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Changing of the Guard: The Evolution of Catholic Trade Unionism in Quebec, 1907-1960

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Abstract: The Catholic Church was a powerful entity that manifested prominently in all levels of society in the province of Quebec, and the workplace was no exception. In 1921, the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour (C.C.C.L.) was formed not only to unite the local confessional unions, but ideally to also provide a buffer against secular syndicates making a name for themselves in Canada, such as the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The C.C.C.L.'s inclination for tradition and pacifistic dispute resolution became progressively ineffectual as strikes became more frequent and as the conservative provincial government under Premier Maurice Duplessis sought to quash unionization in Quebec. The true test of Catholic unionism in Quebec came in 1949 when 5,000 workers in the province's asbestos mines went on strike to protest inadequate pay and benefits as well as poor health conditions. Three months into the demonstrations, the C.C.C.L. nearly lost its members to the secular Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.) and their charitable donations to the strikers and their families. The C.C.C.L. never fully recovered from the developments of the asbestos strikes, and in its later years it became more liberal and even allied with secular unions to save itself from oblivion. The Confederation survived into the 1950s, but it was nowhere near as powerful as it had been in its early years. From the closed shops of the 1930s to the asbestos strikes, Quebec's unionized workers learned that classic Catholic values had no place in an ever-modernizing labor world.

Keywords: Quebec, Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour, unionism, Catholic Church, asbestos strikes.

The most dominant cultural force in Quebec in the early twentieth century was most certainly the Catholic Church. Even as Quebec experienced industrialization, with its associated modernism, urbanism, and the rise of an industrial wage-working class, the Catholic Church, with its hierarchy and conservatism, remained central to economic, political, and social thought. Thus, as Quebec workers began to organize in order to collectively meet the challenges of industrialization, it is not surprising that they did so through the Church. For half a century, the church sought to consolidate

organized labor under a Catholic banner, favoring morality and peace over militancy when resolving workplace disputes. They did so via “confessional unionism,” in which a chaplain is the head official. Proselytizing and organization were the work of the clergy, and the Church provided financial aid and public endorsement. The passive attitudes of Catholic unions, which bordered on ignorance toward labor conflicts were reflected in their general apprehension toward strikes. A few scattered episodes showed that confessional unionism had its uses, but most of the conflicts in which it was involved from inception to the 1950s called for more aggressive solutions; that is full-on strikes, which often turned violent. The 1949 strikes at Quebec’s asbestos mines were the crucible for Catholic unionism. While some individual clergymen rose to the occasion, by and large the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour (C.C.C.L.) was slow to adapt accordingly to contemporary union issues, leading to an overhaul of its leadership and greatly reduced relevance in the lives of Quebec’s organized workers. From the hundreds of “closed shops” across the province in 1937 to the asbestos mine demonstrations of the late 1940s, there is no shortage of cases that reveal the devolving prominence of Catholic labor syndicalism in Quebec from the C.C.C.L.’s promising establishment in 1921 to its sidelining by the end of the 1950s.

The first official Catholic labor unions in Canada were established in 1907. By 1921, there existed enough local unions across the provinces to necessitate the formation of a national conglomerate. Such was the birth of the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour (Confédération des travailleurs catholiques du Canada) in Hull, Quebec.¹ Given its fierce nationalist, conservative, and religious moorings, the C.C.C.L. vehemently opposed foreign influence. Its leaders had a generally pessimistic worldview and considered the international unions like the American Federation of Labor (AFL) to be “materialistic” and “irreligious.” It was also fundamentally anti-socialist and anti-communist, thus making it hostile to more radical labor organizations like the International Workers of the World, while also opposing all English, American, and Protestant influence in Quebec. The C.C.C.L. reviled foreign capital in the province and instead advocated for popular trends of the time including corporatism, provincial autonomy, and the nostalgic idea of

the “return to the land.”² The C.C.C.L. had some cause for concern over foreign encroachment. In September 1902, the Trades and Labor Congress (T.L.C.) had amended its constitution. Some unions broke away to form the Canadian Federation of Labor. Local branches of the Knights of Labor were excluded from representation, as were national Canadian unions in places where international guilds of the same craft already existed. Such a move was meant to create organized opposition to the American Federation of Labor, which had been accused of overstepping its jurisdiction in Canada rather than maintaining an equal partnership with the T.L.C.³ Even though the A.F.L. was a more moderate labor union, the Catholic confederation still feared that the working class would become the victim of the class-strife philosophy of “Bolshevistic” attitudes towards private property allegedly exhibited by some international and secular syndicates. The Church did not seek an overhaul of either the present social or the economic structures of Quebec, instead its message reiterated the notion that private property and divisions of class are the natural result of human nature. Capitalist frameworks were encouraged instead, in which “justice and charity rule(d) the relations of men.”⁴ By this theory, the worker happily provides his highest-quality labor in exchange for full and plentiful payment and protection from the employer.

To the C.C.C.L.’s detriment, however, its ultimate concern was maintaining civility, even if that did not align with the needs and ambitions of its constituents. The church leaders’ focus on preventing widespread strife and their emphasis on cordiality led to a cynical saying around the province: “Buy a bell for the parish church and you’ll never have any labor trouble.”⁵ Canadian labor historian Harold A. Logan echoed this idea in *The History of Trade Union Organization in Canada*. “The ultimate concern of its (the C.C.C.L.’s) founders,” he wrote in 1928, “has not been especially the economic condition of the worker, but rather the moral and spiritual condition, economic betterment being sponsored as contributing to the latter.”⁶ With respect to property rights, the C.C.C.L. condemned sabotage in all its forms and equally respected the rights of workers who were not involved in strikes. The use of persuasion to get others to cease working was acceptable to the point that it was not achieved by force.⁷ As featured on a C.C.C.L. convention program in 1922,

Gerard Tremblay of the Confederation's Montreal Secretariat published a checklist of four conditions that needed to be met before a strike could be initiated. First, strikers could not be bound by any just contract with their employers, unless the employer violated any stipulations therein. Second, members must have exhausted all other means of conciliation first. Third, strikers must have had a justified reason for calling the strike. Fourth, strikers must have weighed all possibilities for success or failure and could not proceed with a strike unless they were absolutely certain it would result in positive change for the parties involved.⁸ Perhaps the C.C.C.L. should be commended for its emphasis on a non-violent and highly methodical discourse toward labor dispute resolution. Nevertheless, Logan's appraisal is proved by the numerous prerequisites imposed upon Catholic workers compared to those of the secular internationals. The C.C.C.L.'s highly diplomatic and respectable moral compass grew to become the very bane of confessional unionism.

It was in the 1930s that the C.C.C.L.'s guiding ideology became even stricter, yet this was also the time in which the Confederation seriously began to face conflicts between tradition and practicality. By then, Canada was the only one of Britain's former colonies to host labor syndicates designed specifically for Catholics. In Britain there had existed the Catholic Confederation (not to be confused with the one in Quebec) and the National Conference of Catholic Trade Unions. In theory, both were meant to confine their activities to defending Roman Catholic interests, yet they were not inclined to sever ties with the secular trade syndicates. As a result, according to a 1930 C.C.C.L. report, these two unions had died out by the end of the 1920s and were absorbed by their secular allies due to their unwillingness to adhere to a purely Catholic operation.⁹ This seemingly compelled the Quebec unions to rally to their traditionalism more than anything. Historic closeness to the provincial government, regardless of the specific governing party at the time, no doubt afforded favor to the confessional syndicates, a contradiction of one of the nine tenets of the C.C.C.L.: "The C.C.W.C (Confederation of Catholic Workers of Canada, an interchangeable name for the C.C.C.L.) can affiliate with no political party whatever."¹⁰ Because of this, the international unions came to regard the C.C.C.L. as a "yellow union," one that existed only through, according to historian Samuel Barnes,

“favoritism and neglect of the interests of the worker.”¹¹ This troubling relationship was made even more alarming with the election of Premier Maurice Duplessis in 1936. A shrewd and fervent Quebec conservative and no friend of worker’s unions, Duplessis and the *Union Nationale* reigned over the province until 1939 before a short stint as an opposition party. Duplessis and the *Union* were reelected in 1944 and served as Quebec’s governing body for another 15 years. Within a year after his first electoral victory, Duplessis had made his opposition to labor organization quite clear. All the while, the increasingly ineffectual role of the Catholic unions had become undeniable.

In September 1937, hundreds of “closed-shops” were in effect throughout Quebec. Within the context of the Great Depression and the variety of socially radical movements across Canada (mainly in Ontario and western Canada), unionized workers in Quebec felt that they had fallen behind in securing labor rights and increasingly sought to use strikes as tool to draw attention to their demands. Duplessis’ response was blunt and ominous: “Workers have the right to organize but we will not permit the establishment of the closed shop in this province.”¹² The Premier used the injunction, a court ordered stoppage to labor action, to prevent any further expansion of unionism in Quebec. In 1937, the Trades and Labor Congress hosted its fifty-third annual conference. In an executive report, the Congress denounced as perilous to the “right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (much like the American Fourteenth Amendment, a clear indication of foreign influence) the implementation of “a number of severe and sweeping injunctions” taken against unions entrenched in “legitimate struggles to maintain and improve living standards.”¹³ The T.L.C.C. also expounded upon the value of the closed shop, which it regarded as a voluntary arrangement between employers and employees that is negotiated by representatives of the affiliated unions. To the T.L.C.C., the policy did not obstruct the right of any employee to continue working regardless of union status. Should any non-union employee choose to continue working in a closed shop, he must be willing to affiliate with other workers in that establishment and eventually become a member of a union himself.

The C.C.C.L. had mixed feelings toward the closed shops of 1937 and was consequentially useless to either faction in this event. While the idea of the closed shop is conformable to Christian

values as a non-violent form of dispute resolution, it also displayed some socialist undertones, according to the Confederation. To them, there were two and only two outcomes of a closed shop. The first was rather optimistic in that a closed shop may be used to raise apprenticeship, improve trades, and create an honest and competent workforce. In so doing, successful and responsible business practices would prevail, and the C.C.C.L. could rest assured that the employer's "sacred" right to the free labor market was not obstructed.¹⁴ Abbé Edmund Hébert's analysis of the closed shop suggests that the second outcome was less celebratory yet, according to history, was regrettably the more frequent of the two.¹⁵ Apparently, closed shops had for so long maintained such an unfavorable public reputation because workers had used them to swell numbers in union membership, ostracize non-union workers, and render employers ineffective by imposing upon them a potentially incompetent workforce. While employers do not completely lose control over the means of production under this system, they must negotiate with the unions to regain authority. To support the closed shop would have gone against the C.C.C.L.'s ideological opposition to workplace sabotage and their respect for the rights of non-union workers. Hébert underlined his point by stating that this subversive phenomenon had allegedly caused the undoing of many international unions in times past, such as the two English unions earlier in the decade.¹⁶ Confessional unions only ever supported the closed shop as a mode of retaliation against opposing unions for past abuses, but Catholic unionists generally considered it too harsh a weapon to be utilized extensively. The closed-shop concept was a treacherous line for the C.C.C.L. to straddle. By playing it safe and expressing greater apprehension than support for the idea, the union avoided the risk of upsetting the preexisting labor and social orders and impurifying its hallowed ideology.

To spectators of the ever-evolving labor world, it appeared that anything short of unwavering support for workers and their causes crippled the appeal of Catholic unionism. In its annual report for the fiscal year of 1938, the federal Department of Labour reported C.C.C.L. membership at 49,401, a decrease of 2,599 from the previous year. It listed just 259 local syndicates and study circles, a decline of 27 from the previous year.¹⁷ Meanwhile, another secular union had formed and rose to prominence

quite rapidly - the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The C.I.O. arose as a radical response to the A.F.L. until unification in 1955 as the A.F.L.-C.I.O., following years of bitter rivalry. The Congress opened in late 1935 with a membership of approximately one million. This soared to 4,037,877 across North America as of October 1938.¹⁸ Neutrality on the matter of the 1937 closed shops did not serve well either the image of the C.C.C.L. or the workers whose interests they claimed to represent, and statistics brought that growing divide to the forefront. Unfortunately for the C.C.C.L., this was hardly the greatest challenge it needed to overcome. The next 11 years forced the Catholic unions to face the fallout from their own dogma, and in so doing they realized their place in the history of Quebec labor. As time progressed, they discovered just how untenable their traditions were amidst the explosive cultural and economic change rising in Quebec, especially with a formidable new opponent in the C.I.O.

Canada entered World War II in 1939, and throughout the 1940s the C.C.C.L. found itself navigating an utterly foreign realm. Rapid industrialization forced the Catholic unions to expand into new war industries, virtually unknown to Quebec before then, at the risk of losing prominence to other unions. The Confederation managed to expand into the mass-production sector, albeit minimally, in which it encountered the most typical problems of contemporary labor organization for the very first time.¹⁹ Until the late forties, according to Quebec historian Miriam Chapin, the confessional syndicates were little better than “glorified company unions.” If not serving in organizational capacities for company formalities like annual picnics, they acted as a foil to the more radical unions. In 1942, for example, a Catholic local under the guidance of a Montreal priest was used to quell an A.F.L. strike at Arvida, an aluminum-mining town owned by and named for American industrialist Arthur Vining Davis. The tactics employed at the Arvida strike included charitable visits to the wives of strikers, emphasis on devotion to the parish, appeals to nationalism, and even anti-Semitism, all of which apparently won the day for the C.C.C.L.²⁰ By upstaging the secular A.F.L., the C.C.C.L.’s actions at Arvida proved, though only temporarily, that tried-and-true Catholic mores still had a place in modern labor syndicalism.

Arvida was but a small success for the C.C.C.L., as it was the secular unions that boasted the greatest appeal across Quebec by this time. Industrial workers were generally hired with little or no regard for ethnic or religious background, which was especially true of Montreal, a city with a sizable non-French population and the one in which the province's industry was most heavily concentrated. Quebec labor law provided certification to those unions that could enlist the broadest base of workers in a given plant. These certified unions could then bargain on behalf of all workers. This diversity did not align with traditional patterns of integral Catholicism,²¹ a belief that could not (and did not) last in modern times.²² While confessional unions represented a third of all organized workers in Quebec by 1940, they were virtually nonexistent in the shipyards and factories. During the tenuous summer of 1943, 401 strikes occurred in the war industries, amounting to 1,041,198 worker-days lost.²³ The C.C.C.L. did manage to win a supervised vote against the Sorel Metal Trades Council, an A.F.L. subsidiary, securing the representation of 2,000 workers of the gun manufacturer Sorel Industries Limited. This was the extent of Catholic influence, however, as it had no presence in neighboring shipyards. The Catholic confederation had also suffered a membership deficit at the hands of Ernest Bolduc of the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders Union of Canada, chartered by the Canadian Congress of Labor (C.C.L.). The use of "Canadienne" in the syndicate's French name apparently attracted many French-Canadian workers, allowing Bolduc to beat out the confessionals and even some craft-based internationals for membership.²⁴

It was not until the election of Gérard Picard as president of the C.C.C.L. in 1946 and Jean Marchand as secretary that the Confederation took on a more active operational philosophy. Picard's platform of militant action allowed him to defeat Duplessis supporter and docile unionist Alfred Charpentier in his presidential bid.²⁵ The effects of the Great Depression, anti-conscription sentiment in the interwar years, increasing international influence, and constant quarrels with the Duplessis government prove that Picard's radical awakening had been a long time coming and was not exclusive to him. By the end of the decade, says Miriam Chapin, the confessional syndicates fought like "wildcats," which signaled a tremendous shift in tone within a few years.²⁶ By 1948, the C.C.C.L.

claimed a total membership of 78,892.²⁷ For the 82,000 that were enlisted by the next year, their faith in the Church would be put to the ultimate test in what was perhaps the most essential labor dispute in Quebec's history.

The Asbestos Strike began on February 13, 1949, in which 5,000 Catholic-unionized workers throughout Quebec's Eastern Townships voted to strike against the six, Anglophone asbestos mining corporations, the American-owned Canadian Johns-Manville Company chief among them. Among the union's 13 demands, most of which were ignored by the companies initially, were the elimination of toxic asbestos dust in and around the mills, a 15-cent-an-hour general pay increase and nine paid holidays a year.²⁸ Deemed illegal under Quebec labor law, the strike was immediately denounced by Premier Duplessis who decried the C.C.C.L. leaders involved as "saboteurs" and "subversive agents."²⁹ Police intervention led to violence, such as a dynamite explosion near the railway line on March 14 and strikers overturning a company jeep that injured an official two days later. Hostility was also directed towards the strikebreakers, attacked by the union men as "scabs," brought in to keep the mines running amidst the strike. They consisted of new and established workers from Asbestos as well as men from the nearby mining townships.³⁰ By April 1, the Asbestos Strike had taken on definite characteristics, and public opinion swayed largely in favor of the union.

During the strike, several clergymen broke from the archaic mold of docility and inaction. Bishop Louis Camirand of Quebec City proclaimed that the workers "are not depriving themselves and their children of their wages for the sake of pleasure; they have been forced to do so because of the unqualifiedly provocative attacks." Father Cousineau contributed two fiercely pro-labor articles to *Relations*, and he hailed the strikes as a manifestation of profound social change for the making of a "new generation" in Quebec. Of the strike itself, he was clear that "social justice must be placed above legality."³¹ On May 1, Joseph Charbonneau, Archbishop of Montreal, called for donations to aid the embattled workers to be collected every Sunday at each church in the diocese until the strike ended. "There is a conspiracy to destroy the working class," the Archbishop declared, "and it is the church's duty to intervene."³² Charbonneau and Cousineau understood that observing from the sidelines aided

the abuser, not the abused. They understood how the Church's doctrine was outdated and wholly incompatible with basic rights and human decency. Nevertheless, as successful as these figures were in procuring material support, and as incendiary as their speeches and writings may have been, the strikers felt the aid of the Church had been too little, too late.

By May 9, the 5,000 workers on strike had seriously begun to consider switching affiliation to the C.I.O. as a last-ditch effort to keep from losing momentum as victory apparently grew near. President Rodolphe Hamel of the Federation of Asbestos Workers reported that strikers had "enough to eat and some spending money" yet "clothes and things to make life more agreeable are lacking."³³ Each married couple received five dollars a week from the C.C.C.L. plus one for each child, along with food allotments when necessary. Money for food had come in large part thanks to charitable collections by churches all around the province. Other contributions had been made from sympathetic unions, Catholic and secular. The C.I.O. planted the seeds of intervention with a \$200 donation by May.³⁴ Even though no official approach had been made regarding a change in affiliation from the C.C.C.L. to the C.I.O., the threat thereof was apparent. President Hamel stressed that wholehearted support had been received by many union leaders in the C.C.C.L. "We must do something to keep our workers from being enslaved," said Hamel in a May 10 column of the *Montreal Gazette*, "and we think such a move [to affiliate with the C.I.O.] would help us immeasurably in getting justice."³⁵ Syndicate leaders minced no words when expressing their discontent to the bishops. "If we lose this strike," their stark warning read, "the Catholic labor movement is finished. Not only will the members desert it for the C.I.O., but we'll (the syndicate officers) desert it ourselves—we'll go over to the international unions in a body."³⁶ Although the mass shift to the C.I.O. never came to fruition, what is important about this event is that the ideological schism between the clergy and the workers could no longer be ignored. In the short term, the workers suffered an unnecessary obstacle to their goals. In the long term, the C.C.C.L. experienced a major blow to its authority from which it struggled to recover.

On June 24, the Thetford mining companies agreed on a return to work for June 27,

recertification of the union, arbitration for issues left unresolved within ten days, and the right of the company not to reengage men convicted of disorderly conduct. In Asbestos, the settlement of July 1 brought about a ten-cent-an-hour wage increase, seniority rights, reemployment of all workers without discrimination (except those convicted in court), four paid holidays a year, and a remaining five-cent-an-hour increase to be negotiated. The plight of those workers still unemployed was not addressed at the December 29 signing of the collective labor agreements.³⁷

The asbestos strikes of 1949 yielded beneficial results for the C.C.C.L., but only marginal results. It is true that the Confederation was now shaken loose from its “reputation for equivocation and appeasement,” and it did mobilize the French-Canadian intellectual community to the side of the church and expose the dark nature of the Duplessis administration.³⁸ The strikes formed the basis of the *Maîtres Chez Nous* campaign slogan of the Quebec Liberal Party that defeated the *Union Nationale* in 1960. Pierre Trudeau in his 1956 reflections on the strikes remarked that the events of 1949 would be remembered as a historical milestone for the province, the country, and the working-class movement around the world, not just one for the asbestos mining townships.³⁹ Even then, the C.C.C.L. still exhibited some level of hubris. It appeared that some had not been quite as troubled by the developments of Asbestos and their impact on the future of the C.C.C.L. In a December 29 column in the *Calgary Herald*, Catholic businessmen (oddly not specified by name, however) went on record saying, “We must be convinced that the social doctrine of the church, and it alone, is able to provide all elements essential for a just solution of the social questions (of Quebec).”⁴⁰ On the Confederation’s social action, Gérard Picard said simply, “It’s good... If there had been no application of social doctrine, the workers would have deserted us. They want results.”⁴¹ Picard was technically right in saying this as the confessional unionists never did switch to the C.I.O. This outcome papers over the fact that the workers threatened to leave the Confederation, thus proving that the C.C.C.L. was unable to meet the demands of modern unionists. The apparent residual stubbornness of some Catholic leaders did not age well and was a major cause for the diminished presence of confessional unionism in the decade following the Asbestos strikes.

The C.C.C.L. continued as a notable union into the 1950s, though much diminished from what it had once been. As of 1959, of the 1,400,000 unionized workers in Canada, just over one million were affiliated with the Canadian Congress of Labor. Of those 275,000 organized workers in Quebec, some 100,000 were members of confessional unions.⁴² Lay leaders had taken on more and more administrative and organizational roles over the previous decade, but the chaplains had remained the supreme authority in the confessional unions during the war years. Following Asbestos, however, the more aggressive laity rose to the leadership, significantly reducing the overall authority and importance of the chaplain. In a collective Pastoral Letter published by the Church of Quebec on February 1, 1950, the wisdom, experience in labor relations, and rank of the chaplain within the Church were certainly still revered, but by now he acted primarily as an observer to union matters.⁴³ Samuel Barnes further outlined the truncated role of the chaplain in a 1959 installation of the *ILLR Review*. The chaplain is “neither leader, director, propagandist nor business agent. In the beginning there was need for the chaplain of these organizations to go now and then beyond his normal functions. Unionism today no longer requires this unusual action. The chaplain must take upon himself the noble function of educator.”⁴⁴

Along with a revised command structure, the C.C.C.L. experienced another milestone change in the 1950s. Once decried as “alien” and “godless,” A.F.L.-C.I.O. unions were now treated as welcomed allies by the confessional syndicates. There was now close and often fruitful cooperation between the local Catholic and secular international federations, and confessional membership was now open to all faiths.⁴⁵ Marchand and Picard had campaigned for years on friendly cooperation with English-Canadian and international unions, and the local syndicates in Asbestos had hosted a number of English-speaking Protestants leading up to the 1949 strikes.⁴⁶ Also in 1949, the Canadian Congress of Labor passed a resolution favoring the unification of “all bona fide labour organizations” in response to both the *Union Nationale’s* proposed provincial labor code and the troubling Prince Edward Island Trade Union Act of 1948 which, among other things, forbade closed-shop contracts like those seen in Quebec in 1937.⁴⁷ The C.C.L. and Trades and Labor Congress of Canada joined with

the C.C.C.L in the formation of the Joint Conference of Organized Labour in the Province of Quebec. Marked progress towards greater unity came in August 1950 when the two congresses issued two joint statements, one in support of the United Nations' stance on Korea,⁴⁸ and another supporting the railway unions of both congresses in their national strike.⁴⁹

All these changes considered, the C.C.C.L. faced three major challenges by the end of the 1950s. First, uncertain attitudes towards nationalism had arisen. The C.C.C.L. would defend the rights of Quebecers to the letter, but it no longer wanted to be associated with the nationalism of the Duplessis government. Even in decades past the Confederation understood that the marriage of unionism and government was historically damning to the former, and the Catholic unions saw now more than ever that nationalism was a tool used merely to prevent the enactment of social legislation.⁵⁰ Second, as indicated throughout the history of confessional unionism, there existed growing dissatisfaction with the role of the Church in Quebec daily life. Though not antireligious, some C.C.C.L. leaders had become anti-clerical, and the organization's confessional status limited membership potential even as enlistment had been opened to anyone. There was a general feeling of defeatism among several C.C.C.L. leaders that confessional unionism in Canada was "dépassé" (meaning roughly, "its time has passed"), especially seeing as how the majority of organized labor in Quebec was now affiliated with the international, "neutral" syndicates.⁵¹ Lastly, the C.C.C.L.'s aversion to party politics allowed more radical laymen to rise and alter the future of confessional unionism. Disengagement from direct action in labor movements allowed the church to expand its freedom of action and would enable the now more-secular C.C.C.L. to expand its economic doctrines and engage in political activities outside the confines of Christian doctrine, and perhaps this was for the better given the Confederation's record.⁵²

For better or worse, the C.C.C.L. had evolved far beyond what its founders had initially conceived. Perhaps such changes were too few and far between. Perhaps they had not come about fast enough to preserve the sanctity of pure Catholic unionism. Whatever the case, the times forced the confessional unions to change rather than the unions adapting on their own merit. For that

reason, Catholic labor unionism had fallen from grace in the eyes of many French Canadians, and at the dawn of the Quiet Revolution, only more modern, revolutionary spirits would prevail and bring about meaningful change in the province of Quebec.



Jake Cuneo is a proud graduate of the Bridgewater State University's, class of 2021 and is now pursuing a career in the field of law.

Notes

- ¹ Samuel H. Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism in Quebec," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 12, no. 4 (July 1959): 570.
- ² Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism," 571.
- ³ Harold Amos Logan, *Trade Union Organization in Canada* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 301.
- ⁴ Logan, *Trade Union Organization in Canada*, 336.
- ⁵ Blair Fraser, "Priests, Pickets and Politics," *Macleans*, July 1, 1949, 50.
- ⁶ Logan, *Trade Union Organization in Canada*, 335.
- ⁷ Logan, *Trade Union Organization in Canada*, 352-353.
- ⁸ Logan, *Trade Union Organization in Canada*, 352.
- ⁹ Canada, Department of Labour, *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada* (For the Calendar Year of 1938) (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1938), 37.
- ¹⁰ Canada, Department of Labour, *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report*, 38.
- ¹¹ Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism," 571.
- ¹² "Trades Congress Raps Injunctions: Urges Fight to End Discrimination Against Unions in Canada," *Montreal Gazette*, September 14, 1937, 4.
- ¹³ "Trades Congress Raps Injunctions," 4.
- ¹⁴ Logan, *The History of Trade Union Organization in Canada*, 353.
- ¹⁵ An abbé (abbot) was an official within the Church who, in the context of the C.C.C.L., could be appointed by a bishop

for such tasks as the creation of a local union. Hébert was from Montreal.

- ¹⁶ Logan, *The History of Trade Union Organization in Canada*, 353.
- ¹⁷ Canada, Department of Labour, *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report*, 184-185.
- ¹⁸ Canada, Department of Labour, *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report*, 185.
- ¹⁹ Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism," 571.
- ²⁰ Miriam Chapin, *Quebec Now* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 68-69.
- ²¹ To specify, this refers to confessional unionism's general apprehension of foreign and/or non-Catholic influence of any kind.
- ²² Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism," 571.
- ²³ James Pritchard, "The Long, Angry Summer of '43: Labor Relations in Quebec's Shipbuilding Industry," *Labour / Le Travail* 65 (Spring 2010): 51.
- ²⁴ Pritchard, "Long, Angry Summer," 53.
- ²⁵ Fraser, "Priests, Pickets and Politics," 50.
- ²⁶ Chapin, *Quebec Now*, 69.
- ²⁷ Alfred Charpentier, "The Labor Organizations: CTCC and the Canadian Congress of Labor," *Industrial Relations*, 4, no.1 (1948): 3.
- ²⁸ Fraser Isbester, "Asbestos 1949," in *On Strike: Six Key Labor Struggles in Canada, 1919-1949*, ed. Irving Abella (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Ltd., 1974), 166.
- ²⁹ Fraser, "Priests, Pickets and Politics," 9.
- ³⁰ Isbester, "Asbestos," 174.
- ³¹ Isbester, "Asbestos," 178.
- ³² Fraser, "Priests, Pickets and Politics," 9.
- ³³ "Asbestos Workers Are Considering Switching Affiliation to C.I.O." *Montreal Gazette*, May 10, 1949, 1.
- ³⁴ "Asbestos Workers Are Considering Switching Affiliation," 1.
- ³⁵ "Asbestos Workers Are Considering Switching Affiliation," 1.
- ³⁶ Blair Fraser, "Labor and the Church in Quebec," *Foreign Affairs* 28, no. 2 (January 1950): 252.
- ³⁷ Isbester, "Asbestos," 187-188.
- ³⁸ Isbester, "Asbestos," 188.
- ³⁹ Jessica van Horssen, "Asbestos, Quebec: The Town, the Mineral, and the Local-Global Balance Between the Two," *Western Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies* (2010): 186.
- ⁴⁰ Richard Daignault, "Management 'To Bend to Church's Social Doctrine,'" *The Calgary Herald*, December 29, 1949, 5.
- ⁴¹ Daignault, "Management 'To Bend,'" 5.
- ⁴² Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism," 569-570.
- ⁴³ Isbester, "Asbestos," 189.
- ⁴⁴ Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism," 574.
- ⁴⁵ Fraser, "Labor and the Church in Quebec," 249.

- ⁴⁶ Fraser, "Priests, Pickets and Politics," 52.
- ⁴⁷ Eugene Forsey, "The Prince Edward Island Trade Union Act, 1948," *The Canadian Bar Review* 26, no. 8 (October 1948): 1159.
- ⁴⁸ The Joint Conference supported the UN's condemnation of Soviet-backed North Korean aggression and the subsequent formation of the United Nations Command on July 7, 1950.
- ⁴⁹ Eugene Forsey, "The Movement towards Labour Unity in Canada," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 24, no.1 (February 1958): 72-73.
- ⁵⁰ Charpentier, "The Labor Organizations," 3.
- ⁵¹ Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism," 575.
- ⁵² Barnes, "The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism," 575-576.

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