

The Right to Manage: Vancouver Employers' Associations, 1900-1923*

ANDREW YARMIE

I

New methodologies and, in particular, the shift from institutional to integrative studies have revealed the complexity of class relations in Canada's historical development. The old teleology which focused on the evolutionary growth of class structure, trade unions, and industrial relations has been questioned by revisionist accounts of restricted class formation and the limited impact of labour radicalism. In this manner the progressive trajectory established by labour historians has been recast by evidence of internal class fragmentation and retrenchment.

Revisionist historians have added new dimensions to the study of class relations, but their analyses have been constrained by a continued focus on the workers' position in the power structure.¹ Insufficient attention has been given to the employers' organizational development and their tactics to counter unionism. Adam Smith's warning in his *Wealth of Nations* (1776) still remains germane.

We rarely hear, it has been said, of combinations of masters, though frequently of workmen. But whoever imagines, upon this account, that masters rarely combine, is as ignorant of the world as of the subject.²

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¹ For reviews of the literature on Western Canadian class relations and the revisionist approach see R. A. J. McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver, 1886-1914: Urbanism and class in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 69/70 (Spring/Summer 1986): 33-69 and J. R. Conley, "Frontier Labourers, Crafts in Crisis and the Western Labour Revolt: The Case of Vancouver, 1900-1919," *Labour/Le Travail* 23 (Spring 1989): 9-37.

² A. Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976 edition), 75. While the employers' role in shaping management-labour relations in Canada is generally acknowledged, studies of employers' organizations and their impact remain few in number. M. Bliss, *A Living Profit, Studies in the Social History of Canadian Business, 1883-1911* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) and P. Craven, *An Impartial Umpire, Industrial*

This study's intent is to expand the integrative approach by concentrating on the origins, structure, strategy, and impact of employers' organizations rather than trade unions. The primary focus will be on the Employers' Association of Vancouver, formed in 1903, and its successor, the Employers' Association of British Columbia, established in 1918. As the most active anti-union organizations in the province, they serve as case studies of employers' external strategies and may be useful vehicles for comparison with other provincial associations.

The first step must be to recognize that industrial relations in British Columbia were significantly shaped by the structure and style of management. Too often, employers have been perceived as reactive rather than active in their relations with labour. This traditional approach does not adequately examine the conscious choices open to employers and their subsequent strategies. In their need to adjust to economic, technological, and trade union influences, employers developed both internal and external systems of labour control. At the plant level, internal structural reorganization based on scientific management principles was instituted by some employers to achieve optimum labour productivity.³ The other, and more typical, approach was direct control over hours, wages, and working conditions by coercion and close supervision. To be effective, this required the development of external organizations capable of defending managerial prerogatives and the employers' right to unilateral control over the workplace.

Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) provide the groundwork for further research, but employers' associations are not central to either study. Provincial studies by R. A. J. McDonald, "Business Leaders in Early Vancouver, 1886-1914" (Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1977) and P. E. Roy, "The British Columbia Electric Railway Company and its Street Railway Employees: Paternalism in Labour Relations," *BC Studies* 16 (Winter 1972-73): 3-24 may be similarly classified. The process of examining employer strategies has been started by J. R. Conley in "Class Conflict and Collective Action in the Working Class of Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1919" (Ph.D. thesis, Carleton University, 1986) and in his above-mentioned article. For an investigation of eastern employers see M. Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979), which contains a chapter on the Employers' Association of Toronto.

³ The importation of American scientific management (Taylorism) by firms such as the Grand Trunk and of British paternalism by the British Columbia Electric Railway were used to subordinate their workforce. Control through specialization of labour, bureaucratic structures, and welfare schemes (housing, hospitals, schools, and recreation) was increasing during this period. See Craven, *Impartial Umpire*, 33-97, and Roy, "Paternalism in Labour," 3-24. Histories of American scientific management are developed in H. Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974) and D. Nelson, *Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).

Theoretically, the shift from independent to collective methods created opportunities to establish new systems of social and industrial relations. The potential for change and development, however, tended to be determined by the organizational stage of both the unions and employers' associations. Early growth stages usually witnessed the application of existing confrontational methods to the new collective organizations in order to create more aggressive and effective policies. At advanced stages, where both trade unions and employers' associations were more structurally developed in number and permanency, peaceful co-existence through collective bargaining by reciprocal organizations became possible.⁴

Two major peaks in the development of British Columbia employers' associations in 1903-04 and 1918-23 reveal the impact of changing organizational and structural development on strategies. The defence of capitalist hegemony and the outright war against unions at the beginning of the century has to be compared to the First World War era when employers were more receptive to co-operative relations and appeared to take a leadership role in industrial relations by promoting industrial councils. The overall responsibility of employers' associations for an increase in class conflict and the polarization of society or, contrarily, for industrial co-existence can only be determined by a comparative analysis of their structural evolution and strategies.

II

While exhibiting regional influences, Vancouver employers fit into national and international patterns of industrial relations. cursory surveys of British, American, and Canadian employers reveal that collective action increasingly came to replace independent resistance to trade unions in each country. British employers were the first and the most successful in the use of employers' associations. After an initial confrontational stage, British employers adapted their associations to create a new system of industrial relations which ultimately favoured management. The development of permanent industry-wide associations in the 1890s enabled employers to use conciliation, arbitration, and sliding scales to reassert their managerial rights. Long-term central procedure agreements were now possible and

⁴ This pattern of organizational development and industrial relations is modelled on material presented in the British case by W. R. Garside and H. F. Gospel, "Employers and Managers: Their Organizational Structure and Changing Industrial Strategies," in C. Wrigley, ed., *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1875-1914* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), I, 103-12.

acted to restrain strike activity and stabilize industries. The existence of a strong union movement and 1,487 employers' associations by 1914 provided the structure to work out a new pattern of national bargaining and laid the basis for a formal system of industrial relations.⁵

In the United States a similar pattern emerged, with local employers' associations consolidating to become state and then national organizations. The 1890s provided employers' associations with opportunities for experimenting with both offensive and co-operative strategies. Effective power tactics, such as the use of strikebreakers and blacklists, were, for example, applied in the infamous 1894 Pullman strike.⁶ More subtle methods, comparable to those initiated by British employers, could be found in the industry-wide agreements reached in the building, coal mining, and iron molding trades. At the turn of the century American employers could turn in either direction. The return of prosperity and a consolidation of monopoly control led them to choose a belligerent stance and to escalate their war against unions. In the next two decades a new employers' movement extended the area of conflict by transforming its offensive from a specific trade into a community attack. City-wide employers' associations such as those in Dayton, Ohio (1900) and San Francisco (1901) were organized and supported by anti-union Citizens' Alliances. Instead of promoting central procedure agreements, the National Association of Manufacturers initiated nation-wide open-shop drives from 1903 onwards. These culminated in the most famous campaign, the 1920 "American plan," which drew approximately 2,000 employers' associations into the fight.⁷

In their evolution and strategies Canadian employers' associations reflected a mixture of the British and American experience. Faced with similar union threats to the internal control of the labour process, employers established approximately thirty organizations in the 1880s and 1890s. Only a few of these bodies, such as the National Founders' Association, National Metal Trades Association, and the National Association of Mas-

⁵ A. H. Yarmie, "Employers Organizations in Mid-Victorian England," *International Review of Social History* 25 (1980) 209-35, Garside and Gospel, "Employers and Managers," 105-06, and C. Wrigley, ed., *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1914-1919* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), 161-62.

⁶ A very general and chronological description of American employers' associations is provided in C. E. Bonnett, *A History of Employers' Associations in the United States* (New York: Vantage Press, 1956). The offensive strategies are discussed in P. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1955), II, 260-62.

⁷ Foner, *Labor Movement*, III, 28-39, and R. W. Dunn, *The Americanization of Labor: The Employers' Offensive Against the Trade Unions* (New York: International Publishers, 1927), 21-22, 40.

ter Plumbers, were able to reach beyond a local sphere.⁸ The 1902 policy decision made by the main national organization, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, to not follow the open anti-union activity practised by the American National Association of Manufacturers confined the organizational structure and counterattacks to a city or regional level.⁹ The Toronto Employers' Association, formed on 14 October 1902 and described by the *Labour Gazette* as a "very important event in the labour chronology of the Dominion," set the stage for city-wide associations in Vancouver, Kingston, Berlin and Winnipeg.¹⁰ When employers in Calgary formed an association in 1903 the Vancouver Trades and Labour Congress correctly alleged that it was another example of capitalists combining to "smash up unionism."¹¹ Counterattacks and open-shop campaigns were to be the main strategies until the First World War shifted the economic balance in favour of labour. War-time industrial councils and postwar co-operative schemes initiated by employers proved, however, to be an aberration in industrial relations. Despite an increase in the number of employers' associations to an estimated 353 main and branch associations by 1927,¹² Canadian employers failed to create a national movement and therefore were incapable of formulating a new system of industrial relations. City-wide and provincial organizations had dominated the movement since 1902, and among these the Employers' Association of Vancouver may be ranked as one of the most important.

By the First World War, British Columbia employers had created a network of associations to protect and promote their interests. The earliest organizations were in the two primary industries; lumbering (B.C. Shingle Manufacturers' Association, 1894) and fishing (B.C. Salmon Packers' Association, 1898). Following the national trend, organization increased at the turn of the century and in 1905 twenty-six of the total 220 Canadian

⁸ For a directory of employers' associations see *Labour Gazette* VI (September 1905), 279-88 (hereafter cited as *LG*). Brief histories are to be found in Bliss, *Living Profit*, 92-93, and Craven, *Impartial Umpire*, 123-29.

⁹ Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Canadian Manufacturers' Association, MG28 I 230, vol. 6, Minutes of Executive Council, 18 September 1902, 59. This decision was based on the need to keep labour as an ally in the association's campaign for tariff protection.

¹⁰ *LG* III (November 1902): 374. The Toronto Employers' Association is described in Piva, *Working Class in Toronto*, ch. 6.

¹¹ Vancouver Trades and Labour Council Minutes, June 1903, Special Collections, University of British Columbia (hereafter cited as VTLC).

¹² Canada: Department of Labour, *Report of the Department of Labour, March 31, 1927* (Ottawa: 1928), 71.

associations were in British Columbia.¹³ As elsewhere, employers tended to group into specific local trade organizations such as Fraser River Cannery Association (1900), Ship Masters' Association (1901), B.C. Loggers' Association (1901), Vancouver Builders' Protection Association (1902), Builders of Victoria (1902), Victoria Master Painters (1902), B.C. Mining Association (1903), and the B.C. Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers' Association (1907).¹⁴ The first city-wide general association in British Columbia, the Employers' Association of Vancouver (1903), mirrored the structure of the Toronto Employers' Association, while its successor, the Employers' Association of British Columbia, extended general association to a provincial level. National political representation was maintained from 1901 by the formation of a British Columbia branch of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, while provincial legislative interests were more directly defended by the establishment of the British Columbia Manufacturers' Association in 1913.¹⁵ The number of associations directly concerned with industrial relations reached its highest level in 1922, when thirty-seven associations represented the principal industries.¹⁶

The stated objectives of these associations were as diverse as the industries they represented, but they may be classified into the three basic categories of trade, industrial, and legislative interests. Associations often incorporated all three objectives in their mandates. The Fraser River Cannery Association and the B.C. Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers' Association, for example, were organized for the purpose of setting rates and prices for their respective industries but also engaged in political lobbying in Victoria and Ottawa and intervened in labour negotiations.¹⁷ The British Columbia

¹³ *LG VI* (September 1905): 279-87. The directory noted increased activity across Canada with fifteen organizations established in 1902, twenty-nine in 1903, and thirty-two in 1904. Ontario with 106 and Quebec with 33 employers' associations reflected their higher density of manufacturing. For B.C. Salmon Packers' Association see K. Ralston, "The 1900 Strike of Fraser River Sockeye Salmon Fishermen" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1965), 98.

¹⁴ See respectively International Pacific Fisheries Commission, 6-2; Fraser River Cannery Association Minutes, 25 January 1900, Special Collections, University of British Columbia (hereafter cited as IPFC); *LG VI* (September, 1905): 285; *LG II* (December 1901): 342; *Daily News Advertiser*, 21 November 1902, 4; *LG VI* (September 1905): 281; *Daily News Advertiser*, 21 February 1903, 2; and Council of Forest Industries, box 84-23, B.C. Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers' Association, Special Collections, University of British Columbia (hereafter cited as CFI).

¹⁵ CFI, box 37-8, Canadian Manufacturers' Association (B.C. branch) minutes, 18 October 1901; *Industrial Progress and Commercial Record*, 1913, 31.

¹⁶ Province of British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for year ending 31 December 1922* (Victoria, 1923): 36-37.

¹⁷ IPFC, Fraser River Cannery Association Minutes, 25 January 1900, CFI, box 84-23, British Columbia Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers' Association, Memorandum

branch of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association adhered more strictly to the political profile and basically followed the national lead by campaigning on tariff issues. The B.C. Manufacturers' Association, on the other hand, reflected local disaffection with the national approach and promoted industrial prosperity on a regional basis.¹⁸ In their constitutions and public statements a number of associations claimed exemption from labour issues, but their actions often demonstrated their anti-union objectives. Industrial crises and legislative issues such as labour laws and social legislation favouring labour generally brought most employers' associations into active opposition. General industrial organizations like the Employers' Association of Vancouver, while organized for both industrial and political objectives, tended to expend their energy on industrial issues.

III

In their organizational structures, objectives and strategies, British Columbia employers' associations may be viewed as microcosms of national and international employers' associations, but any thorough historical investigation must give consideration to the local industrial environment. Vancouver's mixed industrial infrastructure, based on staples production and manufacturing, created management-labour relations which both reflected and contrasted with eastern trends.¹⁹ Unions, trade councils, provincial government bodies and employers' organizations responded more to their immediate environment than to national or international patterns. Common strategies are to be found in the various employers' movements, but the catalysts for conflict or peace were generally local issues.

The ground for the establishment of the Employers' Association of Vancouver, for instance, was prepared by the post-1900 mobilization of British Columbia trade unions and the growing division in class relations. A new militancy among the labouring classes challenged both the employers' political and economic power. Socialist leaders, such as Frank Rogers and William McClain, were perceived and attacked as dangerous to the established economic order, but the real threat to employer autonomy came from

of Association, 1907. For delegations to Ottawa on trade and tariff issues see minutes, 28 April 1904 and 8 December 1904.

¹⁸ CFI, box 37-8, Canadian Manufacturers' Association (B.C. branch) minutes, 16 October 1901; *Industrial Progress*, 1913, 34. While the tariff and other legislative issues were central to employers' interests, the breadth of these activities has necessarily led to their exclusion from this study.

¹⁹ See McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 33-69, and Conley, "Frontier Labourers," 9-37.

the grassroots expansion of the labour movement from 100 local unions in 1900 to 216 locals in 1903. A general obsession with autonomy and unilateral control of their firms predetermined employer hostility and repression. Every method for breaking unions from non-recognition to open violence was applied in their individual battles with unions. Strikebreakers, dismissals, blacklists, and espionage became common weapons as employers adopted the maxim "repression pays."²⁰ This pattern of hostility became a principal feature of labour-management relations and predisposed employers to find methods for strengthening their counterattack.

The infamous 1903 United Brotherhood of Railway Employees (UBRE) strike brought the strike wave and the crisis in class relations to a climax. The unionization of what the Canadian Pacific Railway regarded as an unacceptable class of workers — the unskilled clerks, ticket agents, and freight handlers — led to one of the most repressive campaigns in early British Columbia union history. The company established its position with a blanket statement that it would "spend a million dollars to kill the UBRE."²¹ R. Marpole, general superintendent for the CPR, claimed that the company had a right "to retain control and management of employees without interference from any irresponsible officials."²² Union pressure in the form of a walkout of longshoremen, teamsters, messengers, and steam shipmen failed to influence the company. Instead British Columbia's first great sympathy strike was met by the use of strikebreakers, espionage, and violence. Class tensions were further heightened by the concurrent strike of the Western Federation of Miners at Dunsmuir coal mines on Vancouver Island. Both the UBRE and Western Federation of Miners were identified as promoters of socialism and branded as enemies of the province's economic and political structure. Fears of a socialist conspiracy to damage the western economy were conveniently confirmed by the 1903 royal commission, while the repressive tactics which characterized the companies involved were ignored.²³

²⁰ A. R. McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement: 1899-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 44-48, P. Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia* (Vancouver: British Columbia Federation of Labour, 1967), 37, and McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 48-57. Conley observed that out of 189 strikes between 1900-19, employers' reaction could be classified as hostile in 72 cases and extremely hostile in 45 cases; "Class Conflict," 182-85.

²¹ *Vancouver Daily Province*, 6 March 1903, 1. The origins of the strike are outlined in H. J. Tuck, "The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees in Western Canada, 1898-1905," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 11 (Spring 1983): 63-88.

²² *Colonist*, 10 March 1903, 1.

²³ Tuck, "United Brotherhood," 80-85; Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 41.

Between 1901 and 1903, twenty-four strikes had disrupted the Vancouver economy and polarized society, but it was the UBRE conflict, with its 38,075 striker days, which consolidated employer interests into the city's first general employers' association.²⁴ Among the 103 original members who joined the association in May 1903, a significant number of companies had been affected by the sympathetic strikes. The teamsters and steam shipmen's walkouts, for example, explained the presence of B.C. Transfer Co. Ltd., Pacific Transfer Co., Mainland Transfer and Union Steamship Co. in the new organization. Wholesale grocers such as Kelly Douglas and W. H. Malkin who had experienced disruptions in their business activity were also active members.²⁵ The social, political, and economic tensions created by the UBRE strike may be viewed as the immediate cause for association among employers, but other long-term and broader issues must be given consideration.

Vancouver employers generally were searching for a unified strategy to counter the 216 local unions with their ten to fifteen thousand members. Trades such as building, metal, and printing that faced craft union controls were heavily represented in the association. The formation of the Building Trades Council in 1901 and an increase in the number of strikes led Barr and Anderson, W. Hepburn, and at least fifteen other contractors to become involved in the new strategy. The metal trades were represented by Albion Iron Works, Ross and Howard, and Vancouver Engineering Works while Evans and Hastings, Trythall and Son, and Clarke and Stuart were listed for printing. Unionization among unskilled and semi-skilled factory woodworkers also brought seventeen lumber companies, including large firms such as B.C. Mills Timber and Trading Co., Canadian Pacific Lumber Co., Hastings Shingle Mill, and E. H. Heaps and Co. into the association. Active members from other economic interests included the New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company, F. Buscombe and Co. (wholesale crockery), Vancouver Shipyard, A. Wallace (shipyard), Braid and Co (distillery), and Bell Irving and Co. (fish canning).²⁶

An examination of the management-labour relations at New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company explains why some companies

²⁴ McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 49.

²⁵ The only list of members to be found was in VTLC minutes, 19 May 1904. This was cross-checked with *Henderson's B. C. Gazettes and Directory* (Vancouver: Henderson's Publishing Co., 1903) to establish their trade affiliations. The disruption to the wholesale trade is mentioned in *Daily News Advertiser*, 11 March 1903, 2.

²⁶ See membership list; VTLC minutes, 19 May 1904. Background information on union activity can be found in Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 39-41, McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 43-45, and Conley, "Class Conflict," 238, 249.

were moving from independent to group action. In 1902 the company manager, William Farrell, had attempted to implement scientific management techniques in order to increase efficiency and profits. Threatened by proposed changes to the internal structure of workloads and work processes, the craft workers retaliated by demanding control over entry into the labour force and higher wages. Despite attempts to replace operators with strikebreakers and the company's belligerent refusal to negotiate, the union proved victorious after a two and a half week struggle.²⁷ This ability of the union to block the company's internal control tactics led Farrell to look to external organization to gain advantage and strength.

The potential advantages of collective action had already been illustrated by specific trade groups. The Fraser River fishermen's strike in 1900 had revealed how an external association could be used to maintain control of an industry's internal operation. In this confrontation the owners who had formed the Fraser River Cannery Association relied on their organizational knowledge, experience, and unity to deny the fishermen the same rights. The labour newspaper, *The Independent*, complained that the power of association had turned the Cannery organization into "an autocratic outfit who think everybody must cringe and knuckle under to them."²⁸ Concerted action through the association provided the control mechanism for regulating maximum fish prices and production quotas for each cannery, thereby effectively blocking formal union recognition.

Despite numerous victories, employers generally regarded themselves as being in a disadvantageous position and restricted to rearguard action. The principal reason given for the need to establish a new association was to correct the balance between capital and labour. Labour, it was argued, was more effectively organized and had "locally dealt entirely with individual employers or with sectional associations of employers."²⁹ The business community, on the other hand, was fragmented by Vancouver's diverse economy which ranged from fishing, construction, lumbering, transportation, and shipbuilding to consumer products. In strike situations these divisions in the employing class often created conflicting economic interests and could work to the advantage of labour. The telephone workers, for example, won their 1902 strike against New Westminster and Burrard Inlet

²⁷ E. Bernard, *The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers Union* (Vancouver: New Star, 1982), 22-28.

²⁸ *Independent*, 14 July 1900, 4. The advantages of group action are noted in Ralston, "1900 Strike," 92-95, 148-67.

²⁹ From the official statement of purpose stated by the Employers' Association of Vancouver, LG IV (July 1903): 8.

Telephone Company when a group of influential businessmen intervened on their behalf. While the motives of W. H. Malkin (president of the Board of Trade), H. T. Lockyer (manager of Hudson Bay Company) and F. F. Burns (Boyd, Burns and Co.) were the self-interested restoration of business activity, their support for a negotiated settlement assisted the union in achieving a closed shop.³⁰ The inherent weakness created by the sectional nature of the business community could only be overcome by the creation of a comprehensive employers' association.

Following the model established by American organizations and the Toronto Employers' Association, the new Employers' Association of Vancouver was designed to be a city-wide body and "thoroughly representative of the capital invested in this neighbourhood. . . ."³¹ Its comprehensive structure gave it a number of advantages over the existing specialized trade groups. First, it attracted a high proportion of Vancouver's largest employers who, through their size, wealth, and political connections, tended to direct wage rates, hours, and conditions of work for their industries. Large firms such as B.C. Mills, Timber and Trading Co., New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Co., and Vancouver Engineering Works also had a greater capacity to endure periods of non-productivity which made them more effective leaders in anti-union campaigns. Secondly, the association extended its scope by the inclusion of individuals who represented other associations. The presence of W. H. Malkin (president, Board of Trade), R. H. Alexander (secretary, British Columbia Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers' Association) and W. Hepburn (president, Builders' Exchange) provided important links to major industries. Another important feature was the confluence of middle class interest and public opinion achieved through the membership of the *Vancouver Daily Province*, *Daily News-Advertiser* and *The World*.³²

In establishing its industrial relations policy, two strategic choices were available to the association. It could either follow the American counter-attack against unions or promote the British experiments with industry-wide collective agreements. The association's official public statements

³⁰ Bernard, *Long Distance*, 22-28; *Daily News Advertiser*, 29 November 1902, 2, provides a list of businessmen who attempted to stop the strike.

³¹ Quoted in *LG IV* (July 1903): 8. For comparison with the objectives and constitution of the Employers' Association of Toronto, see *LG III* (November 1902), 374-77.

³² VTLC minutes, 19 May 1904. R. H. Alexander, for example, explained the objects of the Employers' Association to the Fraser River Cannery Association and encouraged their support: IPFC, Fraser River Cannery Association Executive Committee minute book, 20 May 1903. Within a year of its formation, labour had cause to criticize the local press for silencing the Employers' Association's attacks on unions; see the *Western Clarion*, 18 June 1904, 2.

presented it as a "responsible comprehensive body" which "should not be looked upon as inimical to the interests of labour."³³ It argued that the main advantage of reciprocal organizations was the greater opportunities provided for the adjustment of misunderstandings between capital and labour. This public image of a sophisticated conciliatory body, however, bore little resemblance to its real objectives.

Autocratic employer attitudes on the proper economic, social, and political structure of society predetermined antagonistic organizational strategies. Basically, employers adopted a unitary approach which allowed for only one source of authority. Their business leadership, it was argued, had provided economic and social progress for the community. On an industrial level their control over trade rules and a complete command over wages, hours, and conditions was regarded necessary and viewed as sound business practice. The workers' pluralistic view of shared authority through political representation and union regulation, on the other hand, was criticized for distorting normal conditions. Fraser River canners, for example, complained that they

had suffered at the hands of organized labor, the representatives of whom defied the law and resorted to intimidation, coercion, boycotting and all sorts of lawlessness; have influenced the public press, politicians and even juries, to such an extent that salmon packers have been unable to carry on their business in the manner in which it should be carried on.³⁴

These sentiments were reiterated in the association's official announcement that the time had arrived for employers to seek their mutual protection in both the industrial and political fields. Employer autonomy and a "fair return" for capital invested would be achieved by protecting its members' "rights to manage their respective business as they deem proper."³⁵

Successful anti-union campaigns in the United States and eastern Canada supported local ambitions to re-establish managerial prerogatives. In the U.S.A., in particular, newly formed employers' associations in Omaha, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh became symbols of the escalating counterattack launched by the National Association of Manufacturers in the spring of 1903. On the west coast, San Francisco was the centre of action for the anti-union Citizen's Alliance, while in Spokane employers

³³ *Daily News Advertiser*, 13 June 1903, 3; *Vancouver Daily Province*, 11 June 1903, 1. Labour immediately and accurately perceived it to be hostile and warned that it was "folly" to attempt to break the union movement; *Independent*, 11 April 1903, 3.

³⁴ IPFC, Fraser River Canners' Association, Executive Committee minute book, 9 June 1903. For general employer attitudes on business leadership see Bliss, *Living Profit*, ch. 1.

³⁵ Quoted in *Independent*, 9 July 1904, 1.

had combined and vowed to make the city an open shop. In Ontario the formation of the Toronto Employers' Association in October 1902 had signalled the start of a similar open-shop drive.³⁶ Encouraged by these events, Vancouver employers were inclined to believe that membership in the Employers' Association of Vancouver would bring them into a world-wide movement to check "the unreasonable demands of labor organizations."³⁷

Engrained prejudices shaped the association's constitution and locked it into what may be described as the primary stage of industrial relations. Instead of developing an administrative structure for collective bargaining, the bylaws focused on the employers' "right to manage." Unions were only discussed in negative terms and perceived as obstacles to efficient business practice. One bylaw, for example, singled out union officials as "leaders of mobs" and gave the executive committee the authority to prosecute "those instrumental in establishing so-called boycotts. . ."³⁸ Union control of entry into the labour force was the employers' major grievance, and it was countered by a number of provisions in the constitution. Clause 4 bluntly stated their anti-union bias and their commitment to open-shop principles. The objective of the association was

to endeavour to make it possible for any person to obtain employment without being obliged to join a labor organization and to support such persons in their efforts to do so if discriminated against by organized labor.³⁹

Another clause called for the establishment of "a uniform legitimate system whereby members may ascertain who is, and who is not, worthy of employment."⁴⁰ Under normal conditions this would give employers control over

³⁶ The buildup of American employers' associations was observed by the *Western Clarion*, 30 May 1903, 1. Further information on general American and west coast development can be found in Foner, *Labor Movement III*, 32-39, and R. E. L. Knight, *Industrial Relations in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1900-1918* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 66-67, 132-36. The open-shop campaign in Toronto is outlined in Piva, *Working Class in Toronto*, 152-55.

³⁷ IPFC, Fraser River Cannery Association, Executive Committee minute book, 9 June 1903. The labour press argued that the formation of the Employers' Association of Vancouver was an extension of the American open-shop campaign. See *Independent*, 18 July 1903, 3, and *Western Clarion*, 14 August 1903, 1.

³⁸ The association's constitution was reproduced in *Western Clarion*, 14 August 1903, 1. The Canadian Coal Operators' Association was unique in establishing collective bargaining procedures for Alberta and south-east British Columbia but its purpose ultimately was to block union development. See A. Seager, "Socialists and Workers: The Western Canadian Coal Miners, 1900-21," *Labour/Le Travail* 16 (Fall 1985), 26.

³⁹ Cited in *Western Clarion*, 14 August 1903, 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the labour market, and in a strike situation it authorized the establishment of blacklists.

In order to achieve these open-shop activities, the association had first to devise methods for overcoming the sectionalist fragmentation within the employing class. Diverse productive structures divided large and small employers in a trade, while Vancouver's wide range of economic activity generally segregated them into small groups. With employers in an isolated position unions were given the opportunity to strike one firm or trade while receiving support from co-unionists within or outside the trade. These "strikes-in-detail" placed the individual employer at an obvious disadvantage and often led to the collapse of resistance. Small employers, in particular, were extremely vulnerable to this type of pressure.⁴¹ Individual trade associations, such as the Builders' Exchange and the British Columbia Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers' Association (BCLSM), were already developing strategies to undermine this type of manoeuvre. When the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters began to place pressure on individual employers in April 1903 for an eight-hour day, the Builders' Exchange consolidated resistance by implementing an inter-trading rule. Any firm which showed signs of giving in to union demands was automatically cut off from its lumber supply.⁴² Another method of blocking co-operation between unionists was to widen the strike. The BCLSM effectively used this tactic against a June 1903 strike of bench carpenters in the sash-and-door factories. It widened the impact of the strike by refusing to supply lumber to local builders and thereby denied strikers the opportunity to find work with other contractors or to obtain funds from the carpenters' unions. Opportunities for union co-operation completely dissolved when the Builders' Exchange assisted the BCLSM by imposing a "sympathetic lock-out" of the 1,400 men in the building trades.⁴³ For employers, their victory in this strike provided a practical lesson in the power of association.

Control mechanisms were also incorporated into the constitutional provisions of the Employers' Association. Membership in the association obligated individual employers to submit disputes of general interest to the Conciliation committee. Once the issue had passed to the committee, the dispute became the association's responsibility and was not to be settled

⁴¹ For example, a number of building contractors agreed to a closed shop and the card system in 1909 because of a weak market condition and fear of bankruptcy. See the *Western Wage Earner*, July 1909, 15.

⁴² *Vancouver Daily Province*, 2 April 1903, 1.

⁴³ *Province*, 3 July 1903, 1, and *Independent*, 11 July 1903, 1.

independently.⁴⁴ Theoretically, this provision would have made the association the sole bargaining agent for its membership, but enforcement proved impossible because of employers' preference for individual negotiations.

Another obstacle to employer solidarity was the constant fear of bankruptcy. The characteristic boom/slump cycle of the Vancouver economy made small employers, in particular, reluctant to become engaged in the open-shop campaign advocated by the association. The achievement of employer solidarity, therefore, required that it provide its members with financial protection during disputes. Copying trade union tactics, the association established a strike defence fund by assessing a membership fee of five cents per month for each employee. In special circumstances such as a protracted or larger strike a special levy could be applied to assist employers. In the event of a strike members could apply to the fund in order to offer "rewards" to loyal employees who stayed on the job.⁴⁵

Basically the mandate set by the Employers' Association was to regain their "right to manage" by whatever means was necessary. In common with other areas, Vancouver's industrial relations hinged on the issues of control over the labour market and the workplace. To overcome craft union controls, employers had resolved to use external organizational strategies to achieve internal control. Immediately after its formation the association launched counterattacks in two major industries, the building and metal trades, and effectively widened the existing "crisis of the craftsman."⁴⁶ The Building Trades Council's attempt to control the labour market by use of a card system was the first target for attack. Contractors such as Barr and Anderson claimed that the workers' card system, which disallowed union tradesmen working with non-union men, obstructed business and had personally cost the company \$10,000 in lost contracts in one year. Backed by the Employers' Association, Barr and Anderson gained sufficient strength to challenge the Building Trades Council by refusing to recognize the card system.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Western Clarion*, 14 August 1903, 1. Initially the VTLC accepted the employers' conciliation committee but became opposed to it during the March 1904 machinist strike. The committee did not have any members from the metal trades and therefore was unable to deal with the issues at hand; VTLC minutes, March 1904. The machinist union preferred direct negotiations; VTLC minutes, 5 May 1904.

⁴⁵ Cited in *Western Clarion*, 14 August 1903, 1.

⁴⁶ General discussions of the "control" and "crisis" issues are : B. D. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), ch. 3, 7, and C. Heron and B. Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-14," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58 (December 1977): 423-58.

⁴⁷ *Independent*, 27 June 1903, 1.

In the metal trades, employers were also searching for methods to reduce costs by re-establishing control over the labour market and workplace. Competitive disadvantages made these crucial issues in the metal contract shops. The Vancouver Engineering Works, for example, had to find methods to compete with eastern Canadian and American manufacturers who benefited from larger production scales, better freight rates, lower wages, and longer hours. Unable to expand their economies of scale, Vancouver employers could only compete by forcing down wages and increasing hours. For Vancouver Engineering Works the major obstacles to a reduction of costs were the closed-shop conditions established by the Boilermakers' Union. The solution worked out by the manager, Colin F. Jackson, was to ignore the existing union contract and to post new shop rules arbitrarily.⁴⁸ In his position as a principal organizer and executive member of the employers' association, Jackson expected and received its full support for his plans to break the union monopoly. After confiding with the association, Jackson initiated Vancouver's first major open-shop drive on 25 February 1904 by replacing union shop rules with company regulations. The new rules posted in the middle of the night contained the following open shop clause.

In all departments union and non-union men will be employed without discrimination or prejudice. Any employee interfering, directly or indirectly, with the operation of this rule will be subject to immediate dismissal.⁴⁹

The subsequent strike by the boilermakers became a test case for the effectiveness of the association's strategies and its legitimacy.

Generally, a wide range of coercive tactics were available to employers' associations, and these were quickly applied by the Vancouver association. Jackson's posting of new shop rules had followed the common practice of breaking union contracts and then refusing to recognize or negotiate with them. In order to ensure that the Vancouver Engineering Works did not become a victim of a "strike-in-detail," the dispute was transferred from the firm to the Employers' Association. In this manner employer solidarity was heightened and the conflict was extended beyond the firm and trade into a city-wide campaign.⁵⁰ Familiar offensive tactics were then applied to weaken union strength. Union officials were an obvious target for victim-

⁴⁸ *Province*, 19 July 1904, 1. The economic background for the metal trades is discussed in Conley, "Class Conflict," 320-22.

⁴⁹ Cited in *LG V* (December 1904): 655.

⁵⁰ VTLC, minutes regular, March 1904. Jackson claimed that the issue was in the hands of the association's conciliation committee and therefore he could not deal with the conflict independently. See also *LG IV* (May 1904): 1141.

ization, and when the machinists' union president intervened on behalf of the boilermakers the company discharged him for an alleged breach of rules. Another effective method of intimidating unionists was through blacklists. Jackson, once again, initiated this aggressive action on 2 March 1904 by placing before the executive of the Employers' Association a resolution that no member employ any person on strike at his firm.⁵¹ The association's eager compliance with Jackson's request was confirmed by its minutes and the testimony of its secretary, A. E. Goodman, in the subsequent court proceedings. During the strike a blacklist was sent out on seven to eight occasions to the 120 members, a number of Victoria firms, and the Seattle Metal Trades Association. Further weight was added to the coercive power of the blacklist through the importation of English and American blacklegs.⁵² With its existence threatened, the Metal Trades Council countered the employer offensive by initiating court action and charging the association's executive with the crime of conspiracy and restraint of trade.

Viewed by the press as the most important test case between Vancouver capitalists and labour up to 1904, the trial confirmed the employers' right to combine and passively accepted their coercive tactics.⁵³ The failure of the 1873 Trade Union Act to set restrictions on the employers' use of blacklists placed the union's conspiracy charges in jeopardy. Furthermore, a background of provincial and municipal support for employers during mining, transportation, and fishing industry conflicts and a general opposition to unions worked against their case. Existing legal statutes also favoured the protection of employers' property and their right to conduct business without outside interference. In this environment, the lawyers for the association successfully argued that if workers had the right to organize, reciprocal rights must apply to employers. Concerted anti-union activity was justified as a legitimate method of preventing unions from usurping the employers' "right of controlling the details of their own business."⁵⁴ The blacklists' intent, it was argued, was not to injure the striking workers but to allow non-unionists to obtain work without facing union discrimination and to protect the trade. Despite conclusive evidence of a blacklist and personal financial injury to unionists, the Metal Trades Council's con-

⁵¹ *Independent*, 9 July 1904, 2, and *Daily News Advertiser*, 20 July 1904, 2.

⁵² Minutes for the Employers' Association of Vancouver are not available, but those for 10 June and 10 December 1903 and 2, 8, 9 and 20 March 1904 were acquired by labour lawyers and produced during the court case. See *Daily News Advertiser*, 20 July 1904, 2. For Goodman see *Province*, 22 July 1904, 1, and for blacklegs see *Daily News Advertiser*, 21 July 1904, 2.

⁵³ *Province*, 6 April 1904, 1, and *Independent*, 9 July 1904, 2.

⁵⁴ Cited in *Province*, 19 July 1904, 1.

spiracy charges and the claim of R. Mitchell, a boilermaker, for damages evaporated before an unsympathetic jury. In the end the jury ignored the union request to declare blacklists illegal and adopted a middle-ground position. The Vancouver Engineering Works was criticized for imposing arbitrary shop rules, but it found the Employers' Association free from conspiracy charges and not guilty of combining to injure the plaintiff.⁵⁵

For the Employers' Association, the strike and the conspiracy trial reinforced its belief that concerted repressive action was the most effective strategy for breaking craft union control. It had re-established unitary authority over the trade through the aggressive use of blacklists and had only received a mild reprimand. Employers had told labour, "This is our business; we are the business," and they would not abide trade union interference.⁵⁶ For the unions, the danger of industrial absolutism appeared imminent.

Over the next decade the management offensive against trade unions continued with varying degrees of success. Repressive industrial action weakened the unions, but as soon as pressure was relaxed and the economic conditions became favourable, the labour challenge resumed. The Employers' Association, on the other hand, had difficulty retaining its membership and countervailing power. A decline in union activity during the 1907-08 recession was paralleled by a reduction in the association's membership from 120 in 1904 to 75 firms in 1908. Its secretary could only report mixed progress.⁵⁷ While the association had assisted a number of city firms in achieving open shops, it had not made any significant reduction to general wage scales.

The return to prosperity sparked by the building boom of 1909-1913 led to the next labour challenge and a revitalization of the Employers' Association. The construction industry immediately became the focal point for organizational development and conflict. Labour solidified its position through the Building Trades Council and re-introduced the card system as a method of combatting open-shop principles. Concurrently, the building trades employers reacted to a buildup of union power by consolidating their strength through a number of interconnected associations. The Master Builders' Association and the Vancouver Electrical Association, for example, worked in close connection with the Employers' Association to develop anti-union strategy. These alliances were further cemented when F. T. Cope became president of both the Employers' Association and the

⁵⁵ *Daily News Advertiser*, 23 July 1904, 2, and *LG V* (December 1904): 655-56.

⁵⁶ Quoted in *Independent*, 30 July 1904, 8.

⁵⁷ *LG VIII* (May 1908): 1366.

Electrical Association, which included approximately thirty-three Vancouver contractors.⁵⁸ Their confidence may have been further bolstered by what labour critics described as the creation of an "anti-unionist contractor aldermanic board" during the 1909 civic election.⁵⁹ The presence of A. E. Goodman, secretary for the Employers' Association, and Walter Hepburn, president of the Master Builders' Association, on the city council appeared to confirm these suspicions.

The escalation of the employers' tactics from reactive to active was once again stimulated by the more successful American open-shop campaign. In December 1910 leading employers from the Pacific Northwest met at an open shop convention hosted by the American National Association of Manufacturers. The principal recommendation of the meeting called for the development of a council of west coast employers' associations for the purpose of creating a common policy, winning public opinion and establishing labour bureaus. These strategies were expected to win "industrial liberty" and the "right to manage."⁶⁰ At a subsequent conference in February 1911, which was attended by delegates from the Employers' Association of Vancouver, the Pacific Coast Federation of Employers was formed. Its mandate was to devise means of "not only defense but of aggression, if necessary, to bring about 'open shop' conditions on the Pacific Coast. . . ."⁶¹

In the same year Vancouver employers activated their offensive strategies by first promoting a membership drive and solidifying a common policy. At the beginning of the recruitment campaign in April 1911 the association already had the support of 116 firms, many of whom were the largest employers in Vancouver. B.C. Mills, Timber and Trading Co., Barr and Anderson, Canadian General Electric, Vancouver Engineering Works and B.C. Telephone Co. were among the major companies which had been charter members in 1903. The metal and construction trades were heavily represented and reflected the association's continued determination to resist craft union control. The labour situation since 1910 with strikes among machinists, carpenters, plumbers, and sheet metal workers

⁵⁸ Hoffmeister Electric Company; correspondence, Vancouver Electrical Contractors' Association, list of members, 16 March 1909. Special Collections, University of British Columbia. See also *Western Wage Earner*, July 1909, 13, 15. For conflict in the building trades see Conley, "Class Conflict," 597-604.

⁵⁹ *Western Wage Earner*, February 1910, 18. Members of city council are listed in *Henderson's Vancouver and North Vancouver Directory*, 1910, 210.

⁶⁰ Quoted in *Western Wage Earner*, January 1911, 13. Background on the American movement is provided in Knight, *Industrial Relations*, 226-36.

⁶¹ Quoted in *Daily News Advertiser*, 31 January 1911, 3.

had also drawn these groups to the association.⁶² By December, E. C. Goodman claimed that the membership had increased 400 per cent and that the association had as "members *Ninety Per Cent* of the representative business houses in the city. . . ."⁶³

The association's eight-year campaign to protect employers "in their rights to manage their respective businesses"⁶⁴ was credited for attracting the new membership. From the outset control of the workshop was presented as the key issue. In circulars to non-members, Goodman complained that whenever unions had

secured the Closed Shop they have imposed numerous working conditions which are very unpalatable to the employers, and in addition they have gradually worked the scale of wages beyond which the employers state it will be impossible to go.⁶⁵

Before employers could regain unilateral control they required not only a strong membership but also a unified policy. To achieve this end, notices containing extracts from the constitution were circulated to members. For example, one reminder encouraged employers to "make it possible for any person to obtain employment without being obliged to join a labor organization. . . ."⁶⁶ The other major constitutional goal highlighted was the association's need to "adopt a uniform system whereby members can ascertain who is, and, *Who Is Not Worthy of Employment*."⁶⁷

With both labour and capital preparing more aggressive organizational strategies, class conflict in 1911 was inevitable. Unionists, now organized in the B.C. Federation of Labour, were once again promoting the idea of a general strike as a solution to widespread discontent. Having increased its membership and revitalized its policy, the Vancouver Employers' Associa-

⁶² For a "classified list of members" see British Columbia Electric Railway, box 51, B1420, 8 April 1911, Special Collections, University of British Columbia (hereafter cited as BCER). Conley also supports the correlation between employers' resistance and craft union control; Conley, "Class Conflict," 604.

⁶³ Quoted in *British Columbia Federationist*, 9 December 1911, 1 (hereafter cited as *Federationist*).

⁶⁴ Ibid. When commenting on the objectives of the association, J. M. McVety, chairman of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, sarcastically remarked: "Their aims and objects I think are the general good and welfare of the country and particularly of the employers." Provincial Archives of British Columbia, GR684, box 1, f10, Provincial Labor Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, vol. 3, 347 (hereafter PABC).

⁶⁵ This circular was located in BCER, Letters from General Manager: R. H. Sperling to H. Williams, 12 April 1911.

⁶⁶ Quoted in *Federationist*, 9 December 1911, 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

tion appeared to be following the Americans in their resolution to destroy unionism. The occasion for class conflict was the 1911 carpenters' strike. Originally a strike over wages and the eight-hour day, it became an ideological battle between "open shop" versus "closed shop" principles.⁶⁸ While the Employers' Association joined ranks with the Master Builders' Association, and received assistance from the American Pacific Coast Federation of Employers, the workers in the construction trade called a general walk-out of approximately 4000 men.⁶⁹ After a record 241,216 strike days, the combined strength of the associations proved successful in keeping a majority of the carpenters at their old wage and hour levels.

The employers' victory in the 1911 industrial relations crisis can be partially attributed to their organization strength and tactics, and, conversely, to the craft unions' failure to move beyond their self-interested boundaries. Alliances between trade associations such as the Metal Trades Association, Master Builders' Association, and the Employers' Association provided the unity necessary to maintain the open-shop campaign. The latter's establishment of an employment bureau which furnished strikebreakers without cost to members added considerable power to their strikebreaking tactics. Frequent use of the notorious Thiel Detective Agency gave the associations the further advantage of inside information.⁷⁰ The Employers' Association, for example, claimed that it had defeated the two-year machinist strike by exerting these pressures. The increased effectiveness of the association's strategies was acknowledged by the *British Columbia Federationist* when in October 1912 it admitted that the "Bosses are too well organized to run or be Stampeded by Noise."⁷¹ Labour's realization that it had reached a climax in its history had come too late.

Despite the existence of trade councils, unions suffered from a structural inability to unite the workers against the new aggressive employer strategies. The most damaging feature was the craft unions' failure to overcome their exclusionist policies and to organize the unskilled labourers, women, and

⁶⁸ *LG XII* (July 1911): 42. J. W. Wilkinson, a representative for the British Columbia Federation of Labour, held that the Master Builders had been working for this goal since the 1910 strike. "I believe," he testified, "the dictum went forth from the organization of the Master Builders' Exchange that it intended to smash the trade union movement. . . ." PABC, GR684, box 1, f9, Provincial Labor Commission, Transcript of Proceedings vol. 3, 223.

⁶⁹ Canada, Department of Labour, Strike and Lock-out Files, PAC, RG27, microfilm T2687, vol. 298, f3378.

⁷⁰ *Federationist*, 9 December 1911, 1; VTLC minutes regular, 6 October 1910; and *Western Wage Earner*, November 1910, 12.

⁷¹ *Federationist*, 19 October 1912, 1. For the association's claim see BCER, Letters from General Manager, R. H. Sperling to H. Williams, 12 April 1911.

ethnic groups. In 1912, for example, they had only 15 per cent of the labour force organized to face the employers' challenge. The economic depression and heavy unemployment between 1913 and 1915, which further decreased union membership from 21,000 in 1913 to 11,000 in 1915, did the association's work for it.⁷² This decline in unions led to a parallel reduction in the Employers' Association's activities and a subsequent decrease in employers' interest in the association.

IV

The labour movement's recovery during the war years significantly altered the balance of industrial relations and forced employers to change their strategies. An 83 per cent increase in union membership in 1917 over 1916 was followed by a major strike wave. Across Canada, workers during 1917-20 launched more strikes than in any other previous period. The federal government had already become involved by extending the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act in 1916 to control all war industries, and it would remain active for the duration of the war. Individual Vancouver employers were also devising internal strategies to overcome labour shortages and to control workers. In shipbuilding, for example, craft skills were diluted by specialization and mechanization. A new "efficiency system" of management was also developed at Coughlan's shipyard to wrest control from the unions.⁷³ These more sophisticated methods of internal control were matched by the development of a more comprehensive external organization — the Employers' Association of British Columbia.

The acute industrial relations crisis in 1918, with over a dozen strikes in diverse trades, brought a general call for action from the business community. Protests were directed against the unions and the government. R. F. Hayward, manager of Western Power Company, criticized T. W. Crothers, Minister of Labour, for "the lack of a strong War Labor Policy on the part of the Government" and held the federal government "largely responsible for the labor unrest. . . ."⁷⁴ One organization, the Vancouver Board of

⁷² See McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 44-45, and Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 61-62.

⁷³ See Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 63, 70, and D. Cruikshank and G. S. Kealey, "Strikes in Canada; 1891-1950," *Labour/Le Travail* 20 (Fall 1987): 109. For Coughlan, see E. Lees, "British Columbia Shipyard Workers' Organization, 1916-1919: A Case Study of War Work and Industrial Unionism," paper presented to Ninth North American Labor History Conference, Detroit, 1987.

⁷⁴ BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Western Power Company, R. F. Hayward to T. W. Crothers, 12 July 1918. See also BCER, Letters from General Manager, G. Kidd to J. Davidson, 1 August 1918.

Trade, was initially willing to work in conjunction with the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council to place pressure on the government, but this co-operation broke down during the conscription controversy. When the ideological division reached a critical level during the Ginger Goodwin strike, the Board of Trade felt it could no longer work with a labour council controlled by "seditious and anti-national influences."⁷⁵ The solidarity demonstrated by the labour movement became even more disturbing to employers when they realized that it was their own weakness which allowed this to take place. After a careful examination of the situation, George Kidd, manager of B.C. Electric Railway Co., concluded that the employers' abdication of their civic responsibilities and the government's inertia were major contributors to the industrial crisis.⁷⁶

The new Employers' Association of British Columbia was expected to fill the vacuum left by the moribund Vancouver Association and to establish up-to-date priorities and strategies. "The Association," R. F. Hayward reported, "is not formed on the old line idea of putting up a fighting front against Labour Unions."⁷⁷ Instead, the committee appointed to work out its policy emphasized the need for progressive tactics rather than conflict and recommended that it follow some American techniques for overcoming social unrest. Key among these methods were counter propaganda and appeals to patriotism. In his letters to potential new members, George Kidd also emphasized the need for new strategies and set the British Whitley report and Lloyd George's co-operative approach as the models to follow. These principles of accommodation were also to be found in the constitutional statements which confirmed "the right of workmen in any one class of work, to organize on a fair and legal basis for the protection of their rightful interest."⁷⁸ The major objective of the association was held to be the securing of a "permanent improvement" in relations.

From the association's point of view the first step was to overcome sec-

⁷⁵ Vancouver City Archives, Vancouver Board of Trade, MSS.300, Council Minutes, 5 August 1918. For attempt at co-operation see Special Committee Minutes, 12 July 1918, vol 145, 75.

⁷⁶ BCER, Letters from General Manager, G. Kidd to J. Davidson, 13 August 1918.

⁷⁷ BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Employers' Association, Western Power Company, R. F. Hayward to J. D. Mortimer, 13 December 1918. The last correspondence relating to the Employers' Association of Vancouver was an appeal for funds. See BCER, box 57, B1420, G. J. Isted to G. Kidd, 23 February 1917.

⁷⁸ BCER, box 51, fB1420, Constitutional By-Laws of the Employers' Association of British Columbia, 14 August 1918. For Kidd see BCER, box 51, fB1420, G. Kidd to J. W. Fordham Johnson, 29 November 1918. The organizing committee represented thirty-three members: PABC, NWp971.65, Objects and By-Laws of the Employers' Association of British Columbia, 1918, 1.

tionalism and obtain acceptance of its proposed role as arbitrator. Only stronger administrative, financial, and industrial policies could bring employers who had "so long been accustomed to pull each for themselves"⁷⁹ into the association. Leadership was now provided by a professional manager, N. G. Neill, who had achieved "considerable success in certain organizations in Winnipeg."⁸⁰ The new constitution also required members to post a \$2,000 bond to ensure compliance with its basic principles. Membership guaranteed employers the full assistance of the association, but in return they were expected to submit the details of disputes to the executive. Other by-laws sought to overcome the tendency of companies to settle disputes affecting the entire trade when it was to their economic advantage.⁸¹ Despite this enactment of tougher regulations, disunity continued to plague the association and on 9 May 1919 Neill still had to remind members to work through the association.⁸² Internal weakness, therefore, set back its attempt to develop a unified managerial policy, but these problems remained in abeyance.

The major issue at hand was to defuse wartime union militancy by replacing the old repressive tactics with a "progressive" approach. The environment appeared suitable for a change in direction, and other organizations, such as the Board of Trade, were already investigating the benefits to be derived by establishing the industrial councils recommended by the Whitley report. Soon after its formation Neill took steps to publicize the new scheme for industrial peace. His policy document, "Industrial Autocracy or Industrial Democracy," was basically a propaganda tool to win over public and worker opinion.⁸³ Its idealistic tone and suggestions appeared to offer a remedy for the existing distrust between capital and labour. For example, its advocacy of industrial councils gave the appearance that British Columbia employers had moved away from "industrial autocracy" and were engaged in a more sophisticated or secondary stage of industrial relations.

⁷⁹ BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Western Power Company, R. F. Hayward to J. D. Mortimer, 13 December 1918.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ PABC, NWp971.65, Objects and By-Laws of the Employers' Association of British Columbia.

⁸² BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Western Power Company, N. G. Neill to R. F. Hayward, 9 May 1919.

⁸³ BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, N. G. Neill, "Industrial Autocracy or Industrial Democracy," 15 May 1919. For the Board of Trade see Vancouver City Archives, MSS.300, Vancouver Board of Trade, Fall Board Minutes, 18 June 1918. During the 1917-19 strike wave, employers across Canada generally sought settlement by negotiations and third party interpretation. Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes," 93.

In reality employers had not overcome their engrained prejudices and reactionary attitudes, and therefore opportunities for peaceful co-existence between reciprocal organizations were not possible. Labour justly remained suspicious of this “noisy exponent” of industrial councils and the “get together movement,” and was critical of the hypocritical nature of the association’s propaganda. After reviewing the association’s position, the *B.C. Federationist* questioned whether employers were marshalling their strength to work with or against unionism. Its proposal to publish a list of individuals believed to be working against the “general interest” and its opposition to eight-hour legislation were sufficient to discredit the association’s conciliatory public image.⁸⁴ Unknown to the labour movement were a number of confidential documents which revealed a more offensive hidden agenda. A resolution passed at a directors’ meeting on 17 January 1919, for example, stated

This Association advocates the principle of the open shop, believing that men should be free to join any organization, either civil, commercial or political, as they may see fit. But we do not believe that they should be forced to join any specific organization as a requirement of securing employment.⁸⁵

While existing closed-shop agreements were to be honoured, the association agreed that its main objective would be to make the open shop a general provincial policy. The limitations of its new “progressive” approach were fully exposed during the 1919 general strike.

Weeks before the strike, a confluence of middle class interests began to take shape as individual employers, professionals, and their representative organizations such as the Board of Trade, city council, and the Employers’ Association made plans to prevent a disruption of the economy. This reactionary movement against militant unionism soon consolidated into the Vancouver Citizen’s League. These types of associations were common in many American cities and basically acted as auxiliaries to employers’ associations.⁸⁶ Their anti-union stance spread the employers’ offensive to the whole community and therefore represented a greater threat to the labour movement. Although there is no evidence of a direct alliance in Vancouver, close co-operation between the two groups was highly visible. The league’s paper, the *Vancouver Citizen*, claimed that it was not a “brief for the

⁸⁴ *Federationist*, 16 May 1919, 1, 8.

⁸⁵ BCER, box 51, fB1420, N. G. Neill to G. Kidd, 3 February 1919, enclosure, minutes of directors, 17 January 1919.

⁸⁶ See Vancouver City Archives, MSS. 300, Vancouver Board of Trade, Fall Board Minutes, vol 46, May 13, 1919; BCER, Letters from General Manager, W. G. Murrin to R. W. Bartlett, 7 July 1919, and Foner, *Labor Movement*, III, 35-36.

employers,"⁸⁷ but its extreme partisan approach soon established its position. In common with the Winnipeg Citizen's League, it equated the One Big Union with revolution and evoked patriotic sentiment to condemn these "doctrines of Lenine" which had been spawned in the "cesspools" of "German intrigue" and "cultured in the uneducated minds of Russian Peasantry."⁸⁸ To secure a united front, the Citizen's League requested and received support from members of the Employers' Association. R. F. Hayward, A. B. Weeks, J. D. McNeill, and others participated in establishing the food, mechanical, and fuel departments for maintaining essential services, while the B.C. Salmon Cannery Association offered its services in protecting any men who were willing to run the steamship services during the strike.⁸⁹

The Employers' Association, in its outward appearance, at least, was careful to demonstrate a moderate position in order to justify its demands. The public meetings which it convened were exercises in propaganda and basically outlined the efforts made by employers to create co-operative relations with their employees.⁹⁰ Because the unions had gone out on a sympathetic strike rather than as a consequence of local issues, employers maintained that the workers had broken contracts established according to legitimate international union principles. This gave them the opportunity to apply international headquarters pressure against the locals. The association, for example, drafted a resolution to Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, which claimed that employers had "lived up to their engagements" and expected the "Internationals to do likewise."⁹¹

Throughout the strike the association continued to expound its moderate and conciliatory claims, but these statements masked its underlying intrans-

⁸⁷ *Vancouver Citizen*, no. 1, 16 June 1919, 1. Special Collections, University of British Columbia.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 6, 21 June 1919, 1, and no. 7, 23 June 1919, 2.

⁸⁹ BCER, box 93, f1600-14d, Western Power Company, Citizen's League Industries Department, bulletin no. 1 and IPFC, B.C. Salmon Cannery Association, Meeting of Northern Cannery, 10 June 1919.

⁹⁰ For example, F. C. Riley, manager of Bloedel, Stewart and Welch, presented the company's method of obtaining co-operation; BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, N. G. Neill to R. F. Hayward, 17 June 1919. The association issued two bulletins during the strike which emphasized the need to "re-educate" labour; BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Bulletin no. 1, 18 June 1919, Bulletin no. 2, 26 June 1919. Privately, other employers saw the strike as an opportunity to break unions. R. F. Hayward's only fear was "that the strike in Vancouver will be called off before we have scotched the revolutionary movement." BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, R. F. Hayward to J. D. Mortimer, 21 June 1919.

⁹¹ BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Bulletin no. 1, 18 June 1919.

sigent position. A "secret policy" established on 25 June blocked any possibility of a local settlement. The five point document refused to recognize the strike committee or, under any circumstances, the OBU. It also refused to discharge any workers, i.e., strikebreakers, who had joined their firms and took careful measures not to employ any undesirable (OBU) men. Ironically, the association which had constantly attempted to destroy craft unions now found it desirable to support "unions in good standing with the internationals."⁹² With these policies in existence, the workers' call for a return to work without discrimination or victimization was not possible, and as a consequence the Vancouver strike continued even after a settlement was reached in Winnipeg. Eventually, most groups of workers were able to negotiate no-victimization agreements and returned to work but had to agree to some of the conditions set out by the association. The Western Power Co., for example, only allowed the men to return after the latter acknowledged that they had broken their agreement and promised not to recognize the strike committee or the OBU. Another member of the association, B.C. Telephone Co., adamantly rejected its operators' request to return to work without discrimination and by mid-July forced a conditional surrender on the workers.⁹³

The employers' victory and the post-war depression gave them a major advantage in the next decade. In this climate the Employers' Association of B.C. worked to consolidate its position as the leader of the business community by expanding its organizational structure, increasing its propaganda and defining its policy. This need for collective action was expressed in a circular sent to members on 17 June 1919:

British Columbia is waiting for a definite and practical lead on industrial matters, and the only way to accomplish this end is to get some policy evolved which will be acceptable to at least a majority of employers.⁹⁴

The Association's secretary, N. G. Neill, expended considerable energy in trying to achieve this goal.

Success in establishing leadership over the business community was measured in the size and number of external organizations. When the association increased its membership to 200 Vancouver employers and estab-

⁹² This document was obtained and published in the *Federationist*, 27 June 1919, 1.

⁹³ *Federationist*, 27 June 1919, 1 and Bernard, *Long Distance*, 60-61. Hayward held the following opinion of E. H. Morrison, business agent for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers: "Mr. Morrison might go to hell, and . . . all members of the Trades and Labour Council might also go to hell." BCER, box 93, f1600-14d, R. F. Hayward to J. D. Mortimer, 17 July 1919.

⁹⁴ BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Western Power Company, N. G. Neill to R. F. Hayward, 17 June 1919.

lished branches in Nelson and Prince Rupert, it proudly stated that it had created the fundamental principles of co-operation between employers. Neill also promoted interprovincial links and visited Manitoba and Alberta to advocate the formation of associations. These were steps toward Neill's ambitious plan that British Columbia, because of its smaller and more simplified industrial base, lead the rest of Canada in the establishment of new systems of industrial relations.⁹⁵

With its role set, the association now attempted to grasp leadership by influencing the business community, the general public, and the workers. The association's newsletter, the *Bulletin*, was the main vehicle for establishing employer consensus, but it failed to get beyond the newsletter stage. After a few issues devoted to methods of labour management, it resorted to reporting on strikes and the association's organizational development. One article by F. C. Riley, for example, described the successful application of scientific management techniques such as piecework and technology at Bloedel, Welch, and Stewart.⁹⁶ This opportunity to create a forum for educating employers in effective methods of internal labour control appears to have been regarded as secondary to the association's major objective of promoting its structural expansion.

In its public propaganda the association adopted the general postwar reconstruction theme of co-operation. The "industrial democracy" advocated by labour and reformers throughout the war was now re-interpreted by the business community as "co-operation" and a possible solution to conflict. Mackenzie King's criticism of business self-interest and monopoly control further contributed to the establishment of a new direction in industrial relations. Following this lead, the association prior to the general strike had published five articles in local newspapers which carried the message of industrial co-operation.⁹⁷ For employers the general strike, itself, confirmed their argument that industrial harmony was being obstructed by agitators. To counter the "effects of revolutionary and destructionist teachings," which according to Neill could be found in forty-nine "Red" Canadian publications, the association decided to publish its own magazine. Designed to educate the workers, public, and employers, *The Balance*

⁹⁵ See BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Bulletin on Labor Matters, no. 1, 18 June 1919; no. 7, 18 October 1919; no. 8, 22 November 1919; and no. 9, 31 December 1919.

⁹⁶ BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, Bulletin no. 2, 26 June 1919.

⁹⁷ BCER, box 51, fB1420. Newspaper articles approved by the Employers' Association of British Columbia, 15 February-15 March, 1919. For postwar reconstruction see T. Traves, *The State and Enterprise: Canadian Manufacturers and the Federal Government, 1917-1931* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979): 24-25; B. Scott, "A Place in the Sun: The Industrial Council at Massey-Harris, 1919-1929," *Labour/Le Travail* 1 (1976): 158-59; and Piva, *Working Class in Toronto*, 166-67.

was published between June 1920 and December 1921, but financial costs led to its discontinuance.⁹⁸

Along with other associations such as the Canadian Reconstruction Association and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Employers' Association of B.C. attempted to co-opt unions by promoting a "new" system of industrial relations. The whole spectrum of welfare capitalism, with its profit-sharing schemes, pension plans, recreational facilities, medical services, and the scientific management of safety and working conditions, was viewed as a method of winning worker loyalty. Central to these new ideas of co-operation was the development of industrial councils. The establishment of a new industrial relations system had been recommended both by the 1919 Royal Commission on Labour and the subsequent National Industrial Conference in September of the same year. Following the lead of the American War Labor Boards and the British Whitley report, the Industrial Conference, for example, promoted the formation of industrial councils as a solution to Canada's industrial unrest.⁹⁹ The B.C. Association had already conducted a two-month study of the Whitley report and was actively encouraging councils as a method for structuring postwar labour relations.

From the British experience it could be seen that councils worked to the employers' advantage in two major ways. First, the councils by establishing industry-wide wage rates blocked the escalation of wages by union leapfrog tactics during local contract negotiations. Secondly, collective bargaining at councils deterred union militancy during economically profitable periods. This increased control over labour was recognized by Canadian employers and created a "spirit of Whitleyism," but the British system remained less popular than American models.¹⁰⁰ Mackenzie King's 1914

⁹⁸ No copies of *The Balance* have been located, but it is mentioned in BCER, box 51, fB1420, N. G. Neill to G. Kidd, 24 June 1920, 8 November 1920, and 9 February 1921. See also C. D. Orchard MSS. box 1, f6, Excerpts from B.C. Loggers' Association General Meeting, book 3, September 1920, Special Collections, University of British Columbia. This source notes that *The Balance's* purpose was to counteract socialism and radical propaganda.

⁹⁹ Traves, *State and Enterprise*, 24-25, 88; Scott, "Place in the Sun," 159; BCER, box 156, f605-12, Canada, Department of Labour, G. D. Robertson, "Industrial Councils in Industry," supplement to *Labour Gazette*, bulletin no. 1, February 1921. For National Industrial Conference see (PAC), MG 30, A121, vol. 1., J. S. Mackinnon MSS. Canada, National Industrial Conference, Ottawa, September 15-20, 1919, Official Report and Proceedings, 149-62. The history of the Whitley report is available in H. A. Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 31-32.

¹⁰⁰ BCER, box 51, fB1420, N. G. Neill to G. Kidd, 3 February 1919. Minutes of Eighth meeting of Directors, Employers' Association of British Columbia, 17 January 1919. British industrial councils are discussed in Wrigley, *British Industrial Relations*, II, 58-59, 162-63.

Colorado Plan had established joint councils which were more acceptable to Canadian employers. While the British system required union recognition, King's model presented employers with the opportunity for bypassing unions. The councils established at International Harvester Co., B.C. Telephone, Imperial Oil, Manitoba Bridge and Crane Co., and Massey Harris followed the American model by electing employee representatives rather than union officials to their councils.¹⁰¹

Another major obstacle to the development of the British system was the plant-by-plant level of industrial councils in Canada. Only one provincial organization, the Manitoba Council of Industry, had been established by May 1920. This led G. D. Robertson, Minister of Labour, to recommend the development of strong employers' associations as the first step to the establishment of a national system. Quoting the Whitley reports, he noted "that an essential condition of securing a permanent improvement in the relations between employers and employed is that there should be adequate organization on the part of both employers and work-people."¹⁰² The Employers' Association of B.C. could agree with Robertson's plans for a national scheme and the implementation of Whitley style councils, but its preference was for the American system of employee representation rather than union presence. Neill, for example, held that a fair council could only be developed by obtaining representatives by secret ballot during working hours. In essence he was excluding union participation. Other British Columbia employers such as R. F. Hayward, manager for Western Power Co., concurred with the association's position and held it to be doing good work in educating workers along progressive lines.¹⁰³ On the surface it appeared that the association had evolved into a secondary stage of industrial relations in which it was a willing participant in promoting strategies for industrial harmony. Co-operation, however, would be replaced by confrontation when employers gained the advantage.

Following the pattern established across the United States and Canada, British Columbia employers used the 1920-23 recession to regain their managerial prerogatives. The postwar economic, political, and psycholo-

¹⁰¹ Piva, *Working Class Toronto*, 168; Scott, "Place in the Sun," 160-61. For British Columbia experiments such as Coughlan's shipyard and Valley dairy see (PAC), RG33/95, Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Minutes of Evidence, J. J. Coughlan, 432-41; W. A. Knight, 333-42.

¹⁰² Robertson, "Industrial Councils," 12.

¹⁰³ For Neill see BCER, box 93, f1600-14b, N. G. Neill, "Industrial Autocracy or Industrial Democracy," May 1919, and (PAC), RG 33/95, Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Minutes of Evidence, N. G. Neill, 273, 277. For Hayward see BCER, box 93, f1600-14d, R. F. Hayward to J. D. Mortimer, 17 May 1919.

gical environment generally gave employers the opportunity to use patriotic propaganda against the unions. In the U.S.A., employers labelled their open-shop campaign the "American Plan" and condemned unions as "un-American" and "Bolshevist." Across Canada, unions remained militant in 1920, with 310 strikes compared to 322 in 1919. Employers, however, had increased their control and union defeats multiplied as monopoly capitalism became entrenched. Within B.C. the rise of industrial unionism in the form of the One Big Union had been the signal for a major counterattack. The success of the more aggressive American open-shop drive appears to have provided some of the stimulus for action, but local conditions were the catalyst.¹⁰⁴ Placed in a powerful bargaining position, employers sought to use the opportunity to re-establish prewar control and wages and to prevent the formation of new unions. In this environment the Employers' Association of B.C. dramatically shifted its strategy from co-operation to confrontation. Joining forces with B.C. Loggers' Association, the Master Builders' Association and the Shipping Federation, it launched a major attack on unionism.

The Lumber Workers Industrial Union, a branch of the OBU, was the first target of the employers' offensive. Militant attempts to organize the logging industry in 1919 led to widespread and frequent strike activity in the camps. In response, the logging industry organized itself into "one big union of employers" by bringing together the Rocky Mountain Lumbermen's Association, B.C. Loggers' Association, and the B.C. Manufacturers' Association.¹⁰⁵ After a call for "definite action to combat the activities of the Loggers' Union,"¹⁰⁶ the Loggers' Association established an employment agency for controlling labour through blacklists. At another meeting in December 1919 it solidified its position by clearly denouncing the OBU and refusing to have "any truck or trade with the Union officials."¹⁰⁷ This refusal to recognize the OBU was reinforced by similar action by the Em-

¹⁰⁴ Dunn, *Americanization*, 21-23; Traves, *State and Enterprise*, 87; and B. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience, The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1983), 190. The continued militancy of British Columbia unions is noted in A. Seager, "Workers, Class and Industrial Conflicts in New Westminster, 1900-1930," in R. Warburton and B. Coburn, eds., *Workers, Capital and the State in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 128.

¹⁰⁵ *Federationist*, 31 October 1919, 1, and C. D. Orchard MSS. box 1, f6, Excerpts from B.C. Loggers' Association, general meeting, 26 August 1919.

¹⁰⁶ Orchard, Excerpts, 26 August 1919.

¹⁰⁷ Orchard, Excerpts, 10 December 1919. The success of these aggressive tactics is described in G. Hak, "British Columbia Loggers and the Lumber Workers Industrial Union, 1919-1922," *Labour/ Le Travail* 23 (Spring 1989): 84-85.

ployers' Association of B.C.¹⁰⁸ These collective coercive tactics, when combined with the impact of the depression, gave employers a victory against the province's most radical union.

Provided with an economic whip hand, employers applied open-shop tactics as a first step toward wage reductions. By 1921 the *B.C. Federationist* observed that local employers had become "somewhat affected with the disease which has broken out in many parts of the continent to reduce wages."¹⁰⁹ Strikes over wage reductions occurred in the shipbuilding, transportation, metal, printing, and building trades. The Typographical Union held that "Open Shop" advocates whose ambition was to implement the "American Plan" were the direct cause of labour conflict. This accusation was soon to be confirmed by the Employers' Associations' declaration that the "closed shop must go," and by an escalation of anti-union tactics.¹¹⁰ As the conflict widened, the number of employers' associations in B.C. grew from twenty-seven in 1919 to thirty-seven in 1922.¹¹¹

The most aggressive of the associations was the Shipping Federation of B.C., which had represented the major shipping and stevedoring companies on the west coast since 1911.¹¹² Contrary to the normal pattern, the International Longshoreman's Association was organized in 1912 as a counter to the employers' association and defended the longshoremen's position until the major challenge of 1923. Encouraged by American events and strengthened by an alliance with the Washington Waterfront Employers' Union, the federation used the strike as the occasion to break the union. Collusion with Seattle's most notorious "open shoppers," W. C. Dawson and J. K. Middleton, was confirmed by their joint meetings and the federation's subsequent rejection of all negotiations with the unions.¹¹³ From the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council's point of view, this action represented "a part of the concerted design of American capitalist class, to wipe

¹⁰⁸ Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 83.

¹⁰⁹ *Federationist*, 28 January 1921, 1. The low wage policies of Vancouver employers may be found in (PAC) RG27, vol 209, f617.1:9-1B, vol. 1, Labour Conference in Vancouver, Re: Unemployment in British Columbia, Proceedings, 10 August 1921, 45, 48.

¹¹⁰ VTLC minutes regular, 6 December 1921; BCER, box 51, fB1420, Bulletin no. 30, Employers' Association of British Columbia, 26 October 1922.

¹¹¹ Province of British Columbia, Department of Labour, *Annual Report, 1919* (Victoria, 1920), 59-60, and *Annual Report, 1922* (Victoria 1923), 36 provide lists of employers' associations.

¹¹² Vancouver City Archives, Add MSS.279, B.C. Shipping Federation, Minute book, Shipowners' Association of B.C., 28 July 1911. Among its ten charter members were the CPR, Grand Trunk, Union Steamship, and Northern Steamship companies.

¹¹³ *Federationist*, 26 October, 1923, 1.

out all semblance of working class organization and to establish their ambition in industrial life — the open shop. . . .”¹¹⁴ Intransigent attitudes on the part of the shipping interests who wanted a “fight to a finish” divided Vancouver along class lines. The strike became more entrenched and moved in the direction of a city-wide sympathy strike as both sides mustered support for their positions. The Longshoremen’s Association received the backing of the Trades and Labour Council while the federation was assisted by major firms such as the CPR. The federation’s ability to attract large numbers of strikebreakers by offering steady employment and the current union rates made it unwilling to mediate. After nine weeks the employers’ concerted action successfully brought the strike to an end on their terms. Union recognition was denied and the union hiring hall was replaced by a government employment office. The settlement effectively destroyed the International Longshoremen’s Association and replaced it by a company union, the Vancouver and District Waterfront Workers’ Association.¹¹⁵

The employers’ success in meeting the labour challenge in the industrial field was not matched in the legislative arena. Here, employers increasingly felt under-represented and looked to the development of more specialized organizations to protect their interests. The lumber manufacturers, for example, complained that “the industry suffered at critical times from the lack of a central body which could take hold of matters affecting the entire industry.”¹¹⁶ These legislative concerns brought the B.C. Lumber Manufacturers’ Association, B.C. Loggers’ Association, Forest Products Market Extension Bureau, Shingle Manufacturers’ Association of B.C., Mountain Lumber Manufacturers’ Association, B.C. Pulp and Paper Companies, and the Timberholders’ Association of B.C. together to form the Timber Industries Council in 1920.¹¹⁷

As interest shifted towards legislative concerns the Employers’ Association of B.C. found itself in a precarious position. Internal problems became evident in 1921 when low attendance and apathy led to the resignation of the manager. A reorganization took place in December 1921 but it was unable to revitalize the association. Whereas E. G. Mundy, the new secretary, called upon employers to expand the association and to work with provincial employers’ associations in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and

¹¹⁴ VTLC, minutes, 16 October 1923.

¹¹⁵ For strike details see Province of British Columbia, Department of Labour, *Annual Report 1923* (Victoria 1924), 33-36; *Federationist*, 23 November 1923, 1, and Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 93.

¹¹⁶ CFI, Timber Industries Council of British Columbia, box 38, f6, minutes, directors, 6 July 1923, Special Collections, University of British Columbia.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Quebec to create a national federation, British Columbia employers were moving in a different direction.¹¹⁸ They were transferring their energy into trade associations and pulling away from the Employers' Association of B.C. This movement culminated in the foundation of the General Industries Committee in January 1922.

Unlike the Employers' Association, which relied upon individual firms for its membership, the new committee's objective was to represent the existing twenty-eight trade associations within the province. Basically an extension of the Timber Industries Council, it included all of the council's members plus other diverse groups such as the Shipping Federation, B.C. Salmon Cannery Association, B.C. Manufacturers' Association, Metal Trades Association, the local branch of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, and the Employers' Association of B.C.¹¹⁹ The enlistment of the Employers' Association appears to have signalled its relinquishment of leadership and its absorption into a wider movement. The committee's mandate of securing joint action among all associations placed the Employers' Association in a role equal to rather than above the other groups. A new focus on legislative concerns in regard to trade matters such as income tax, sales tax, merchant marine, and the labour issues of Workmen's Compensation and the Eight Hours Bill gave the committee a more comprehensive image than the Employers' Association.¹²⁰

Support for the Employers' Association continued to decline, and by November 1923 the association had to remind members that it could only be maintained by their active attendance and financial support. Arguments presented for the continuance of an employers' association "both from a point of view of its usefulness during times of trouble, as well as for the good done by the propaganda and the moral effect it has upon the radical element of general labour" failed to make an impact.¹²¹ On 20 November 1923 the directors met and closed the association.

Both the Employers' Association of Vancouver and its successor had appeared to be formidable opponents of trade unionism, but they were incapable of overcoming their internal weaknesses. Industrial sectionalism,

¹¹⁸ BCER, box 51, fB1420, N. G. Neill to G. Kidd, 14 March 1921, E. G. Mundy to Saville, 17 December 1921, and E. G. Mundy to G. Kidd, n.d. (received 14 September 1922).

¹¹⁹ A full membership is provided in BCER, box 51, fB1420, M. A. Granger to Associations, 28 January 1922.

¹²⁰ CFI, British Columbia Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers' Association, box 70-f4, General Industries Committee of B.C., minutes, 10 March, 29 May, 20 October, and 13 November 1922, and 1 November 1923.

¹²¹ BCER, box 51, fB1420, R. C. Timmins to members of the Employers' Associations of British Columbia, 20 November 1923.

created by the heterogeneous composition of their members, divisions between large and small employers, separate economic interests, and antipathy towards association were the major obstacles. Furthermore, the Employers' Association of Vancouver was an ad hoc organization and lacked the advantages of a professional manager. Co-ordinated anti-union activities tended to be formulated in crises, and their victories tended to be as much a consequence of union weakness as the association's strength. A more determined effort was made by the Employers' Association of British Columbia to organize collective bargaining and establish a uniform policy, but again sectionalism proved to be its downfall. Employers insisted on negotiating their own contracts or relied on specific trade associations, such as the Metal Trades Association or B.C. Shipping Federation, to protect their interests. The success of trade associations, in fact, kept inter-industry organization weak. Fragmented and unable to maintain a common front, the Employers' Association of B.C. relinquished its leadership role and industrial relations fell back to an individual or industry level.

On a comparative level both case studies revealed associations similar to other Canadian, American, and British associations in their early stages of development. Organized during periods of worker mobilization and militancy, they had as their primary objective the obstruction of trade unionism. Their strategic tactics emphasized employer unity not for the purpose of collective bargaining but for the maintenance of their "right to manage." Within this mental framework there existed a predisposition to conflict rather than negotiation. Aggressive behaviour was characteristic of the two major associations and was evident in the industrial crises of the period. Movement towards a progressive policy symbolized by the Employers' Association of British Columbia's encouragement of industrial councils was too late, too meagre, and superficial. When the opportunity arose to co-opt the unions during the war period, worker distrust had hardened their resolve to stand free of negotiations with the association. Unlike their British counterparts, Vancouver employers' associations and Canadian employers' associations, in general, failed to establish a formal system of industrial relations. The return to an "open shop" policy in the twenties confirmed the failure of Vancouver employers to move beyond the first stage of industrial relations — a reliance on power.