a common strategy and agreed unanimously to "absolutely" refuse "one and all to deal in any way or form with the 'One Big Union' as a whole". Throughout the first

two weeks of the strike, this position remained firm except for one minor and very brief incident. Late in the first week of the strike, the owners of the Victor Woodworking Co. expressed their willingness to give a wage increase to their 75 employees and recognize the Amherst Federation of Labor. Pressure from other manufacturers, however, forced Victor's to reverse its stand. The small, locally owned business explained this change of policy as a decision not "to be the first squealor [sic]" among the employers and promised it would take direction from "the big fellows", Amherst's largest employers. In order to improve its tarnished image among other manufacturers, Victor's claimed to have installed a "new system" that required only five men to operate.<sup>63</sup>

Although the employers agreed that union recognition was unacceptable, each industry used different tactics to get its employees back to work. Frank Stanfield, a principal owner in the Amherst Woolen Mill and director of the family's Truro textile mills, championed the intimidation technique. He refused to discuss the employees' demands, laid off his salaried staff, and announced that the Amherst plant was "closed down". Canadian Car and Foundry officials chose to ignore the strike, while the shoeworks and foundry managements agreed to meet with their workers, but not Amherst Federation of Labor negotiators. At Robb Engineering, David Robb appealed to his employees to return to work and promised to meet any of their grievances. Across the street from Robb's, the Amherst Piano Co. tried to entice its employees to return to work with a profit sharing proposal. Manager J.A. McDonald proposed that once the company achieved a seven percent net profit on

capitalization all additional profits would be divided among the shareholders and employees. The workers rejected the scheme because, as Frank Burke pointed out, the company had never turned a seven percent profit in its six year history.<sup>64</sup>

The first crack in the solidarity of the Amherst labour movement had enjoyed over the previous months occurred when the employees at Robb Engineering returned to work on the second day of the strike. But, despite the company's serious financial situation and David Robb's stature as a community leader, the strike ended only when Robb agreed to negotiate a new wage schedule and a shorter working day. The next week, when these negotiations bogged down, the workers threatened to strike until their demands were met. This announcement jolted David Robb into an agreement with "a committee representing employees", granting higher wages, a nine hour day, and the "Whitley Council principle".<sup>65</sup> In the final analysis, it was Robb Engineering's dire economic straits that kept its employees working throughout most of the general strike. Other factories with a history of relatively harmonious industrial relations and owners with a community stature that equalled that of David Robb could not persuade their employees to abandon the general strike. To attribute the actions of the predominantly skilled work force at Robb's simply to some tradition of craft exclusivism also seems to miss the point. The Amherst Federation of Labor won solid support from the town's other skilled workers and there is no reason to assume that Robb employees were unusually craft conscious. After their return to work the Robb employees did not

abandon the Amherst Federation of Labor, as the machinists, moulders, and boilermakers made important contributions to the strike fund.<sup>66</sup>

Several events cushioned the effect of the Robb employees' return to work on the morale of the Amherst Federation of Labor. Most important was the town council's decision to give "full recognition" to the union and to implement eight hour day with ten hours pay.<sup>67</sup> The town council's concession to the civic workers was its attempt to break the impasse between the Amherst Federation of Labor and the employers. A majority of the councillors were small businessmen: a contractor, merchant, realtor, farm implement's agent, two lawyers, and a foreman with shares in the Amherst Foundry, who were suffering from the decline in business precipitated by the general strike. In fact, the councillors and other small businessmen expressed some cautious support for the strikers, especially those employed by the carworks. Many felt that, as the Daily News editorialized, the "unpleasantness in the town was due almost altogether to the uncertainty that has prevailed at the Car Works".<sup>68</sup> Lawyer and former Liberal M.P. Hance Logan chided Canadian Car and Foundry "with its head office and Directorate in Montreal" because it was "naturally more interested" in its central Canadian operations "than [in] our own local industry".<sup>69</sup> Thus, at the end of May when the Amherst Federation of Labor approached the council to arbitrate the strike, the council immediately appointed a committee to try and resolve the dispute.<sup>70</sup> After several days of separate meetings with the union and employers, the committee announced that employers were prepared to bargain with committees of their employees, including a member of the Amherst Federation of Labor

executive. Furthermore, the employers conceded that the employee committees with whom they would meet did not have "the power to accept or refuse any proposition without the sanction" of the Amherst Federation of Labor general executive.<sup>71</sup> This in effect recognized the Amherst Federation of Labor because executive decisions required membership sanction. Elated with the decision, the union committees met with the employers, expecting a quick end to the strike, but the manufacturers retracted their offer without explanation.

The employers probably hoped that the desperate economic circumstances facing many of the strikers would force them to return to work. Apparently the union officials shared a similar concern, for they launched a major fund raising drive. A relief committee solicited funds from the Robb employees and local merchants, and sent delegations to labour meetings in Moncton, Joggins, and Springhill. The best response came from the Springhill miners who collected \$537 in a house to house canvass.<sup>72</sup> The Amherst Federation of Labor also organized a "patronize those who patronize us" campaign and advertised that "electrical workers" and "employees of different industries" affected by the strike would accept odd jobs around Amherst.<sup>73</sup> Moral support came in the form of a continuous flow of labour leaders into the town. C.C. Dane and C.M. Arsenault of Pictou County; Silby Barrett of Cape Breton; W.M. Goodwin of Truro, formerly of the Winnipeg T.L.C.; and a number of Cumberland County U.M.W. officials addressed the various union evening meetings.<sup>74</sup> As the general strike continued through the first week of June, support for the Amherst Federation of Labor remained strong. By this point in the dispute, picketing was



unnecessary. Early in the strike Victor Woodworking had attempted to re-open with non-union staff, but the Amherst Federation of Labor members had marched to the plant and frightened away the employees. After the initial excitement of the first few days of the strike, the daily routine of many working-class families centered around putting in their gardens, perhaps spending the afternoon at the labour hall, and attending the evening union meeting.<sup>75</sup>

On 9 June the federal government's Royal Commission on Industrial Relations opened hearings in Amherst, bringing together representatives from both sides in the general strike. Several hundred Amherst Federation of Labor members greeted "with hearty" laughter D. W. Robb's report to the commission, especially his assertion that rents in Amherst were low. On the other hand, the workers "warmly applauded any statement that appeared to favour them", until Justice Mather, the chairman, "threatened to adjourn the meeting if quiet was not maintained". Over the afternoon, Mather and his fellow commissioners heard Amherst's most prominent businessmen condemn the Amherst Federation of Labor for leading a strike "similar to that in Winnipeg". They also endorsed international unions in preference to "local organizations" and committed themselves to the eight hour day, if it was adopted universally across Canada. Labour spokesmen used the commission's hearings as another opportunity to catalogue their list of grievances against local employers. Although the session did not settle the strike, the opportunity to vent its frustrations with conditions in Amherst to an apparently neutral body boosted the union's morale.<sup>76</sup>

Throughout the strike, attacks were made on the integrity of the union's leadership. Frank Burke felt the brunt of most of these individual attacks, although G. M. Arsenault, as an outside "labour agitator", faced considerable criticism. When the Amherst Federation of Labor's leadership was accused of transferring union funds to the local Catholic Church, Burke replied that these "rumours" were attempts "to split the organization through the creation of religious strife". When some employers pronounced that international unions were preferable to "local organizations", many workers saw this as yet another ploy to weaken the Amherst Federation of Labor. In one particularly bitter report Daily News editor, A. D. Ross, one of the strongest exponents of craft unionism, criticized the Amherst Federation of Labor for disregarding "regular trade union principles" and for adopting "the Western One Big Union program". Concerned by the effectiveness of the general strike, Ross worried that "force" would be the "only medium to be applied in the settlement of future industrial disputes in the community".<sup>77</sup>

The most serious attack on the union's credibility came when the Daily News reported on 6 June that at the previous evening's meeting, employees from Victor Woodworking had tried to raise the question of a return to work, but "failed to get a complete hearing". After witnessing these events, disgusted employees of another woodworking company also interested in ending the strike decided to "retire from the hall". Frank Burke quickly challenged the story's accuracy insisting that the appeal presented by six employees of the Victor Woodworking had been aired fully at the meeting. When their position

was put to a general membership vote, he pointed out that almost 1,400 strikers voted "in favour of leaving the matter in the hands of the general executive".<sup>78</sup> The principle of maintaining the general strike until all workers had acceptable agreements with their employers had been confirmed earlier in the week, when the Amherst Boot and Shoe Co. had offered its employees a settlement weighted heavily in favour of its skilled workers. When several of these skilled workers had brought the offer to an Amherst Federation of Labor meeting, the shoeworkers' largely unskilled women workers, with the support of the majority of the company's skilled employees, had strenuously opposed it. Not surprisingly, the proposed settlement had been defeated soundly and the strike at the shoeworks continued.<sup>79</sup>

At the end of the strike's third week, the town council's strike committee managed to bring the two sides together. With the union's strike fund depleted it was only the strikers' determination to wring concessions from the manufacturers that kept them away from work. On the other hand, the employers recognized that their factories would not re-open until a number of union demands were met. Who was to make what compromises remained the crucial question. At the Amherst Federation of Labor's meeting on 12 June, Frank Burke announced that the labour situation had "changed materially" over the past few days. The Amherst Boot and Shoe, Amherst Foundry, Christie Bros., and the Victor Woodworking Co. had offered to meet with Amherst Federation of Labor committees from their factories and had conceded the nine hour day with wage increases that ensured that the workers' weekly pay remained at pre-strike levels. Similar agreements with the Canadian Car and

Foundry and Rhodes-Curry Woodworking also appeared likely. Burke informed his audience that "after long deliberation" the Amherst Federation of Labor executive had decided to recommend that the union accept these offers; the alternative was to "continue a deadlock to the bitter end", which, given the financial circumstances of many members, seemed pointless. Union members, wearied by the long strike agreed and "adopted unanimously" the executive's position.<sup>80</sup> Workers in the four factories with new wage scales scheduled an immediate return to work and the others planned to follow suit as soon as agreements could be finalized with their employers. In the case of Canadian Car and Foundry and Rhodes-Curry, wage schedules similar to those of the other four factories were agreed to the following day.<sup>81</sup> The woolen mill and a local garage remained on strike for several days longer until the garage mechanics called off their strike. The dispute at the woolen mill proved more complex, as Stanfield continued to ignore the strike, but the factory gradually re-opened.

How did Amherst workers assess the results of their three week general strike? Some workers, like textile worker Albert St. Peter, were embittered and accused Burke of the misuse of union funds.<sup>82</sup> But this was not the opinion of the majority of Amherst Federation of Labor members, who in July re-elected the union's executive for another year. They must have agreed with the Eastern Federationist's assessment of the May events: "We heartily congratulate the Amherst union workers on their victory for no matter what may be said to the contrary it was a victory for their recognition and [sic] raise in

pay. Not bad for beginners".<sup>83</sup> But while the majority of workers did win a shorter working day and higher wages, the victory was not all they had hoped for. Through their resistance to the union, the employers managed to stop the Amherst Federation of Labor short of the eight hour day and at the woolen mill they defeated the union on all counts. Coupled with the events at Robb Engineering, these employer initiatives weakened the union and it never recovered the momentum it had enjoyed in the months prior to the strike. But, as we shall see, the energy of the Amherst labour movement did not suddenly dissipate after the general strike.

The Amherst general strike was the response of the local working class to the post World War One crisis of industrial capitalism at home and abroad. In Amherst, as elsewhere in the Maritimes, intensifying regional disparities gave the situation a special urgency. In shaping their reaction to this crisis, local labour leaders drew on their pre-war trade union and political experiences, which when combined with the ideas of industrial unionism and socialism, were institutionalized in the Amherst Federation of Labor. Seeking protection in the workplace and wage parity with other Canadians, Amherst's skilled and non-skilled workers alike created the town's largest, most militant and, at least temporarily, most successful labour organization. On the other hand, it was these same regional economic and social forces that eventually destroyed the Amherst Federation of Labor and that have severely weakened the local labour movement through to this day.

Footnotes - Chapter V

1. Record (Sydney), 21 May 1919.
2. Post (Sydney), 20 May 1919.
3. D.Ns., 21 May 1919.
4. Eastern Federationist (Pictou), 31 May 1919.
5. D.Ns., 22 May 1919.
6. David J. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Toronto, 1978); Ernest R. Forbes, The Maritimes Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism (Montreal, 1979).
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Chapter VI  
Economic Decline and Labour's  
Response, 1920-1927

I

The momentum of the war economy lasted until the middle of 1920 when the post-World War One depression began in earnest. Across Canada the effects of the depression on industrial production were dramatic and working-class Canadians found their wages and working conditions under an aggressive assault from the business class. If one region of the country suffered more than another from these conditions, it was the Maritimes. Thoroughly within the political and economic hegemony of central Canadian capital, which had little interest in revitalizing the Maritime economy, Maritimers suffered more severely and for a longer time than most other Canadians in the 1920s.<sup>1</sup> Though hardship was widespread throughout the region, some centers bled more than others. In Amherst, the depression had a devastating impact on the local economy and on the town's social structure. By the mid 1920s, the bustling industries of the "Busy Amherst" era lay in financial and, more often than not, physical ruin. The town now exported workers across the country instead of electrical engines, boilers, shoes, railway rolling stock, woolen goods, and enamel products. The

depression of the 1920s precipitated the crisis that brought an end to Amherst as an important manufacturing town, but it alone cannot explain the collapse of the economy. As we have seen, the town was integrated into the national capitalist system before World War One and the consequences of this process had become apparent during the 1913 depression.

The working-class response to the crisis of the 1920s is the focus of this final chapter in the study of the rise and decline of Amherst in the last nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1920, the solidarity displayed by the Amherst working class during the general strike gave momentum to the I.L.P., which was enjoying unprecedented popularity in the town. During the July provincial election, Amherst voters helped to elect two of the three I.L.P.-Farmer coalition members to the House of Assembly. Even in these months of labour's victories, however, internecine struggle in the labour movement was beginning. Labourists in Amherst, encouraged by their international unions, established a rival labour council to the Amherst Federation of Labor and gave only a limited endorsement to the I.L.P. In spring 1920, the labourists staunchly defended their position at the point of production but they took this initiative largely in isolation from other members of the labour movement. Amherst's slide into depression starting in the middle of 1920 rapidly eroded the base of the labour movement and left labourists and socialists alike confused in their reaction to the crisis. By the mid-1920s, it was clear that influence of the labour movement in Amherst had long since peaked and that its prospects for the future were not good. The analysis of Amherst during the 1920s

begins with an exploration of the economic context of the period and briefly discusses the middle-class response to the crisis. Focus then shifts to a study of institutional and political response of the labour movement to its declining fortunes in Amherst.

## II

The post-war depression that began in Canada in the summer of 1920 was particularly severe in the Maritimes. Integrated into the national economy and with little influence in the country's centers of political and economic power, the region plunged into a depression from which it would never fully recover. "If Maritimers remember the 1930s at the period of the 'Great Depression'", historian E. R. Forbes has commented, "it is only because in the earlier decade they were able to mitigate the effects of their industries' collapse through wholesale migration".<sup>2</sup> Because of its manufacturing based economy, Amherst was one of the region's towns most severely affected by the depression. The seriousness of the situation first became apparent in the early autumn of 1920. Indefinite layoffs occurred at the rolling mills, shoeworks, and woolen mill. During the winter, circumstances worsened when Canadian Car and Foundry decided to abandon permanently the Malleable Iron and close at least temporarily the carworks. These decisions abruptly added almost 1,000 men to Amherst's unemployed. By the mid-1920s, all of Amherst's major industries were either permanently shut or in their final death throes. The woolen mill, shoeworks, and malleable iron works no longer existed, while the

Amherst Foundry, facing bankruptcy, negotiated its sale to the larger Enamel and Heating Products Company of Sackville, New Brunswick. At Robb Engineering and at the carworks, the flagships of the economy in the "Busy Amherst" era, windows were boarded over and the shops crumbled into disrepair.<sup>3</sup>

Economic statistics from the 1920s indicate the magnitude of the collapse in manufacturing. Between 1920 and 1930, the value of manufactured goods produced in Amherst plunged from \$9.7 million to \$2.1 million, aggregate wages and salaries declined from \$2 million to \$655,000 and 1,500 to 2,000 manufacturing jobs disappeared in a town with a population of only about 9,000 residents in 1920. While 19 percent of the population found employment in manufacturing at the end of World War One, only 8.6 percent reported similar occupations a decade later.\* As a result of the collapse of these manufacturing industries, in 1922 Amherst suffered one of the highest unemployment rates in the region, and as the Office of the Employment Services of Canada observed one year later, the situation had improved only because of the "great many people leaving here during the past year for other parts of Canada and the United States". During these years of despair, Amherst lost at least 25 percent of its population, a figure significantly higher than that recorded in the surrounding area. Whereas, before World War One Amherst had accounted for a sizeable proportion of Cumberland's population increase, after the war it

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\* See Table II, p. 51.

contributed disproportionately to the county's continuing de-population.<sup>4</sup>

A declining population and the loss of manufacturing brought a significant drop in the revenues available to Amherst during this period of high unemployment, amid increasing demands for social assistance. By 1929, assessment values had fallen to 1905 levels and most houses and buildings sold for less than 75 percent of their assessed value. Municipal taxes went unpaid as unemployment worsened; in 1920, total taxes in arrears had already reached \$27,000 and in 1921, this figure rose to \$48,000. Much of this money was never recovered, as some residents simply abandoned their homes and left town with their taxes unpaid. No new construction occurred in the 1920s and, as one resident recalls, Amherst had a "destruction industry rather than a construction industry", because the town tore down abandoned houses and factories. Declining revenues made it difficult for the town to respond to the pressing need for improved health and sanitation programs for the poor. As public health officials discovered on their tours of the local schools, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, and "numberless cases of skin disease, scabies and impetigo" were found among the children.<sup>5</sup>

The story behind the collapse of Robb Engineering in the 1920s is a reminder that the crisis in Amherst of that decade had its origins in an earlier time. It was the final act in the process of underdevelopment that had begun before 1914. After the Dominion Bridge Company of Montreal purchased a majority holding in Robb Engineering in 1917, the Amherst works continued to thrive for another year on federal

government contracts for munitions and marine engines and boilers. In 1920, the company was once again teetering on the edge of bankruptcy and, indeed within three years foreclosure proceedings would commence. The circumstances that led to Robb Engineering's final collapse in 1923 were very complex. D. W. Robb gave his version of the company's history in testimony before the Duncan Commission. Until shortly before World War One, he explained, Robb Engineering had prospered on the manufacture of electric engines and small generating plants. But the invention of the steam turbine and the development of hydro-electric power before World War One made Robb Engineering's equipment obsolete. By 1917, Robb revealed, the company was pursuing an arrangement with Dominion Bridge to manufacture diesel powered tractors. Robb Engineering was to build the engines, gears, and other mechanical parts, while Dominion's Bridge's Winnipeg shops manufactured the frames and completed the final assembly of the new Tillsoil Tractors. But the venture failed for two reasons, Robb reported: first, the federal government's removal of the protective tariff on small tractors open this market to American competition. Second, high freight rates - another political decision, Robb observed - further aggravated the company's difficulties. Both these factors likely contributed to the failure of the Tillsoil Tractor experiment and the company's collapse in 1923. Other factors were involved as well, though, which Robb, for whatever reason, did not bring to the attention of the Duncan Commission.<sup>6</sup>

In his history of Robb Engineering, Norman Ritchie called the Tillsoil Tractor "a monstrosity". Ill-conceived in its basic design,



Ritchie reported, the tractor at its conception was 30 years behind the advances in design and manufacture made by the industry's leading competitors.<sup>7</sup> It is reasonable to speculate that the design and production problems with the tractor partly related to Robb Engineering's chronic financial woes after 1909, which were not alleviated when Dominion Bridge became interested in the company. The Montreal company's interest in Robb Engineering waned after the war when state subsidies to the shipbuilding industry were reduced. Dominion Bridge's original interest in Robb Engineering was, of course, due to its potential to tap the market for marine engines and boilers.<sup>8</sup> There is little evidence that Dominion Bridge ever seriously committed itself to the Tillsoil Tractor programme, as in 1920 the Montreal based company and other Robb Engineering creditors were already contemplating foreclosure proceedings. Furthermore, Robb Engineering's management had no room for independent action, even if they wished to strike out along a separate path from Dominion Bridge. The Amherst company's board of directors was thoroughly integrated into Dominion Bridge's corporate structure. G. H. Duggan, president of Robb Engineering, and W. F. Angus, vice-president, were executive officers on Dominion Bridge's board of directors. Angus also was an executive board member of Canadian Car and Foundry and was linked to the Montreal Trust. The Montreal Trust was a principal actor in the liquidation proceedings. Angus' role in Canadian Car and Foundry and Montreal Trust made him an associate of Nathaniel Curry, whose Montreal hotel hosted the final meeting of Robb Engineering's shareholders in 1923.

Duggan was closely associated with the Royal Bank, the Steel Company of Canada, and many other major Canadian industrial operations.<sup>9</sup>

The final events leading to Robb Engineering's closure began in autumn 1921. A special committee of the company's directors, consisting of Duggan, Angus, and D. W. Robb, reported to the board of directors that the shops should be shut down until the depression ended. The interregnum, they explained would provide the board with an opportunity to consider the company's future. Both recommendations were accepted by the board, which soon after this decision further decided that Robb Engineering would have no future. Acting in his capacity as president of Robb Engineering, Duggan notified the shareholders of a special meeting to discuss the situation. "Your Company finds itself in considerable debt to its Bankers", Duggan warned, "with no means of raising any further money to meet the growing deficit". The board of directors recommended the liquidation of the company, Duggan concluded. Duggan was, in essence, writing to himself in his other capacity as an executive with Dominion Bridge. With the Montreal company holding 8,111 of Robb Engineering's total 10,000 common and preferred shares, the meeting's results were inevitable. Only four shareholders attended the Montreal meeting and all four represented Dominion Bridge. Robb Engineering was liquidated under the Winding-Up Act of Canada, rather than under the Bankruptcy Act, thus allowing the purchase of the company's assets without forcing the new owner to assume all of the liabilities involved. Dominion Bridge was, of course, to be that new owner. By the end of 1923, these transactions were finalized and the Amherst plant was closed after

Dominion Bridge removed selected pieces of equipment. A skeleton crew continued to service the Robb Engineering engines and boilers that had been produced in a more glorious era. Over 400 men were left unemployed and the bustling machine shops that had so impressed the reporter for Canadian Machinery in 1909 fell silent.<sup>10</sup>

The response of Amherst's small businessmen and merchants to the economic crisis was captured in the minutes of the Maritime Board of Trade Meeting held in Amherst in September 1920. Sponsored by the Amherst Board of Trade, the Amherst Merchants' Association, and the town council, which they dominated, the meeting was addressed by mayor B. W. Ralston, H. M. Canfield of the Amherst Board of Trade, and Hance Logan, former Cumberland M.P. and, in 1920, president of the Maritime Board of Trade. In his analysis of the economic problems confronting the region, Ralston focussed on the "railway problem". He complained that the merging of the I.C.R. into the Canadian National Railway system meant that Maritime business interests "no longer have any say with regard to what the rates shall be" and as a result freight rates had dramatically increased in the past decade. Canfield also addressed the railway question but went on to identify the "winter ports" as another issue deserving attention. Halifax, Saint John, and Sydney were "National ports belonging or should belong to the people of Canada", Canfield argued, and they therefore should receive the federal subsidies granted to the St. Lawrence and Pacific coast ports. Finally, Hance Logan gave an impassioned speech on the necessity of "Maritime Union" or, at least, on the necessity of a greater sense of

united political action. "What we require in the Maritime Provinces", he exclaimed, "is less party politics and more Maritime politics".<sup>11</sup>

These arguments were intensely debated in Amherst as its economy worsened over the next several years. Though a consensus on Maritime Union was never achieved, there was a general agreement among the merchants and small businessmen on their grievances with the federal government. They demanded what they considered as more equitable freight rates and government contracts for railway rollingstock built in Amherst. Securing government orders for the carworks, in fact, became the primary preoccupation of the business class. Such state intervention appeared to them as the only solution to the town's economic woes, though no one was prepared to support the nationalization of the plant, as Logan had suggested in 1919. In February 1921, a delegation from Amherst composed of representatives from the Board of Trade, the Merchants' Association, and the town council travelled to central Canada to lay Amherst's request for rollingstock orders before the Canadian Car and Foundry and government officials. In Montreal, a company spokesperson claimed that there simply "were no car orders on hand"; the next day, in Toronto, D. B. Hanna, president of the National Railway Commission, "received us very kindly", one delegate noted, but he also reported that there "was no scarcity of cars in Canada today". Hanna suggested that Amherst could provide the C.N.R. with a repair depots, though this question he said, had to be raised first with the federal government. The delegation then proceeded to Ottawa where it interviewed five cabinet ministers and met briefly with Prime Minister Meighen. In its appeal for federal

assistance for the carworks, the delegation described Amherst's desperate plight, with between "fifteen hundred and two thousand men out of work". Meighen assured the delegation that his government would give its request special attention.<sup>12</sup>

Upon their return to Amherst, the delegates reported their findings to the town council. The federal government appeared sincere in its wish to aid Amherst industry, the councillors learned, but local pressure had to be maintained on the "very busy men" in Ottawa to ensure that they kept their promises. A constant stream of letters and telegrams from Amherst residents should flood the government's mailboxes, the delegation suggests. When the Conservative government subsequently failed to meet the raised expectations of the local residents, it faced the political consequences of its inaction in the 1921 federal election. Future governments, however, proved equally unwilling to meet the demands of other Amherst Board of Trade delegations.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the specific concerns of the carworks, Amherst capitalists found themselves in broad agreement with the grievances of the Maritime Rights movement, as their participation in the Maritime Board of Trade indicated. Because of Amherst's manufacturing base, the issue of freight rates was of special concern to local business interests. Hence Logan stressed this point in his 1920 address to the Maritime Board of Trade, and, in 1922, C. A. Lusby of the Amherst Foundry raised the issue in the pages of Industrial Canada. "The enormous freight rates which the railways have been charging", Lusby complained, "have had a very detrimental effect on business". Several years later, D. W.

Robb would echo Lusby's complaint in testimony before the Duncan Commission. But a lowering of the freight rates would not have saved Amherst's industries in the 1920s.<sup>14</sup> As we have seen, the integration of Amherst in the national economy before World War One gave a certain sense of inevitability to the events of the 1920s. Freight rates and other federal state policies exacerbated the crisis but were not at the root of its case.

Because the Maritime Rights movement failed to locate the nature of the process within the logic of capitalist development, its solutions, even if implemented, would not have fundamentally altered the process. Despite D. W. Robb's protestation before the Duncan Commission that freight rates and the tariff were responsible for his company's collapse, the historical record suggests otherwise. The history of Amherst's other central industry, Canadian Car and Foundry, supports this argument. Its policy of assigning to Amherst the role of providing excess capacity for its central Canadian operations was firmly established before World War One. Other industries, the Amherst Boot and Shoe and the Amherst Foundry, for example, by the 1920s simply could not compete with the better capitalization, mass production industries of central Canada, a problem unquestionably exacerbated by the policies of the federal state. Adjustments to freight rate and tariff schedules, at best, could only have prolonged the decline.<sup>15</sup>

III

A dearth of information has left many aspects of the Amherst labour movement's history in the 1920s shrouded in mystery. It is impossible to know, for example, whether the Amherst Federation of Labor maintained fraternal ties with the One Big Union beyond the summer of 1919. The Amherst Federation of Labor did remain popular among the workers in the months following the general strike. Confidence in the union's leadership was confirmed during the election of officers in July 1919 when Dan McDonald became the only new member of the executive. Voting for the executive of Dane Lodge followed a similar pattern, when in the autumn Frank Burke, William McInnis, Alfred Barton, and George MacArthur won re-election to its executive. Reports from labour organizers passing through Amherst expressed their satisfaction with the state of the Amherst labour movement. Fred Tipping and W. N. Goodwin were pleased with their reception in the town. Campaigning across the region to raise support for the arrested Winnipeg General Strike leaders, Tipping and Goodwin attracted an Amherst audience large enough to convince a reporter for the Eastern Federationist that the One Big Union was "going well". In spring 1920, A. A. Heaps, the prominent western O.B.U. advocate, stopped in Amherst after completing a speaking tour in Cape Breton. He was delighted when 70 workers attended his Amherst meeting, despite the fact that the Daily News had not advertised the session on "the excuse they had lost the copy" provided to announce the meeting.<sup>16</sup>

The reports of the Amherst Federation of Labor's strength were given an unexpected practical test in April 1920 when woolen mill workers struck to protest the dismissal of a fellow employee. Pitted against the union was one of the town's most anti-union employer, Frank Stanfield. The dispute at the woolen mill revolved not only around the dismissal of the employee, but also the subsequent resignation of Mr. Corey, the popular foreman of the weaving department. Corey was accused by another foreman, William Black, of hiring one of Black's workers to train as a weaver, despite the company's rule against foremen competing for one another's employees. Black demanded that the superintendent reprimand Corey and dismiss the worker involved, with whom Black had also had an earlier confrontation. Superintendent Cullinan accepted Black's version of the dispute and fired the employee. Corey resigned in protest, a stand which won the weavers' immediate approval; indeed, on learning of Corey's decision, the workers stopped production and sent a delegation to interview Cullinan. They demanded that Corey be retained as foreman and that the dismissed worker be rehired. No other issues were involved, the weavers explained, as they were satisfied with their wages and working conditions. Prepared to back Corey "to the limit", the weavers threatened to "walk out" if Cullinan did not immediately accept their demands. The superintendent agreed to reply within several hours and left the meeting, presumably to contact Stanfield in Truro. But the weavers chose not to await word from Cullinan, likely anticipating a negative response, and struck the plant. The protest won the sympathy of the other woolen mill employees as well and soon all 180 workers had



left their jobs. Winnie Patterson, who had helped to organize the woolen mill workers into the Textile Workers' Union, Federation of Labor in May 1919, played a prominent role in the strikers' leadership together with several other original members of the union. The union's leadership realized that though the strike was being fought over a specific workplace question, it implicitly raised the broader worker's control issue of union recognition. Bitter memories of Stanfield's hard bargaining the previous May worried the strikers as they awaited his arrival in Amherst.<sup>17</sup>

When Stanfield reached Amherst several days into the strike, he assumed control of the company's conduct for the duration of the conflict. He posted a notice declaring the woolen mill closed indefinitely for repairs and refused to negotiate with the union. The strikers' financial situation was very weak, as neither it nor the Federation of Labor had a strike fund. Individual savings were also small because the mill had been closed for a considerable time during the previous winter. Therefore, as the dispute advanced into a second week with no hope of resolution, the strikers asked J. A. McDonald of the Amherst Piano Company to mediate the dispute. Stanfield, bargaining from an increasingly stronger position, continued to reject discussions with the union and refused to consider the rehiring of Corey and the fired employee. He agreed to re-open the mill after two weeks but only on the condition that each striker first provide him with a signed document stating his intention to return to work. Because of the weakness of their position, the union and the Federation of Labor capitulated and urged a return to work. While the majority of

workers filed back to work, the weavers continued to resist. Only eight of the 40 weavers returned to work, while the others continued to press their demands. But crumbling union solidarity in the face of Stanfield's determination to defeat the strike eventually forced the weavers to concede defeat and they gradually began to trickle back to work. Perhaps as one last act to express their resentment towards the company, the weavers boycotted a meeting called by Cullinan several weeks after the strike was over to discuss continuing tensions in the plant. The union would never have the opportunity to recover from its defeat by Stanfield because the mill was soon closed and its equipment removed to the company's main plant in Truro.<sup>18</sup>

The impact of the strike at the woolen mill on the Amherst Federation of Labor was significant. In the previous year, the union had won the confidence of the mass of unorganized workers with a promise to defend them in their confrontation with the employers. A key factor in the union's partial victory in 1919 had been its ability to bring the industrial life to Amherst quickly to a halt. Given the social and economic conditions in the town, the strategic use of the general strike was likely the workers only truly effective defence against the employers. In April 1920, the Amherst Federation of Labor chose not to launch a general strike to protect the interest of its textile workers. The reasons for this decision are unclear because no statements on the subject can be found. But several factors must have weighed heavily in the minds of the union's leaders. General economic conditions must have given cause for concern, although the rapid slide into depression had not yet begun. A more important consideration was

the precarious situation that existed at the woolen mill because Stanfield's threat to close the plant was not simply posturing on his part. Why the leadership of the Federation of Labor should have been more concerned about this problem than the company's striking employees were is unknown. Evidence suggests that the union's leadership divided over the question because they were concerned by the growing division in its ranks between some craft unionists and the general membership. By spring 1920, labourist elements in the Amherst Federation of Labor were seriously contemplating the possibility of reviving the pre-World War One craft union structure. The decision not to defend aggressively the interest of the textile workers weakened the confidence of the town's semi-skilled workers and labourers in the union and limited its possibilities for future action. The full implications of the defeat at the woolen mill were not immediately apparent because the Amherst Federation of Labor was busy with plans to create a provincial labour party.

Interest in founding a provincial labour party had been building since the last years of World War One. It was part of a general pattern across Canada that had brought the T.L.C. to endorse the creation of a labour party in 1917. In New Brunswick former S.P.C. member H. H. Stuart called for a broad coalition of progressive forces to replace the bourgeois parties in power across the country. "A truly popular political party" must be built, Stuart argued, "by union of the workers, farmers and all others who perform any useful labor with hand or brain". In Cape Breton, socialists also had decided that the organization of a labour party was a strategic step on the path to the

new society. J. B. McLachlan, for example, was instrumental in the revival of interest among the miners in labour party politics. The founding convention of the Nova Scotia I.L.P. occurred in April 1920 at Truro. Delegates in the majority were from the industrial areas of Cape Breton, Cumberland, Pictou, and Halifax counties. Their first action was to endorse the position of the Winnipeg Strike Defence Committee and then to adopt the legislative programme of the T.L.C. for the eight hour day, a minimum wage, election of factory and mine inspectors by the workers and other reforms. The party was autonomously organized in each county, which granted local supporters considerable flexibility in their campaigns and facilitated alliances with progressive farmers' groups. Thus for the first time in its history, the provincial labour movement prepared to launch a co-ordinated intervention into politics.<sup>19</sup>

In Cumberland County, the alliance behind the I.L.P. was similar to that of the first attempts to build a labour part in 1909. The Springhill miners provided a solid base for the party and, in Amherst, the Federation of Labor organized I.L.P. rallies. In Amherst the I.L.P. represented an alliance between the socialists and the labourists who were committed to independent labour representation. William McInnis represented the local workers at the founding convention of the provincial I.L.P. and Dan McDonald did much of the local organizational work. McDonald was also a principal actor in discussions between the I.L.P. in Cumberland and a group of farmers interested in running a coalition slate in the next provincial election. Similar co-operation was established during the election

called for July when miner Archie Terris and two farmers, Gilbert Allen and Daniel Mackenzie, former an I.L.P.-Farmer slate.<sup>20</sup>

Speeches at an early meeting of the I.L.P. campaign in Amherst identified the ideological shadings of the groups of workers that were uniting under the party's banner. Sponsored by the Amherst Federation of Labor and chaired by George MacArthur, an executive member of the union, the rally was addressed by three I.L.P. advocates, each of whom had a different perspective on the purpose of the labour party. Joe Wallace, secretary of the Nova Scotia I.L.P., spoke first. He was the ardent socialist editor of The Citizen, a new Halifax labour paper. Wallace's politics was similar to that of the Marxian socialists among the leadership of the Amherst Federation of Labor. In his oration, Wallace wove the more immediate legislative concerns of many I.L.P. members into a radical perspective. He traced the historical development of the provincial I.L.P. within the context of the international emergence of working-class political parties, especially in Australia and England. The I.L.P. was, for Wallace, the vehicle through which the working class could achieve power in Canada. The I.L.P. must use its influence, Wallace argued, to make radical changes in the organization of Canadian society. With overtones of the pre-war socialist clarion calls to action, Wallace committed the I.L.P. to securing the "democratic control of industry on a co-operative basis rather than a competitive basis" and promised to legislate the public ownership of all utilities and natural resources.<sup>21</sup>

Rose Henderson, the evening's second speaker, represented a political perspective quite different from that of Wallace. A judge of

the Juvenile Court in Montreal for eight years, her allegiance to the I.L.P. stemmed from a commitment to moral and social reform common to the Fabian socialists of the era. She began by painting a disturbing picture of the ravages of capitalism on the poor and the young. To ameliorate such conditions, Henderson argued, workers must take political action, "then love, not hate would rule amid unity and co-operation". Speaking after Henderson, Sergeant William Hardy, a Toronto soldier-labour candidate, interjected a cautionary note into the proceedings. Agreeing that "the middle class should be urged to join the political ranks of labor", as Henderson seemed to be urging, Williams warned that it should "not be permitted to influence its [labour's] economic organization". Thus the I.L.P., composed of a coalition of progressive yet disparate political forces, launched its campaign sporting an alliance with the farmers' group.<sup>22</sup>

The Liberal and Conservative parties both offered full slates in the campaign, but across the province the Conservative party entered the election disorganized. In Cumberland, the Tories nominated three non-descript candidates and once again the Liberals appeared likely to capture the three member Cumberland constituency. They attracted strong candidates, including incumbents J. L. Ralston, son of the mayor of Amherst, and Rufus Carter. Their party was in a weakened position. The Murray government was held responsible for the collapse of the rural economy and the subsequent migration from these areas. Also under attack was the government's uncritical support of British Empire Steel and Coal Company, which operated the Springhill mines, along with those of industrial Cape Breton.<sup>23</sup> The election brought surprising

results in Cumberland and across Nova Scotia.\* In the county, the I.L.P.-Farmer alliance swept to a decisive victory over the Liberals and Conservatives. Even in Amherst, traditionally a Liberal stronghold in provincial elections, the party came perilously close to losing all. War hero J. L. Ralston polled only 300 votes more than Springhill's Archie Terris. Incumbent M.L.A. Rufus Carter defeated F. Allen by less than 100 votes, while Daniel Mackenzie, the third I.L.P.-Farmer candidate, took 57 more votes than his Liberal challenger. The percentage vote in Amherst was close: The Liberals captured 42 percent and the I.L.P.-Farmer alliance 37 percent, while a decimated Conservative party drew only 21 percent of the total vote.

Across Cumberland, the I.L.P.-Farmer alliance won solid majorities in the mining district and in many of the rural polls. Its total vote of 14,416 was 4,000 higher than that of the Liberals, and over 8,300 more than the Conservatives. The I.L.P.-Farmer celebration in Cumberland became even more ecstatic when the provincial results were tallied. They had polled 30.9 percent of the popular vote, elected seven of 14 Farmer candidates and four of 12 I.L.P. candidates, and replaced the Conservatives as the official opposition in the House of Assembly.<sup>24</sup> For the veterans of labour party politics in Amherst, the I.L.P.-Farmer success heralded what they believed to be a new era for the labour movement. It was an important victory that represented a new level of working-class identity. A crucial coalition of farmers and labour discontent had also been established. But it further

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\* See Table I, p. 318.

represented a potential for change that would not be realized because of the persistent urban-rural tension within the forces of protest. Ideological fragmentation within the ranks of the labour movement was the other important factor, which will be examined in some detail for Amherst.<sup>25</sup>

Even before the July election, tension was beginning to emerge within the Amherst labour movement from several sources. The Amherst Federation of Labor's inability to protect its textile workers during the Stanfield strike hurt its credibility among some of the membership. Industrial unionism and the One Big Union in particular were under vigorous attack from the capitalists, the state, the bourgeois press, and the most conservative of the labourists. These attacks strengthened the hand of the labourists in Amherst whose influence had declined in the labour movement with the emergence of the Amherst Federation of Labor. They were always prepared to defend their interests at the point of production but they chose to do this through their craft unions and not through industrial organizations like the Amherst Federation of Labor. Their allegiance to the bourgeois political parties was also intact.<sup>26</sup>

During the general strike, Amherst moulders and machinists carried dual memberships in the Amherst Federation of Labor and their respective craft unions. By spring 1920, they were under pressure from the I.M.U. and the I.A.M. to disassociate themselves from the Amherst Federation of Labor because of its industrial structure and O.B.U. sympathies. In April, I.M.U. Vice-President Barnett toured the Maritimes as part of a national campaign by the craft unions to



discredit the O.B.U. and to ensure the skilled workers' allegiance to the craft unions. Attacks on the O.B.U.'s industrial structure and its radical ideology were combined with promises from the craft unions of material support to the skilled workers in confrontations with employers over wages and working conditions. The I.M.U.'s commitment to strike pay was a persuasive argument in its favour because Amherst moulders were preparing themselves for a major strike with the employers. Observing the financial plight of the striking Amherst Federation of Labor textile workers, the moulders believed that I.M.U. assistance was essential to the success of any strike at the moulding shops. While in Amherst, Barnett assisted the moulders and machinists in chartering a T.L.C. affiliated trades and labour council. This new council emphasized the central role of craft unions in the labour movement and was therefore a rival to the industrial based Amherst Federation of Labor. Having apparently achieved his objectives, a satisfied Barnett left the region convinced that the Maritimes was "solidly for International Unionism and has no use or sympathy with the One Big Union".<sup>27</sup>

Leadership in the revived craft union movement came from the labourists whose influence over the labour movement had waned somewhat with the emergence of the Federation of Labor. George Sutherland, a prominent member of the I.A.M., joined I.M.U. members C. E. Carter, Andrew Jackson, R. Milner, and I. H. Crawford on the new labour council. Before World War One, these men worked together on labour council but none of them was prominent in the post war agitation of the Amherst Federation of Labor. Except for Sutherland, all these workers

were Liberals. Sutherland and carpenter Clarence Josie, who in 1920 helped organize a local of the B.R.C.A. in the carworks as a rival to Dane Lodge, Federation of Labor, were well known Conservatives. The addition of William Rackham's name to the supporters of the craft unions was disturbing to the Amherst Federation of Labor's leadership. Though a longtime member of the I.M.U., Rackham had carried dual membership in the I.M.U. and the Amherst Federation of Labor during the general strike. What made matters worse for the Amherst Federation of Labor was Rackham's involvement in discussions to establish a rival craft based labour council. Pressure may have been brought to bear on Rackham by the I.M.U. or he may have decided that the I.M.U.'s resources were needed in the confrontations brewing in the local moulding shops.<sup>28</sup>

In the summer of 1920, the Amherst moulders engaged in a series of struggles that proved to be classic examples of labourism. The first strike began in early June when Robb Engineering rejected union demands for the eight hour day and an increase in wages. These demands were justified, the 30 striking I.M.U. members declared, because they reflected increases in other moulding shops in the region.<sup>29</sup> Moulders at the Malleable Division, Canadian Car and Foundry joined the Robb Engineering moulders on strike several days after the dispute commenced. The confrontation at the Malleable Iron though was not a sympathy strike, nor were wages the central issue. It was primarily a control strike as the moulders were insisting on union recognition and a closed shop, a practice established at Robb Engineering and the Amherst Foundry before the war. The militancy of the Malleable Iron

moulders was remarkable under the economic circumstances of the period. Over the winter of 1919 unemployment was widespread in Amherst and Canadian Car and Foundry's decision to re-open the Malleable Iron for the first time in eight years was welcomed in the town. As the details of the operation emerged, however, local unionists became increasingly suspicious of the company's motives.<sup>30</sup>

The decision to open the Malleable Iron, reported manger J.P. Pero, was influenced by two factors. First, world demand for iron castings was increasing and the company's central Canadian plants were already stretched to capacity. Second, Canadian Car and Foundry wished to meet its corporate responsibilities. "As a Canadian organization", Pero stated, it is "the policy of this company as far as possible to place their plants in different geographical sections of the Dominion". The refurbishing of the Malleable Iron attested to the soundness of this type of corporate management, Pero explained, and promised that it would lead to the creation of 500 jobs in Amherst. After promoting the importance of the Malleable Iron to Amherst, Pero cautioned that all would be lost if the moulders insisted on a closed shop and union wages. The Malleable Iron must operate "on the open shop principle", the manager warned potential employees, "not discriminating against any man because of race, color, politics or religion, nor on account of affiliation with any organizaton". Any "demand for a minimum wage" or quibbling over the piece rate schedule also would not be tolerated. Because of the high level of unemployment in the area and because the facility provided the company with only excess capacity, Canadian Car

and Foundry officials confidently predicted that the workers would accept the company's conditions.<sup>31</sup>

The moulders' decision to strike shortly after the Malleable Iron resumed production, therefore, took company officials and many local business people by surprise. Strike leader William McCarthy explained that the stoppage was a "matter primarily of principle". Before World War One the Malleable Iron operated as a closed shop and there were no compelling reasons why it should not continue to do so, the moulders protested. The moulders also demanded that their wages and working conditions should be comparable to those of Canadian Car and Foundry workers in central Canada. Thus from the moulders' perspective it was a defensive strike being fought on the central questions of a closed shop and the degree to which union moulders would be able to establish their own wage schedules, an established tradition of the moulder's trade now under assault from capital throughout Canada.<sup>32</sup> The journeymen moulders were joined in their protest by the apprentices in the shop, which completely halted production. About 40 men prepared themselves for a long strike during which they would have to survive on strike pay from the I.M.U. Canadian Car and Foundry officials refused to negotiate with the union. Pero blamed the I.M.U. for the strike, claiming that the union had ordered the Malleable Iron moulders to strike in support of the Robb Engineering moulders.<sup>33</sup>

The confrontations between the moulders and the Malleable Iron and Robb Engineering worried many local merchants and small business people. Unlike 1914 and 1919, they were much more reluctant to grant the strikers' position any legitimacy. This change in attitude was

prompted by the realization that Robb Engineering was considering declaring bankruptcy and the fact that the carworks had been closed for a considerable time over the past year. Headlines in the Daily News warned that "the Robb Industry is in Peril Because of the Moulders' Strike" and the article predicted that the company's "very existence is now in the balance". The paper reported that the potential of Robb Engineering's new Tillsoil Tractor Division "may be immense", but all would be lost if the moulders persisted in their demands. "Large orders have already been cancelled because of the trouble", the writer cautioned, and "the welfare of the employees in every department, the future of the company, and the interest of the town are all at stake". It was this fear among the merchants and small shop owners that these central Canadian controlled factories would be abandoned if the workers did not remain docile that sparked a condemnation of the strikes. This theme received increasing emphasis as the dispute stretched into its third week. "The belching of smoke from the tall stacks, the changing of hammers, and the various signs and sounds indicative of a robust industrial town", one observer remarked, were just beginning to re-appear after a long, hard winter. But "in the very teeth of such opportunity", he continued "is cast a most undesirable labour situation". This "evil work" of the moulders must be brought to an end.<sup>34</sup>

The I.M.U. strongly backed its Amherst local throughout the two disputes. Strike pay financed the moulders through difficult times, and I.M.U. organizer Barnett assisted local unionists in the negotiations. In mid July, Barnett arrived in Amherst, his second trip

to the town since the beginning of the strikes, to advise Robb Engineering moulders in a new round of bargaining with the company. He also needed to consult with 12 moulders in the carworks who had recently launched their own strike against Canadian Car and Foundry. Since they were the only moulders in the carworks and thus, at least informally, maintained a union shop, their demands were similar to those of the Robb Engineering moulders. Perhaps to avoid another long strike that would possible close all its Amherst operation, Canadian Car and Foundry officials granted the requested wage increase and promised to introduce the eight hour day. A similar agreement was soon reached with the Robb Engineering moulders, which also included the formation of a grievance committee and a layoff policy that protected married men.<sup>35</sup>

The concessions won by the Robb Engineering moulders after their six week strike and the wage increases secured by the moulders in the carworks reinforced the Malleable Iron strikers' determination to force a satisfactory agreement from Canadian Car and Foundry. Such a settlement would not be achieved for another two months. In September, Pero and the union negotiators finally achieved a settlement which granted several significant concessions to the moulders. The minimum wage for all moulders was raised to a level consistent with that of other local foundries and the piece rate schedule matched that of the company's central Canadian shops. Furthermore, Pero accepted the union stipulation that there "shall be no discrimination against anyone involved in the 'misunderstanding'". But the union did not secure one of its central demands for, as the agreement stated, the Malleable Iron

would "run an open shop and all must understand it is an open shop and work in harmony with one another". The I.M.U. had been forced to accept that non-union moulders hired during the strike would not be dismissed.<sup>36</sup>

The moulders' strikes of 1920 were impressive displays of solidarity and militancy. However, the emphasis on craft unionism tended to divide Amherst workers just at the moment when the town's economy was entering the depression of the 1920's. In the workplace, the decision of the moulders and the machinists to support totally their respective craft unions further weakened the Amherst Federation of Labor. This was particularly the case in the carworks, the center of the Amherst Federation of Labor's membership. Though few details of the situation in the carworks are known, evidence suggests that the T.L.C. affiliated labour council sponsored the B.R.C.A. raid on Dane Lodge, Amherst Federation of Labor in 1920. The new local of the American union was a labour council member and its leader, Clarence Josie, was a former activist in Dane Lodge. Tension in the labour movement in 1920 though was most evident in the political sphere. Labourists dominated the A.T.L.C. and were largely successful in steering this organization away from independent labour politics. George Sutherland, Clarence Josie, and other leaders of the A.T.L.C. remained loyal to the bourgeois parties in 1920 and encouraged the general membership to adopt a similar position. In this regard they were only partly successful because in the civic and provincial elections of 1920 some A.T.L.C. members did support the local labour party.<sup>37</sup>

Labour's response to Amherst's rapidly declining economic position passed through several stages. In autumn 1920 and through until late 1921, labour leaders took economic and political action to resist unwanted changes in the standard of living of the local working class. Even the moulders in the Amherst Foundry, traditionally the most effective group of organized workers in Amherst, however, quickly lost their power to prevent wage reductions and layoffs. A strike at the Amherst Foundry in April 1921 brought this point home to the moulders, as well as other Amherst unionist. The strike began when C. A. Lusby presented his moulders with an ultimatum during the annual spring settling of rates. Either the moulders accepted a 12 percent wage reduction, Lusby declared, or the foundry would be permanently closed.<sup>38</sup> Taking on Lusby's challenge, the determined moulders struck the plant and warned the management not to tamper with the workers' traditional right to set their own wage schedules. The strike encountered the same middle-class hostility that had greeted the confrontations of the previous year. Though the moulders had been able to overcome this problem in 1920, in April 1921, this resistance combined with other factors to make the moulders' defeat appear inevitable. I.M.U. International Headquarters hurt the workers' cause when it refused to sanction the strike because it began while the Amherst Foundry was still closed for annual maintenance.<sup>39</sup> Conditions in the labour market though were the deciding forces in the confrontation. Unemployment in the area gave Lusby the upper hand in the dispute. As he reported to Industrial Canada, the scarcity of jobs meant that labour found it "advisable to be more prompt and give more



faithful service than it has been doing". Lusby argued that "under the existing conditions" wages should decline by at least 20 percent. From the employer's perspective, wage reductions were the surest method of cutting production costs to meet central Canadian competition. The results were immediate compared to the tedious negotiations with the federal government over freight rates and other fiscal policies.<sup>40</sup>

The strike ended in defeat for the moulders after only 13 days. Its significance went beyond that of the immediate interest of the Amherst Foundry moulders because it made other workers wary of striking under existing conditions. If the I.M.U. members in the Amherst Foundry could not stop unwanted changes in their working conditions, the prospects for the town's more poorly organized workers were bleak. The April moulders' strike consequently was the last strike in Amherst during the 1920's. Labour market conditions that had always complicated labour organizing in Amherst had once again brought a major setback to the labour movement. As C. A. Lusby observed in Industrial Canada, rising unemployment ultimately was capital's most effective method of asserting its discipline over unruly workers.<sup>41</sup>

The seriousness of the economic crisis that beset Amherst in the later months of 1920 forced the A.T.L.C. and the Amherst Federation of Labor to put aside some of their differences. They found that co-operation was possible on many issues that came before the town council, especially those related to relief. In the 1921 February town council election, the labour movement united around a slate of candidates that went far to meet the interests of the various factions with the organization. Captain W.T.M. MacKinnon, an executive member

of the Great War Veterans Association and a supporter of the Amherst Federation of Labor, represented the I.L.P. in the coalition. A.T.L.C. representation fell to moulder William McCarthy and machinist Frank Brown; McCarthy was Liberal, Brown supported the Conservatives. The labour programme focused on relief measures and job creation measures. In the election, MacKinnon was successful, while McCarthy and Brown were close losers to the slate of businessmen running in the contest.<sup>42</sup>

Co-operation between the Amherst Federation of Labor and the A.T.L.C. continued in local affairs through the rest of the year. They took their campaign for relief to the town council chambers on several occasions. Shortly after the February elections, William McInnis, Amherst Federation of Labor, and William Rackham, A.T.L.C., successfully petitioned the town council to create a relief organization. Composed of "One Lady and One Gentleman" from each of the labour centrals and from the churches, Board of Trade, and several other local associations, the relief organization advised the town council on the distribution of relief monies.<sup>43</sup> Labour leaders took a prominent role in the deliberations of the relief organization. John Ball, Amherst Federation of Labor, served as its secretary and Frank Brown, A.T.L.C., was the vice-president. After the relief organization had been operating for only a month, Brown and Ball appeared before the town council to argue that a volunteer organization was incapable of handling a situation as serious as the one that existed in Amherst. Later, at a public meeting called to discuss the relief question, Brown, Rackham, and Dan McDonald were among the voices heard demanding

that the town hire a permanent relief officer. The recommendation was accepted by the town council and the position established.<sup>44</sup>

Labour leaders urged the town council to undertake job creation programmes, as well as the provision of relief. Frank Burke, Amherst Federation of Labor, met with the town council in July 21 and urged the town to create a special fund to finance public works like the repair and expansion of the water, sewage, and road systems. Even though some of the work was initiated, it did little to improve the position of the hundreds of unemployed men and women in Amherst.<sup>45</sup> The Amherst Federation of Labor tried to assist some of its most desperate members by paying to have its hall "cleaned and renovated". A special committee oversaw the task, while a "crowd of unemployed members" stood around the hall and observed the work of a small number of their fellow unionists employed in the project. Though the hall was reported to be in "splended condition" following its redecoration, the programme obviously did not meet the urgency of the situation.<sup>46</sup> No further suggestions seemed to have emerged and as unemployment continued to rise through 1921 and 1922 the exodus of working people from Amherst began in earnest.

The unity in civic affairs between the labourist dominated A.T.L.C. and the socialist orientated Amherst Federation of Labor did not extend to other levels of political action. Partyism among the craftsmen continued to limit the fortunes of the I.L.P. in Amherst. This became obvious in the December 1921 federal election when the Amherst Federation of Labor supported the candidacy of Captain MacKinnon, who ran under the Progressive party banner. MacKinnon and his labour party

supporters hoped to build on the I.L.P.-Farmer alliance that had proved successful in the 1920 provincial election. The Progressive candidate denounced the "financial interests" that were "pushing the farmer and the laborer to the wall". During the campaign MacKinnon's militant rhetoric was used against him by the bourgeois parties but MacKinnon was undeterred by such attacks. He told an Amherst audience that the Liberals and Conservatives could denounce him as a "Socialist, Bolshevist, or whatever they like" but he would not mute his criticism of the "present system", which MacKinnon declared "was rotten and simply made the rich richer and the poor poorer".<sup>47</sup> MacKinnon's election possibilities, especially his chance for a respectable showing in Amherst, were damaged by Hance Logan's decision to enter the campaign. Logan had lost none of his popularity in Amherst since his narrow defeat by E. N. Rhodes in the 1917 conscription election. His outspoken criticism of Canada Car and Foundry in 1919, his advocacy of Maritime rights, and the federal Liberal party's identification with Maritime grievances made Logan an attractive candidate to Amherst voters. The Conservative party was in no position to challenge Logan in Amherst, or, indeed, in Cumberland. E. N. Rhodes, perhaps sensing defeat, declined to offer in the election, choosing instead to pursue business interests in Ontario. Left to carry the Conservative banner was Amherst merchant Colonel Charles Bent. He had the task of explaining to Amherst voters why the Conservative government had not fulfilled its promises to aid the carworks and Robb Engineering.<sup>48</sup>

On the election day in Amherst, the Liberals were the political beneficiaries of the town's economic crisis.<sup>46</sup> Logan polled strong

support from all areas of the town in capturing 68 percent of the vote; in Amherst West, the most distinctly working-class poll, Logan won 75 percent of the vote.\* MacKinnon fared extremely poorly in Amherst, obtaining a mere four percent of the vote. Bent and the Conservatives also faced a crushing defeat, dropping 21 percentage points in the popular vote from the last federal election. Logan's strength in Amherst significantly contributed to his overall margin of victory in Cumberland, as he defeated Bent by 5,194 votes and MacKinnon by almost 6,600 votes. The Progressive candidate, though not faring well in Amherst, did receive respectable support in Springhill, where the growing confrontation with Besco made anyone associated with the Liberal party suspect. Across the region the election results mirrored the Amherst returns. Unlike western Canada, where the Progressive party attracted the protest vote, the Liberals, drawing on somewhat similar discontent with the political system, won 25 of 31 Maritime seats in the House of Commons.<sup>49</sup>

The magnitude of MacKinnon's defeat in the December 1921 federal election was a sign of labour's declining fortunes in Amherst. By spring 1922, the workplace structure of the Amherst Federation of Labor and the A.T.L.C. was in tatters. The Amherst Federation of Labor was considering its own dissolution, a step it would take within the next several months. The disintegration of the Amherst Federation of Labor and the A.T.L.C. in 1922 left Amherst workers without any union representation in the factories. A further result of this dismantling

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\* See Table IV, p. 175.

of the unions was the disappearance of the labour movement from direct involvement in civic elections. This problem was apparent in the 1922 town council elections when labour failed to enter a slate in the content; in fact, the tradition of offering labour slates, established before World War One, had ended with the 1921 election. In 1922, fewer than one quarter of the electors even voted and in three of the next four years all council positions were acclaimed. None of these councillors had any identification with labour.<sup>50</sup> Thus in 1922 the institutional structure of the Amherst labour movement was rapidly disintegrating, as only the provincial I.L.P. remained from among the working-class associations that had emerged over the last several decades. Even the future of the I.L.P. appeared to be in difficulty as the 1925 election approached.

Local and regional factors influenced the prospects for independent labour politics in Amherst. The town's industrial collapse that forced the closing of many factories and paralyzed the unions had a debilitating affect on the I.L.P. Many of Amherst's staunchest advocates of labour party politics joined the exodus of 1922. Frank Burke, Alfred Barton, John Ball, John Fortune, and Hillman Farnell were among this group and there were likely more leaving with them.<sup>51</sup> The geographical dispersal of the Amherst working class in the 1920s was permanent because even in somewhat better economic times there were few manufacturing jobs to attract these workers back to the town. I.L.P. supporters who remained in Amherst after 1922 faced the difficult task of keeping interest alive in the party in an economic and social context that was demoralizing for many workers.

Regional events were also affecting the viability of the I.L.P. The promising labour-farmer alliance of the 1920 election was dissolving because of the resurgence of partyism initially among the farmers. Another factor was the skillful campaign being waged by the provincial Conservative party to tap regional discontent to its political advantage. After its pitiful performance in the 1920 provincial and 1921 federal elections, the Conservative party made a special appeal to the working-class vote. Party members attacked the labour record of the Liberal Murray government, especially its support for Besco in its confrontations with the Cape Breton coalminers. Some Conservative editors also defended the workers' right to organize unions and discounted Liberal charges of "Bolshevism" against the labour movement. Direct overtures were made to the I.L.P. to join the Conservatives in an Opposition slate against the Liberals.<sup>52</sup> On a national level, the I.L.P. idea was also under pressure from a number of sources. The post-World War One recession was putting labour on the defensive as the manufacturers used the situation to weaken the union movement. Attacks by the press and the slate on the labour movement fostered hostility towards union and labour party politics. All these factors combined to dim the hopes of many I.L.P. supporters across the country.<sup>53</sup>

The 1925 provincial election determined the immediate future of the I.L.P. in Amherst, as it did elsewhere in Nova Scotia. In Amherst, the ranks of the I.L.P. were depleted by the exodus of some of its leaders and by the desertion of those members influenced by the ideological attacks by the press and other defenders of capital on the labour

movement. The I.L.P. faced a dilemma as the election approached; either it had to run independently or accept an offer from the Conservatives to form an united Opposition slate against the Liberals. Little is known about the discussion of this question within the I.L.P., through the results suggest that the members split on the issue. William McInnis and Joseph Mitchell represented the position that no compromise should be made with the Conservatives. The I.L.P. should either remain independent, they argued, or disband and await better times for the labour movement. Dan McDonald and George MacArthur apparently accepted the need to compromise with the Conservatives, likely believing that a Conservative government would be more sympathetic to labour than the Liberals.<sup>54</sup> A third position was represented by Archie Terris, the Springhill miner chosen to represent the I.L.P. in the election. He was prepared to join the Conservative party.

Terris successfully urged the I.L.P. to adopt an Opposition slate consisting of himself, P.C. Black, an Amherst businessman and the son of former M.L.A. Hiram Black, and D. G. McKenzie, the Farmer M.L.A. elected along with Terris in the 1920 election. On the one hand, Terris' decision was an astute political move to bolster his personal political fortunes in light of the declining influence of the I.L.P. across the province.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the decision did not demand any fundamental ideological shift for Terris, a labourist, who had always represented the less radical wing of the I.L.P. During the 1925 election, he was truly outraged by Liberal accusations that he was a "Red". Terris told an Amherst audience that he "believed that a



revolution should take place in the hearts and minds of men", so as to create, he explained, "a closer spirit of harmony between capital and labour".<sup>56</sup> Though it cannot be argued with any certainty, because of an absence of sources, it is probable that McDonald and MacArthur did not share Terris' enthusiasm for a "spirit of harmony between capital and labour". Their long involvement with the S.P.C. and their immersion in labour politics suggest that their choice of the Conservative party was a tactical decision made during a time of limited political options.

During the provincial election, Terris and the Opposition slate attacked the Liberals for their "firm belief in Provincial police, soldiers, machine guns and other instruments of war fare" to defend the interests of the British Empire Steel and Coal Company. Dwelling on the fears of many Nova Scotians, Terris placed the region's economic problems squarely on the shoulders of the Liberals. "Hundreds of our people are starving; hundreds are migrating to the United States, while scores of industries in the Province have closed their doors", he declared to a sympathetic Amherst audience, because "the Government in Halifax is doing nothing to alleviate these serious conditions".<sup>57</sup> The Opposition members, however, did not present any alternative policies for the province beyond their promises to bring Besco under tighter rein and to press the federal government to broaden its financial assistance to Nova Scotia. An effectively organized Conservative campaign run in the midst of the recession in Nova Scotia brought the party an impressive election victory.<sup>58</sup> In Cumberland, the Opposition slate easily won all three seats and provincially the

Conservatives collected 60.9 percent of the votes cast and secured 40 of the 43 seats in the House of Assembly.\*

In the federal elections of 1925 and 1926, the Conservative party was again the beneficiary of the weakening presence of the I.L.P. and won both elections from the Liberals by wide margins. During the 1925 election, the News and Sentinel felt compelled to comment on the number of "labour men" attending the nominating meeting of the Conservative party, a "notable" difference from previous years. Dan McDonald and George MacArthur were delegates to the meeting, a comment to their concern about the desperate situation in Amherst and across the region. The Conservative party had at least temporarily convinced even some of Amherst's most ardent labour leaders that they had no political alternative in 1925. How long McDonald and MacArthur remained active in the Conservative party is unknown, but 1925 was the only year in which their names appeared among its nominating lists. In provincial politics, Archie Terris continued to represent Cumberland until 1933 as a Conservative.<sup>59</sup>

Thus the decade that had opened on a note of optimism for Amherst's working-class leaders ended in a mood of pessimism. The solidarity of the 1919 general strike and the I.L.P. victory of 1920 gave way to division in the labour movement and the resurgence of partyism. By 1927, the labour movement had reached its lowest ebb since the 1890's. There were no union locals and the labour party that had sustained the movement during previous hard times had also disappeared. Another

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\* See Table V, p. 176.

difference between the 1920s and the earlier setbacks of 1908 and 1914 was the dispersal of the leadership cadre of the movement, as many of the younger labour leaders joined the exodus. Because of Amherst's industrial plight, few of these men and women would ever return to the town.

Amherst workers did resist the effects of underdevelopment. This struggle often galvanized around issues of wages and working conditions when employees refused to accept situations that significantly deviated from those existing elsewhere in the country. In 1919 these concerns were partly responsible for the emergence of the Amherst Federation of Labor and, in 1920 and 1921, brought the moulders and their employers into confrontation. The moulders' struggles were bitterly fought by Amherst standards and the workers' militancy can perhaps only be explained in the context of the resilience of their craft tradition. On the other hand, this tradition of labourism tended to separate skilled working from other working-class people.

The I.L.P. was another vehicle of working-class protest against regional underdevelopment in the 1920s. Its strength lay in the willingness of the pre-war socialists and the non-revolutionary supporters of labour party politics to co-operate in a common assault on the bourgeois parties. They benefitted from and, in turn, helped to create the interest in anti-capitalist ideas in the immediate post-World War One period. The I.L.P. was equally important for the alliance it tried to establish with the Farm groups that were active at the time. This was potentially a very significant development because a movement consisting of the traditional working class and independent

commodity producers, including farmers and fisherman, could have offered a meaningful challenge to capitalist ideas. In an underdeveloped region, such as the Maritimes was in the 1920s, none of these groups acting individually had the power to bring about this kind of change. The collapse of the I.L.P. and the worker-farmer alliance of 1920 still requires more extensive investigation. Partyism took its toll on the movement as the post-war radicalism that had fostered protest subsided across the country. In Cumberland, the Conservative party strategically placed itself to benefit from this development. But the resurgence of partyism cannot be explained by reference to some Hartzian notion of a political culture of conservatism, which argues that political ideas congealed in the 1840s and 1850s. With the rise of industrial capitalism, as the case of Amherst demonstrates, workers did join unions, strike, and pursue anti-capitalist ideas. By 1920 a tradition of labour and socialist ideas and organizations existed among the town's working people.

This study of the working-class response to the rise and decline of Amherst has argued that the changing fortunes of the labour movement must be understood within the context of regional underdevelopment. As a direct consequence of uneven capitalist development in Canada, secondary manufacturing declined significantly in the early twentieth century in Amherst and throughout the rest of the Maritimes. One important dimension of this process, especially in respect to Amherst, was the emergence of the region as an area of relative surplus labour, which has largely emasculated workers' power in the workplace. According to some studies,<sup>60</sup> underdevelopment increases the urgency

for co-operation between industrial workers and independent commodity producers, if the region is to escape the structural problems that have beset the area since the beginning of the century. On the other hand, these studies argue that, while a popular movement is necessary, underdevelopment deepens the economic and social divisions that separate these groups.

Table I

Cumberland Constituency Poll Returns for  
the 1920 Provincial General Election

	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Cumberland Labor Party</u>
Amherst	2,770	1,493	2,490
Fort Lawrence	66	21	119
Amherst Hill	139	48	282
Nappan	102	77	446
Hasting	155	55	377
Amherst Head	42	76	307
Linden	231	26	417
Tidnish	106	94	336
Chapman Set.	50	38	294
Pugwash	330	137	292
Wallace Bay	149	20	260
Pugwash River	165	76	351
Wallace	296	97	331
Wallace Ridge	318	52	205
Malagash	209	47	409
Westchester	154	96	279
Middleboro	187	53	427
River Phillip	323	435	223
Oxford	515	276	106
Little River	86	15	401
Oxford Junction	71	9	18
Southampton	190	38	391
Rodney	86	40	143
Springhill	796	468	2,518
Springhill Junction	71	30	20
River Hebert	209	147	749
Minudie	51	20	118
Joggins	428	100	454
Shulee	58	24	7
Advocate	305	247	101
Port Greville	177	570	108
Diligent River	125	66	372
Parrsboro	802	501	152
Halfway River	82	41	204
Maccan	147	105	184
Apple River	92	113	13
Total	10,360	6,048	14,416

Source: Nova Scotia. Journals of the House of Assembly, Appendix  
No. 32, 1920

Footnotes - Chapter VI

1. Stuart Jamiesons, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, pp. 192-221; David Bercuson, Fools and Wise Man, passim provide introductory overviews to the impact of the depression on the Canadian labour movement. For the Maritimes, in the 1920s, see Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement; David A. Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Miners, 1917-1926" (Ph.D. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1979); Dawn Fraser, Echoes from Labor's War: Industrial Cape Breton in the 1920s (Toronto, 1976); Donald Macgillivray, "Cape Breton in the 1920s: A Community Beseiged" in B.D. Tennyson, editor, Essays in Cape Breton History (Windsor, 1973), pp. 49-67.
2. Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, p.54.
3. This information was gathered from the Labour Gazette's monthly "Industries and Trades" reports on Amherst for 1920 ad 1921. See also, Norman Pearson, Town of Amherst, pp. 12-13.
4. Report on Manufacturing in Cumberland County, pp. 35-37, 57-58; "A comparison of Employment Conditions inthe Maritime Provinces on February 3, 1922 and February 3, 1923, as shown by Reports fom Offices of the Employment Service of Canada", P.A.C., RG 27, V. 184.
5. Norman Pearson, Town of Amherst, pp. 12-13; Graham Hennessey Interview, 1976.
6. Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, p. 62; Norman Ritchie, The Story of Robb's, p. 22
7. Ibid.
8. Monetary Times, 21, 28 December 1917.
9. "Receivership Notice", Robb Papers, V. 14, Dal. Archives; Who's Who and Why 1919-1920, pp. 243, 1072.
10. Report to the Board of Directors, 16 November 1921, Robb Papers, V. 14, Dal. Archives; G. H. Duggan to Shareholders, 30 January 1923, Robb Papers, V. 14, Dal. Archives; Petition to the Superior Court of Quebec, Robb Papers, V. 14, Dal. Archives; Dominion Bridge Offer to Purchase, Robb Engineering, 2 October 1923, Robb Papers, V. 4, Dal. Archives.
11. The Busy East, November 1920, pp. 5-11. For an overview of the emergence of agitation over Maritime grievances, see Earnest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement.
12. Amherst, Minutes, 21 February 1921.

13. Ibid., For an account of a similar meeting with the government of Mackenzie King, which brought a similar response from Ottawa, see Amherst, Minutes, 22 May 1922. In October 1922, the town council was still petitioning Canadian National Railways to "fulfill the long outstanding promise of Car orders" for the local shops. Amherst Minutes, 23 October 1922. By May 1923, the council - board of trade trek to Ottawa had become an annual event. The results for the town, however, were unfortunately no better than in previous years. Amherst, Minutes, 8 May 1923.
14. Industrial Canada, February 1922, Earnest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, p. 62.
15. Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement offers a good discussion of the impact of higher freight rates on Maritime industry.
16. Eastern Federationist, 19 July, 2 August 1919; Workers' Weekly (henceforth W.W.), 7 November 1919, 20 March 1920; One Big Union Bulletin, 27 May 1920.
17. D.Ns., 15, 19 April 1920; "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #20 (103), RG 27, V. 320, P.A.C.
18. Halifax Herald, 16 April 1920; D.Ns., 19, 24, 27, 28 April, 3 May 1920; "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #20 (103), V 320, RG 27, P.A.C.
19. Union Worker, 9 July 1918; W.W., 23 April, 18 June 1920; International Association of Machinists, Bulletin, October 1920. Studies that consider the rise of the I.L.P. in Nova Scotia include D. Frank "The Cape Breton Coal Miners, 1917-1926", pp. 290-389; Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, pp. 41-51; A. A. MacKenzie, "The Rise and Fall of the Farmer-Labour Party in Nova Scotia", (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1969); G. A. Rawlyk, "The Farmer-Labour Movement and the Failure of Socialism in Nova Scotia", in Laurier LaPierre, et al., editors, Essays on the Left (Toronto), 1971), pp. 31-41, and "Nova Scotia Regional Protest, 1867-1967", Queen's Quarterly, V. 80 (Spring 1968), pp. 105-123.
20. W.W., 26 March 1920; N. & S., 25 March 1920; A. MacKenzie, "The Rise and Fall of the Farm Labour Party in Nova Scotia", p. v.
21. N. & S., 2 July 1920.
22. Ibid.
23. A. MacKenzie, "The Rise and Fall of the Farmer-Labour Party in Nova Scotia", p. v-vii; E. Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, pp. 41-51; N. & S., 9, 27 July 1920.



24. Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rigths Movement, p. 47.
25. David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Miners", A. MacKenzie, "The Rise and Fall of the Farmer-Labour Party in Nova Scotia; G. A. Rawlyk, "The Farmer-Labour Movement" all consider the collapse of the I.L.P.-Farmer alliance after 1920.
26. John Saville, "The Ideology of Labourism", pp. 213-226.
27. Union Worker, June 1920; International Molders' Journal, March 1920; Report on Labour Organizations in Canada, 1920, pp. 157, 164.
28. Compiled from biographies of Amherst labour activists, from Report on Labour Organizations in Canada for the years 1920-1930 and T.L.C., Report of Proceedings, 1921, n.p.; 1922, p. ix.
29. D.Ns., 3 June 1920; "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #20 (200), RG 27, V. 303, P.A.C.
30. Ibid., Strike #20 (245), RG 27, V. 322.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.; D.Ns., 15 July 1920. The moulders contention that the Malleable Iron was a closed shop before World War One was misleading. Union and non-union moulders worked together in the plant before 1914 and, in Amherst, the only closed shop was the Amherst Foundry.
33. D.Ns., 15 July 1920; "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #20 (45), RG 27, V. 322, P.A.C.
34. D.Ns., 12, 25 July 1920.
35. "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #20 (200), 20 (45), 20 (270), RG 27, V. 321, 322, P.A.C. Labour Gazette, October 1920.
36. "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #20 (45), RG 27, V. 322, P.A.C.
37. Report on Labour Organizations in Canada 1920, p. 120; "Strikes and Lockouts", Strike #20 (245), RG 27, V 322, P.A.C.
38. Ibid., Strike #21 (97), RG 27 V 325.
39. Ibid.
40. Industrial Canada, February 1922.
41. Ibid.
42. N. & S., 4 February 1921.

43. Amherst, Minutes, 21, 23 February 1921.
44. Ibid., 29, 30 March 1921.
45. Ibid., 25 July 1921. Norman Pearson, Town of Amherst, p. 12 The town council borrowed \$15,000 in 1922 to finance this work. Amherst, Minutes, 22 March 1922. Another response to the depression was the revival of interest on council to have the provincial government allow the town to levy a special tax on non-resident workers. Ibid., 2 January 1923.
46. D.Ns., 30 March 1921.
47. N. & S., 4, 8 November 1921.
48. Ibid., 11, 15 November 1921; Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, p. 45.
49. Ibid., pp. 82-83
50. N. & S., 31 January, 9 February 1922; 9 February 1923; 1 February 1924; 30 January 1925; 29 January 1926.
51. Winifred Bulmer Interview, 1977; Thaddie Gould Interview, 1977; Robert McKay Interview, 1976; Albert St. Peter Interview, 1977; John Davidson Interview, 1976.
52. Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, p. 137.
53. Stuart Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, pp. 192-221. Sociologist R. J. Sacouman argues that the Antigonish Movement also helped to dissipate the discontent event among small producers, especially farmers and fishermen. For example, see his "The Differing Origins, Organizaion, and Impact of Maritime and Prairie Co-operative Movement to 1940" in R. J. Bryn and R. J. Sacocimin, editors, Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada, pp. 37-58.
54. N. & S., 15 September 1925; James Mitchell Interview 1976.
55. The conflict in the Cape Breton I.L.P., for example, is well documented in David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Miners", pp. 352-357. See also, G. A. Rawlyk, "The Farmer-Labour Movement", pp. 35-41.
56. N. & S., 8 May, 26 June 1925.
57. Ibid.
58. Ernest Forbes, The Maritime Rights Movement, pp. 372-373.

59. N. & S., 25 September 1925.
60. R. J. Bryn and R. J. Sacouman, editors, Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada, pp. 11-14.

## Conclusion

Two central themes were woven throughout this study of Amherst, Nova Scotia. First was the consideration of the historical forces that shaped the town's emergence as a regional manufacturing center in the late nineteenth century and later accounted for Amherst's precipitous decline into a state of chronic crisis. The transition to industrial capitalism was fostered by a group of aggressive local merchants and master craftsmen who built their small foundries and wood-working shops into nationally competitive industries. Their success offers a further example that significant levels of industrialization were achieved in the Maritimes and that this kind of development occurred in the secondary sector of the economy as well as in the primary sector, the more studied dimension of the region's economic history. But in an important sense the activities of Amherst's capitalists were not exceptional for the region. As other studies have shown, Halifax investment houses made impressive financial commitments across Canada and in the Caribbean, manufacturers in Moncton and Saint John competed in national markets, and promoters poured huge sums of capital into steel and coal production in Cape Breton and New Glasgow. Amherst like many other Maritime towns benefitted substantially from the general expansion of the Canadian economy at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Why did Amherst decline after achieving what appeared to be a strong and diversified manufacturing base in the early twentieth century? In addressing this problem, the study has argued that the social and economic policies of the federal and provincial states, market and geographical factors, the availability of resources and, in some instances, ineffective management were among the factors that contributed to Amherst's decline after 1909. These explanations, however, must be situated within the economic and social context of the changing structure of industrial capitalism in Canada in the twentieth century. Amherst's de-industrialization was one feature of the centralization and concentration of economic and political power in Canada, a process that began in the mid-1890s. This creation of a national economy subordinated the needs of the regions, like the Maritimes, to those of the metropolitan centers of Canadian capitalism.

The long term consequences of Amherst's integration into the national economy were several. First, the collapse of secondary manufacturing in the town was permanent and second, as a result of this collapse it has suffered with chronically high levels of unemployment. In 1939, when Amherst marked its fiftieth anniversary as an incorporated town, there were no festivities comparable to the Old Home Week celebrations of 1910. There was little to boast about on the eve of World War Two. Its population stood at pre-1900 levels and 20 percent of its residents, or over 450 families, were on relief. The war brought some temporary development because the demand for munitions and other instruments of war was so great that even Canada's areas of marginal industrial production had to be utilized. After 1945, when

this excessive productive power was no longer required, a return to conditions similar to those of the pre-war period occurred. Undercapitalization of its remaining industries and high levels of unemployment have persisted in Amherst through to this day.

The working-class response to the emergence of industrial capitalism in Amherst was the second of the study's central themes. Material conditions were never favourable to the development of a strong labour movement in Amherst. The surplus labour supply readily available in the area weakened the possibilities for collective action because strikers could usually be replaced by non-union labour. Many of Amherst's workers had rural origins that seldom included a union experience, which likely made them somewhat suspicious of the labour movement. Differentiation among workers according to their skills aggravated the situation, as craftsmen defended their position in the workplace but proved less zealous in the defence of other workers.

Skilled working men organized the first craft unions in Amherst, a decade after the failure of the Knights of Labor struggle in 1890. The craft union was the central institution of the early labour movement and it played an important role in eroding the barriers that separated skilled workers. Craft unionists also formed the first labour council that brought workers together to discuss co-operation on local labour and political issues. The isolation of Amherst skilled workers from those elsewhere in the region also began to decline with the emergence of the craft union movement in the town. Labourism was the dominant ideology among skilled workers in the pre-World War One era. This ideology fostered the craft unionist resistance to changes in their

status in the workplace but seldom led them in search of broader working-class goals. After the war, many labourists continued to oppose industrial unionism and in the early 1920s organized a labour council in opposition to the Amherst Federation of Labor.

Not all skilled workers accepted the limited objectives of the labourists. By 1914, a significant minority of these workers were interested in socialist ideas and, as class conscious workers, they began to challenge the institutional and political hegemony of labourism in Amherst. During World War One, the conditions that encouraged the radicalization of Canadian workers and the specific problems of Amherst's economy brought skilled and unskilled workers together for the first time in the Amherst Federation of Labor, or the One Big Union. The structure of the union, an industrial organization of all working people in Amherst, was in itself evidence of the heightened working-class identity of the period.

In the early 1920s, the unity of the immediate post-World War One period eroded for a number of reasons. Across Canada, the state, the press, and business launched an aggressive campaign to discredit the One Big Union and other militant working-class organizations. In some instances, this attack was joined by craft unionists concerned with the continued privileged existence of their organizations. In Amherst, these forces combined with the collapse of the local economy to weaken severely the labour movement. Workers were geographically dispersed across the country and the closing of the factories narrowed the possibilities for labour action. Unlike the labour movement in many other Canadian towns affected by the open shop movement of the

employers and the post-war recession, the Amherst labour movement never regained the influence of the earlier period. In this regard, the 1920 provincial election was of particular importance because it pointed to the potential for change when industrial workers and independent producers decided to co-operate politically. Ideological and structural pressures brought the collapse of the alliance and as yet no alternative has emerged to replace it.



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