PRAY FOR THE DEAD,
BUT FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE LIVING:
An introduction to Ginger Goodwin, Joseph Naylor,
Lucy Parsons, and Mother Jones

The masters can howl!
we do not hide our intentions.

for we are what they have made us-
the dispossessed class.

that is out to overthrow them.

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Acknowledgements

This work was produced on the ancestral, unceded territory of the K'ómoks, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw (Squa-mish), Tseil-Waututh, and xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nations. The authors are grateful to live and work on this land.

It was created in honour of Albert “Ginger” Goodwin and the 100th year anniversary of his shooting death and was released during the 33rd Annual Miners’ Memorial event in Cumberland, BC.

The authors wish to thank the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers/Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes, Paul Finch, Aaron Spires, James Coccola, Anna Rambow, the Cumberland Museum & Archives, Miners’ Memorial, and the Goodwin 2018 Commemorative Events Committee.

A special thank-you to David Lester for providing cover art for this booklet, and Rowan Helliwell for assistance with design.

This booklet was made possible through the generous support of the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers/Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes.
Introduction

We don’t encounter the past directly when we read history. Instead, we see the choices historians have made to present some stories and not others. What they choose is their interpretation of the past. Even if it were possible to tell only “what happened,” such history would be random facts from which we learn nothing. Historians who believe their work is not an interpretation believe this because they are writing history that echoes the ideas of the dominant groups in our society. Such history is a problem for activists, because activism is about challenging those groups and their ideas.

Since all historians interpret the past according to their world view, we need to ask, what are the political implications of the stories the historian has presented? What people and events are held up as successes and which are dismissed as failures? Do the choices made by the historian close off possibilities for the present or help us ask new questions for the future?

It is especially important to look for what is missing, to study the history of working people, and to learn about the new ideas, tactics, and strategies developed by the militants, radicals and rebels in generations past. From the inclusive unionism of the Knights of Labor to the analysis of capitalism by the Socialist Party of Canada, from the direct action of the Industrial Workers of the World to the mass unionism of the Communist Party, from the socialist feminism and left-wing rank and file militancy of new unions in the 1960s and 1970s, to contemporary challenges to organize the unorganized and confront the “1 per cent,” the labour movement has been reinvented and remade by unconventional and unorthodox activists who challenge the dominant ideas of the time.

We need new ideas today more than ever. Splits in the labour movement reveal the lack of a common vision. Unionized workers make up a smaller portion of the workforce than they did in 1978, with disastrous effects, particularly for women workers and workers of colour. Work is getting worse for most of us: some are working longer hours while others can’t find enough work. Forty years ago, Canadians looked forward to a shorter workday, higher incomes, the expansion of healthcare, employment insurance, job safety, welfare, education, and pensions—but all of these have been weakened, privatized, and denied. Even a minimum wage of $15/hour buys less than the minimum wage of 40 years ago.
New ideas require new militants, radicals, and rebels, and the histories of earlier activists can support their efforts. We do not draw on these historical activists because they were right on every issue or because they hold answers to today’s questions. Nor do we stand with them because they were successful in the limited ways success is measured by the labour movement today, such as electoral victories, strikes won, stable jobs, and awards given by the same governments that send the police and army against workers. We look to them because we agree with the values they held, because we are inspired by their example, and because their battles can provide us with broad lessons from which we can draw for our own struggles.

The first of these lessons is that the strength of workers lies in solidarity on the job, on the picket line, in the streets, and at the ballot box. That means activists must reach across artificial lines of race, gender, occupation, and union jurisdiction. Solidarity, however, is meaningless if workers don’t use it. No one needs a union if they aren’t going to fight. The second lesson we can take from these activists is that workers must be militant if they are going succeed.

Militancy has to be aimed at the right target, and so our historical activists insisted on a radical understanding of our society. That too is a lesson we need to take from them. “Radical” comes from the Latin meaning “root,” and radicals look beyond the symptoms to the root of the problem. This understanding helps them identify allies and adversaries and build a unifying vision for workers.

Finally, these historical figures remind us that while it may be true that no strike is ever entirely lost, we only learn from such conflicts if we draw the right lessons from them. These lessons are developed through debate, discussion, even ferocious argument. That means the movement must be democratic so workers learn from their own mistakes and successes.

Solidarity based on militancy, radicalism, and democracy: these are the values we share with Ginger Goodwin, Joe Naylor, Lucy Parsons, and Mother Jones. We need these lessons today to learn how to, as Mother Jones put it, “pray for the dead but fight like hell for the living.”
Rediscovering Radical Roots

It’s clear what Goodwin, Naylor, Parsons, and Jones meant by militancy: they understood workers had to organize and fight. And democracy is easy enough to understand: they knew that the labour movement had to be run by and for the rank and file, not by and for the leaders. Understanding radicalism is harder, because we’re no longer exposed to the wide variety of ideas that made up the labour movement of a century ago.

In the past, the labour movement openly and heatedly discussed socialism, Marxism, communism, and anarchism. These were fluid categories, and people might move between them, and even hold conflicting ideas at the same time. Goodwin and the others never thought it necessary to publish a complete statement of their political views, but some definitions will help us understand their ideas.

While socialists and others criticized conservatives in the labour movement, those conservatives were not necessarily reactionary. Many favoured reforms such as women’s suffrage and equal pay for equal work. But such conservatives rarely looked beyond their own occupation, craft, and privilege. Too often they failed to see how their success came at the expense of less privileged workers. Their focus on short-term gains for themselves created long-term problems for workers by undermining the efforts of others. The classic example is the craft union movement that refused to organize women and people of colour so it could maintain the high income and culture of privilege of its members.

Conservative unionists might engage in militant strikes and sometimes won wage increases for themselves. Some conservative leaders might even be accepted into “respectable” society along with the bosses and politicians. But their call for “a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work” reflected their better pay and elitism.

Socialists too fought for immediate reforms, but they had a much more useful understanding of capitalism. They understood that the moment a strike was won, the boss started to plan to replace union workers with lower-paid workers and machinery. Much labour history is the story of strong, successful unions, such as shoemakers, tailors, printers, and many others, that vanished without a trace except for a dusty, unread history book that told of past glories.
Ginger Goodwin and socialists like him understood that capitalism is an economic system where a few people own the companies, factories, and businesses that produce the goods and services we all need. To own those businesses, one needs capital—wealth that is used to create more wealth. Owning that capital makes one a capitalist, and it gives the owner a great deal of power. Because the capitalist is in charge, it’s called the capitalist system. The capitalist decides what is made, how it is made, who is hired, how much they will be paid, and how profits are distributed. Because capitalists compete with each other, they are always trying to lower the wages they pay workers.

In this system of private ownership of businesses and companies, profits go to the owner—the capitalist. The capitalist decides what to do with the profits. He—and most are men even today—could give the money to the workers, but this rarely happens. He might build a castle, as the BC coal capitalist Robert Dunsmuir did in the 1880s. He might even spend billions to blast a car into space, as Elon Musk did.

Socialists then talked about classes: a small group, or class, of capitalists that owned what Goodwin would call “the means of production” and a much larger working class that had to go to work for the capitalist. So socialists insisted that the capitalist system, not just an individual boss like Robert Dunsmuir, was the problem. Profit, they argued, taking their ideas from Karl Marx and others, was not the reward capitalists received for being smart risk-takers. Profit was wealth—the money paid for goods and services—produced by workers who did not receive the full value of what they produced.

We might imagine it like this. Let’s say you are working in a coffee shop for $15 an hour. In an 8-hour shift, you would have to sell $120 worth of coffee to make your wage. If a cup of coffee sells on average for $3.00, once you sold 40 cups of coffee, you have sold enough to cover your wage. Of course the employer has to buy coffee, pay rent, purchase equipment, and cover other costs; let’s estimate that all those costs together cost about the same as the labour. So you have to make and sell 80 cups over your 8 hour shift to cover your wage and all the other costs. If you were paid the full value of what you produced, once you’d sold those 80 cups, you could go home, having earned your wage and all the other costs of producing the coffee.
Let's say you sell 80 cups in 4 hours. Great! Time to go home! But that's not how it works. The boss keeps you at work for the whole shift, and you produce another 80 cups. You've now produced twice as much coffee as necessary to cover your wage and all the costs of the business. But you don't get any more money from your extra work.

The profit from all that extra production doesn't go to you; it goes to the boss, the owner, the capitalist. And with that extra wealth you created, he can buy a new coffee machine that replaces you and another worker. Or he can decide that your wage is too high, fire you, and offer the job at minimum wage. People who are unemployed might be willing, even desperate, to take that job at less money than you were paid. And so the system creates great wealth for a few who own capital and creates division and poverty for those who must go to work for the boss. This is true in both the private and public sectors, for in both the labour relations of capitalism—the power of the boss to direct what work is done and how—are the same. And public workers are no less exploited than those in the private sector.

What is a "fair wage" in this system? Who gets to decide what's "fair"? Whoever has the most power. And usually that is the capitalist, with his wealth and connections to the politicians who make the laws and can send out the military and the police to break strikes. If that sounds cynical, there are dozens of examples of Canadian governments using force against workers, ranging from arrests to jail sentences to killings. There are no examples of those governments using this force against capitalists.

Those on the left of the labour movement agreed with this analysis, as the IWW preamble and the Socialist Party of Canada program make clear. And all agreed that radical, that is, systemic, change was needed if workers were to have free and full lives, free from exploitation and oppression and full of the necessities and luxuries of life. They said that production of goods and services should not be owned by a few individuals. Production should be owned and managed democratically by society as a whole. That is, ownership should be social, and thus they were socialists.

Communists and anarchists more or less agreed with this analysis. They differed with socialists on how the new economic system, the new society,
would come into being. Some communists advocated violent revolution, but these were always a small minority and their calls for revolution were more often rhetorical than real. Certainly by the 1930s and 1940s that was the case. Socialists in Canada like Goodwin and Joe Naylor believed that political action—voting—was the key. Once workers elected socialists to power, the socialist government would pass legislation that favoured workers. It might start with reforms, such as minimum wages and safety provisions, but the aim was to build a democratic society in which everyone played an equal role in politics and in the economy.

Anarchists such as Lucy Parsons, and members of the IWW who called themselves “revolutionary industrial unionists” and “syndicalists” had no faith in government. They pointed out that many workers didn’t have the vote, and so could not take part in the political process. And they were convinced that even good socialists would be corrupted by power once they were elected. Instead of political action, these radicals called for direct action against the boss: protests, strikes, boycotts, and sabotage.

For the IWW, the ultimate weapon was the general strike, a strike of all the workers in a city, region, or industry. The revolution would be made when workers were organized so completely that they would go on strike and force the bosses out of the factories and businesses. Then workers would go back to work, now producing to take care of people’s needs, not for the profit of the boss. The IWW was not opposed to reforms in the short-term, but its members were clear that the problem was not individual bosses but the capitalist system. They differed with the socialists on the means, but not the ultimate goals.

Earlier activists didn’t have all the answers. What they had was a radical understanding that let them see the problems more clearly. Since the problems are still with us, we can still learn from that radical understanding and find inspiration for ways to work towards a better future for us all.
Albert “Ginger” Goodwin, 1887-1918

Albert “Ginger” Goodwin is remembered today because he died for his principles. Less is said, though, about those principles. Goodwin was a sophisticated, radical political thinker and activist who resisted World War I, struggled to build unions, and fought for an end to capitalist exploitation. We should be inspired today not only by the price he paid, but by his activism and analysis.

Goodwin was born in 1887 near Sheffield, England. He left school at 12 years old to be a coal miner, and walked his first picket line in 1902-03. At 19 Goodwin was recruited by the Dominion Coal Company to come to Glace Bay, Nova Scotia to work in the mines there. When Goodwin made his way to Canada in 1906, he was already a coal miner and veteran of a bitter strike.

Goodwin worked in Glace Bay until at least the 1909 strike, a brutal conflict that saw almost 1800 miners’ families evicted from their company homes by the government militia at the employer’s behest. Goodwin moved west, and in 1910 found work in the Crowsnest Pass. There he played soccer, winning the medal on display at the Cumberland museum.

and joined the United Mine Workers of America. In the fall of 1910 he moved further west, and settled in Cumberland on Vancouver Island to work in the Number 5 mine, where he met Joe Naylor.

When the Great Coal Strike began in 1912, Goodwin was a member of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), and of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), where he developed his political views. He wrote his first piece for the SPC’s Western Clarion in 1912 shortly before the strike started, and showed a keen class-consciousness. As he explained, workers were forced into “miserable conditions” by a “class of parasites [that] has been living off the blood of the working class.” This was a sharp contrast to those conservative labour leaders who thought that workers and employers had interests in common and who wanted to be “respectable” members of capitalist society.

The strike only sharpened Goodwin’s convictions. In 1913, Goodwin wrote another piece for the Clarion criticizing the notion of capitalist “communities.” As he explained, a community in a capitalist society was made up of bosses and workers who had opposing interests. Thus the idea of community papered over the fact that while for some capitalism afforded a life of “contentment,” most people “have to work long hours under inhuman conditions.” He pointed out that the capitalist state created institutions to teach the ideas that would bind workers to the notion of a community that served their bosses: “to respect private property, love ‘your’ country, respect the laws, obey your ‘superiors,’ be industrious and thrifty.” These “bourgeois ethics have played a great role in holding the working class in subjection, and they will still keep this up if the workers don’t get wise and find out where those ethics spring from.”

By the time the Great Coal Strike was over, Goodwin had served as a delegate to two BC Federation of Labour conventions and a UMWA convention. But he had also positioned himself as an outspoken advocate for a unionism that was dedicated to replacing capitalism with a form of society that “will have freed itself from economic bondage.”

As the Great Coal Strike ended, the First World War began. Goodwin’s commitment to a socialist revolution was not just a rejection of capitalism as an economic system. It included a rejection of capitalist wars. Goodwin became a prominent anti-war activist in BC, even as he moved to Trail
after being blacklisted from the mines on Vancouver Island. Goodwin continued to organize, now for the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelterworkers (Mine-Mill). His union activism and outspoken resistance to the war meant that his public profile grew rapidly in 1916 and 1917. He was elected the president of Mine-Mill district 6, Vice-President of the BC Fed, and ran for office for the SPC — all while working in a war industry and writing for the Clarion.

In these writings Goodwin analyzed the war as an extension of the exploitative economic system and of the logic of the bosses, who sent workers to their deaths to expand control of overseas markets. Goodwin was an internationalist who saw nationalism as a tool of the bosses to divide the working class. He was an anti-militarist but not a pacifist. He believed fighting in capitalist wars was wrong and deadly for workers, but he thought that fighting the class war was necessary and just. To that end, he led a strike against the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company (CMS) in Trail in the Fall of 1917, demanding the eight hour day, pay increases to deal with rampant wartime inflation, and union recognition. For Goodwin, resisting the war and improving the lives of workers were two parts of the same struggle — the socialist campaign to end capitalism as a system and put working people in control of the production of the goods and services they needed.

Goodwin’s prominence among workers in Trail made him a target for CMS, and that ultimately led to his death. When Prime Minister Borden could no longer motivate Canadian workers to volunteer to fight in the seemingly endless war in France, his government introduced conscription. Goodwin was called to the draft board to register and undergo a medical examination. In October, 1917 he was classified medically unfit for service. But the next month — only eleven days after the strike of smelterworkers started — Goodwin was suddenly recalled to the draft board. He was reclassified and ordered to report for service. Even before conscription was introduced, labour activists had predicted that employers would use conscription to get rid of militants and radicals, and Goodwin and other BC leftists believed that the draft board in Trail had been pressured by CMS to get him out of the country to weaken the strike. Goodwin expressed his commitment to the anti-war movement with his feet, going into hiding near Comox Lake with a number of other draft dodgers to avoid being forced to report for service in a war he believed was unjust and unnecessary.
Goodwin represented a powerful rejection of the state and its coercive power in wartime. And so the government set out to capture draft dodgers like him to make examples of them. By the time special constable Dan Campbell entered the woods around Cumberland in July 1918 to find Goodwin and his friends, the war was in its final stages. There was no possibility that the draft dodgers, even if caught, would make it to Europe in time to serve in the war. Instead, Campbell and others like him were sent to enforce the rule of the capitalist state – to show Goodwin, but especially those who were inspired by his anti-war activism, that there would be consequences to challenging the “bourgeois ethics” the way Goodwin had. Thus when Campbell shot and killed Goodwin, it was seen by many as a direct attack on the left and its anti-militarism.

Though since his death people have obsessed about the possibility of a conspiracy to arrange Goodwin’s murder, that obscures an important lesson. The Canadian government sent armed men to hunt down draft dodgers because they refused to fight, and in refusing they challenged the hierarchy of Canadian society. Goodwin was not killed because he was Ginger Goodwin, but because he refused to allow an authoritarian state to force him to fight in a war to defend the expansion of business empires that meant only poverty and death for working people.

When we remember Goodwin today, we should reflect not on his death, unjust as it was, but on his life. Goodwin reminded us that we, as workers, create all of the world’s wealth; that we are united by that role, and that we must not allow ourselves to be divided by ideas of nation and race. More, if we band together, we can build, as Goodwin put it, “a society where slavery is no more, and happiness, joy, peace and plenty be at the disposal of all.”
By making an analysis of the people that comprise any community, we find that the relations between them are of a chaotic form, owing to the fact that they have interests that are opposed. We find that their actions are the result of how they happen to get their living. If people get their living easily, then we find that the ideas they express voice contentment—that they have “no kick coming”, but on the other hand, the people that have to work long hours under inhuman conditions, naturally resent it, and express ideas that are in opposition to this condition.

Now we find that the master of industry agrees with everything except that which interferes with his material interests, and that he uses all methods and wiles in order to put you off the track, and keep you from looking after your own interests. We find that all the institutions of this capitalist society are based on the rights of property, and they teach ideas that conform to this, using all the sentimental claptrap to blind you. To respect private property, love “your” country, respect the laws, obey your “superiors”, be industrious and thrifty, as there is every opportunity to rise and become a “great man.” All this education is the result of the fear that in the near future they will have to get off the workers’ backs and give up their life of ease and comfort and the reveling in luxury that this form of society permits them to enjoy.

It is plain to see that these bourgeois ethics have played a great part in holding the working class in subjection, and they will still keep this up if the workers don’t get wise and find out where those ethics spring from. When we find these workers howling about not getting “justice” and that it is “not right”—that is proof they do not understand the class nature of society. It has been in evidence during this coal strike that this sentiment is nothing but a sham, for those that have been brought up before the court and are strikers are given the maximum penalty, while
those that are helping the masters to defeat the strikers are let off with the minimum penalty – showing conclusively that the courts are at the disposal of the master class.

Then in order to put a stop to all this you will have to:

**Stop Appealing And Praying**

And line up in an organization that has for its mission the abolition of this capitalist system, for as long as you allow the means of wealth production to be owned by a few, just so long will the majority live in poverty and want. And as the evolution of society still keeps up the march, the development of machinery in all industries is proving the great leveler in the ranks of the working class and is obliterating all ideas that were inculcated by the master class.

With this law working to our end, the gulf widening between the capitalists and the workers with every introduction of improved machinery, more of you are fleeing into the ranks of the unemployed to satisfy the lust and greed of these inhuman monsters that refuse to grant a living worthy of a human being to those who support them.

Now fellow workers this is our mission:

**Take And Control Production**

For the wants and needs of society and not for a few. So line up in this great worldwide movement of Socialism, and use the concerted action of all workers that have marched out of the darkness of superstition into the daylight of science and power to wrest from the master class the means of wealth production.

This is no sentimental movement, and the masters can howl; we do not hide our intentions, for we are what they have made us – the dispossessed class that is out to overthrow them. All their sweet little ideals we have no use for: they will not retard the Socialist Movement in the least, for it is the natural contradiction to this society, and just as all other societies had to give way to the march of progress, so too will capitalism, now in the stage of dissolution, have to give way to the next form of society, which will be the grandest, owing to the fact that the human race, for the first time since primitive communism, will have freed itself from economic bondage.
“Salvation”—Western Clarion, July 1916
By Albert Goodwin

Along with the development of modern civilization grows the lines of demarcation between the two classes constituting society. Every device that man’s ingenuity has brought into being has increased the economic power of the capitalist class, and reduced the working class to a lower level of subsistence. This is the inevitable economic law which gives to those who own (but do not produce) all the luxury and enjoyment that society has at its command. The abundance of wealth is displayed before the worker’s eyes in such tangible forms as bouquets and pageants, with monkey dinners and blackbird pies (chorus girls encased in baked dough) and other similar debaucheries to satisfy the insatiate appetite of the class that rules.

Then the pageants, with their figureheads, whoever they may be, whether King, President, or some other person (whom it has pleased God, of course, to place in charge of the nation’s destiny) with their trains of flunkies and lickspittles, to jump, shout, sing, or pray, as the occasion demands, like mere automata. These are spectacular scenes that are met with daily by the workers either in the locality where they exist, or through the easy medium of the “reliable” press. This gorgeous display of wealth by those that do not produce, before a half-starved community of workers must arouse a consciousness more or less of the huge amount of wealth that has been exploited from the workers in the past.

The satisfaction of those feelings that the worker possesses cannot be fulfilled. Although he may be “possessed” of a job, which he follows daily, the pittance that falls to him, is barely enough to keep him alive. The enslavement to the rule of capitalist conditions could not be otherwise. On the side of the class that owns the forces of production is all the wealth at their disposal, and on the side of the working class is the abundance of misery, degradation and want. This constitutes the great chasm between the classes in society.

To maintain this system that pauperizes the many, that the few might revel in wealth, is to the material interest of the capitalist class. It has called into being every institution imaginable, to safeguard and perpetuate the rule of robbery. The workers have been taught the ideas of capitalist
interests through the school, press and pulpit. The teachings of “honesty and thrift”, “obey your masters”, etc., to the end, that if success does not crown your efforts, it is “God’s will”, and reward will be yours (after submitting to the trials and tribulations of this damnable system) in the life above the clouds is good business from our master’s stand point.

But the conditions of the slaves are gradually pushing those capitalist ideas into the background. Instead of waiting till we are dead, we are beginning to realize that happiness can be gained here; instead of accepting that everything that falls into our lot was ordained, it has been discovered that intelligent action by the workers can affect the conditions of their lives. Again, realizing that conditions change, a method is adopted whereby the cause of these miserable conditions can be found. Already, the cause of the misery of the working class has been solved by a good many of the slaves. So soon as the discovery is made, they become factors in furthering the knowledge of the cause of their slavery.

The institutions which uphold the present system are analyzed very carefully and their functions closely watched. The particular institution of “government” came into being to transact its business in the interests of the ruling class. The laws which are passed are but the expression of the dominant economic interests. Should any of the laws be disputed or the working class refuses to abide by the decisions of the henchmen of capitalism, the different departments of government are utilized to enforce the slaves to obey their masters. If cajolery and persuasion fail to keep the slaves quiet, then armed force is resorted to.

This, then, becomes the mission of the workers; to get a knowledge of the cause of their slavish conditions, and the means that keep them in subjection. It is the workers themselves that must work out their own emancipation. As a means to that the Socialist Party of Canada is organized to carry on a program of education. As the condition of the workers becomes more unbearable, the call for education and knowledge must of necessity increase, that the galling chains of wage slavery, with their accompanying evil effects of misery and want, insanity and crime, may give place to a society where slavery is no more, and happiness, joy, peace and plenty be at the disposal of all.

This will mean “social salvation.” To all those desirous of enjoying the full social fruits of their toil, this article is dedicated. It is the only way
out of the wilderness, and the direction demands that “knowledge” must be our weapon to the end that we may attain “salvation.”

Workers of the World
Are officially advised by the officers of District 23, U. M. W. of A., with headquarters at Nanaimo, that the

Strike on Vancouver Island is still in full force and effect

And if you do not want to scab, keep away from Cumberland, Ladysmith, Soo Tula, South Wellington and Nanaimo. When the strike is over, official notification will be sent out through the labor press. This notification is made necessary by false reports, spread in the old country press, that the strike has been settled in favor of the men, thus causing many victims to come to Vancouver Island under gross misrepresentation. Union men and their friends will keep away from Vancouver Island until the strike is settled.

Vancouver Socialists Gathered at Local Beach in 1911. Photo: Socialist Party of Canada, courtesy of John Ahrens
PLAT FORM --- Socialist Party of Canada

We, the Socialist Party of Canada, in convention assembled, affirm our allegiance to and support of the principles and program of the revolutionary working class.

Labor produces all wealth, and to the producers it should belong. The present economic system is based upon capitalist ownership of the means of production, consequently, all the products of labor belong to the capitalist class. The capitalist is therefore the master; the worker a slave.

So long as the capitalist class remains in possession of the reins of government all powers of the State will be used to protect and defend their property rights in the means of wealth production and their control of the product of labor.

The capitalist system gives to the capitalist an ever-swelling stream of profits, and to the worker, an ever-increasing measure of misery and degradation.

The interest of the working class lies in the direction of setting itself free from capitalist exploitation by abolition of the wage system, under which is cloaked the robbery of the working class at the point of production. To accomplish this necessitates the transformation of capitalist property in the means of wealth production into collective or working-class property.

The irrepressible conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker is rapidly culminating in a struggle for possession of the reins of government—the capitalist to hold, the worker to secure it by political action. This is the class struggle.

Therefore, we call upon all workers to organize under the banner of the Socialist Party of Canada with the object of conquering the political powers for the purpose of setting up and enforcing the economic program of the working class, as follows:

1. The transformation, as rapidly as possible, of capitalist property in the means of wealth production (natural resources, factories, mills, railroads etc.) into the collective property of the working class.
2. The democratic organization and management of industry by the workers.
3. The establishment, as speedily as possible, of production for use instead of production for profit.

The Socialist Party when in office shall always and everywhere until the present system is abolished, make the answer to this question its guiding rule of conduct: Will this legislation advance the interests of the working class and aid the workers in their class struggle against capitalism? If it will, the Socialist Party is for it; if it will not, the Socialist Party is absolutely opposed to it.

In accordance with this principle the Socialist Party pledges itself to conduct all the public affairs placed in its hands in such a manner as to promote the interests of the working class alone.
Joe Naylor (c. 1870s-1946)

"To order a man to go to war, whether with the workers of another country or with the workers of his own country, as in a strike, is like ordering him to take a gun, load it, dig his own grave, crawl into it and shoot himself.” Joe Naylor, 1912

Joe Naylor is often in the shadow of his friend Ginger Goodwin. Even Goodwin's tombstone looms over Naylor's grave. But when Goodwin was alive, Naylor was the more prominent figure. Naylor was a leading socialist, a dedicated union organizer, and the president of the BC Federation of Labour. He helped to found the radical One Big Union, and was targeted by the government for offering assistance to draft dodgers. But Naylor's most important legacy is his activism against racism in the labour movement. As he wrote in 1912, "there are no foreigners in the working class.” Naylor, unlike some of his contemporaries, embraced socialist internationalism not just as a theory but practically, organizing workers across racial and ethnic divisions into the socialist movement and unions.
Naylor was born in England in the 1870s, and had arrived in Cumberland by 1909 after stints in Montana and Nanaimo. He helped bring the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) to Cumberland, and became the local’s president. He also joined the United Mine Workers of America, and was its delegate to the BC Federation of Labour in 1912. When the Great Coal Strike started in the summer of 1912, Naylor was a prominent organizer, helping to lead the strike and trying to organize Chinese- and Japanese-Canadian miners into the union together with their white fellow workers. His efforts were prevented by the Canadian government, which would not allow the UMWA to bring translators across the border to help in the organizing efforts. When defeated strikers returned to work in 1914, many white unionists blamed the Chinese-Canadian miners who had been forced by poverty to cross the picket line, but Naylor rejected that interpretation. He told the BC Federation of Labour convention in January 1914 that if Chinese and Japanese miners had been allowed to, they would have sided with their coworkers, and that “it is the white men, and especially the men who have come from the same country as myself, and that is England, that are the real curse in this province.”

Naylor’s socialist internationalism meant that he was an outspoken opponent of the First World War even before it started. As the war progressed and its horrors became more obvious, the labour movement began to more openly oppose the war. One example of this was the election of both Naylor and Goodwin to the BC Fed executive in January 1917. Naylor’s election particularly appeared to represent a turning point for the BC Fed, away from racist exclusion and reformism and towards a strong anti-war stance. But Naylor would be disappointed. At the end of his first year as president of the BC Fed, he lamented the lack of solidarity in the movement, the failure to rally around the struggle against conscription, and the limited reformism that the American Federation of Labor endorsed. When asked to serve as president again, he refused, saying that the “union movement had been a failure” in challenging the war and conscription.

Naylor’s commitment to socialism meant that he continued to be a voice for radicalism in the BC left even after he left the presidency of the BC Fed. In 1918, Naylor was among the Islanders who helped Goodwin and other draft dodgers to avoid the special police, and he was a speaker at Goodwin’s funeral. On the day of the funeral, workers in Vancouver launched the first general strike in Canadian history, an action that
helped inspire a wave of general strikes across Canada over the next year. Energized by the power of the general strike, and frustrated by the failure of the conservative labour movement during the war, Naylor joined other radicals in forming a new union federation, called the One Big Union (OBU), in 1919.

Naylor was integral in building the OBU into a new, industrial union movement. The OBU was built to be different than the conventional trade union movement. It was meant to replace the craft union federations that were impediments to radical change, especially anti-war socialism. The OBU was built on the principles of democratic industrial unionism. Instead of imposing a top-down structure on workers, the delegates at its founding convention decided to allow the union to develop as its members determined, and focused on organizing instead of establishing a solid union bureaucracy. What came of this was an organizing model that emphasized worker power on the job floor, and made it possible to organize workers in industries where employer hostility and other structural factors had prevented unionization in the past.

Naylor brought to the OBU a strong critique of racist union politics, particularly the reactionary strategy of Asian exclusion. Most of the founders of the OBU were Anglo-Canadian workers, like the trade union movement in general at the time. But the industries that the OBU organized, especially construction, mining, and logging, included many workers from ethnic and racial minorities. The OBU set out to join workers as a class across racial and ethnic divides. The OBU was hardly perfect – its record on gender is especially disappointing – but it represented a new path for Canadian workers, and it grew explosively, with tens of thousands of workers joined the OBU between 1919 and 1921. In BC, nearly 20,000 joined, and they made a majority of unionists across the province. The OBU was more than just a precursor to the industrial unionism of the CIO, it was a class conscious organization that attempted to improve day to day conditions for workers while also working to build socialism and an end to exploitative wage labour.

The Canadian government recognized the OBU as an important innovation as well, and moved quickly to halt its growth. After the Winnipeg General strike was ended by RCMP violence in June of 1919, the police turned their attention to disrupting the new union federation. Joseph Naylor was prominent on their list of targets, labelled a "chief
agitator” for his role during the war and in founding the OBU. One RCMP spy ominously wrote to his superiors: “I am of the opinion that his removal at some time would have a most beneficial effect, and I shall keep him well in mind.” Ultimately, the RCMP would not attack Naylor directly, but it did work to undermine the OBU. RCMP spies suggested that “with an organisation of this nature, and a good deal of determination about its leaders we are faced with a very grave problem.” The solution, they argued, was “the festering of dissention between the leaders of the various Unions and Labor Organisations,” and so this was the strategy the government, and ultimately employers and conservative trade unionists used to disrupt the OBU. From 1919 to 1922 OBU organizers and leaders were subjected to a red scare, a campaign of harassment, that painted the OBU as foreign and treasonous. Conservative union leaders, worried that the OBU would replace them, went along with the campaign. Coming as it did in the context of a global recession that hurt all unions, and aided by internal political struggles within the OBU, the OBU collapsed as quickly as it had grown, and the union was basically eliminated as a force in BC by the end of 1922.

Naylor moved back to Cumberland after the end of the OBU, and eventually returned to work in the coal mines. In the years after the end of the OBU, many socialists and radicals drifted into the Communist party or the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation after its creation in 1932. Neither party shared the dedication to education that Naylor and the SPC had advocated, and both had an uneasy relationship with organized labour. Perhaps for these reasons, Naylor never joined either party, retaining instead his commitment to the socialist, industrial union analysis he and others had developed so forcefully in the war period. Naylor was still working in Cumberland in 1937, when the mines were finally officially organized by the United Mine Workers of America. He retired from mining in 1943, at 71, and lived the rest of his days in a cabin near Comox Lake. He died in 1946, and was buried by the UMWA local he had worked much of his life to build.
From the 1914 BC Federation of Labour convention:
Resolution No. 40 - Public Ownership of Mines, Mills, Railways, etc.
Moved by J. Naylor, U.M.W. of A., No. 2299, Cumberland, B.C.:

Whereas – An attempt is being made throughout this dominion to form a political party similar to the labor party of Britain – a party advocating reforms and basing its strength on votes and compromise, rather than on working class intelligence, and
Whereas – Political representatives are but a reflection of the intelligence of the electors, and
Whereas – Capitalism gives to the employing class an ever-increasing stream of luxury and wealth, and to the employed class an ever-increasing measure of misery and degradation, and
Whereas – The capitalist class are compelled by competition to introduce more and more modern machinery, which must increase the already large army of the unemployed, and the competition of workers for jobs, which reduces wages, increases misery and poverty of the working class, together with discontent and the spirit of revolt. Hence the capitalist class is compelled to continually patch up the system by reform, and
Whereas – No reform was ever given to the working class until the economic conditions demanded it, and
Whereas – It is folly for the working class to fight for legislative reform since the laws favourable to the working class already existing cannot be enforced, but are completely ignored by the capitalist class wherever and whenever they deem it necessary and expedient; and
Whereas – So long as the workingman must offer his energy for sale, all he can receive for it, on the average, is the same as the seller of any other commodity, viz., its value, or enough to reproduce it; and
Whereas – The only real salvation of the working class lies in the complete overthrow of the capitalist system, and this necessitates the wresting of the political power from the capitalist class by the working class; and
Whereas – An election is the only time, and the polling booth the only place where the workers are afforded the opportunity to accomplish this act, and
Whereas – To make political issues of, or to vote for, reforms, in preference to the abolition of the system, is to endorse and justify the continued exploitation of labour, and at the same time hand over to the capitalist class the political power, by virtue of which power alone can the employing class retain ownership of the means of wealth production and hold the workers in slavery, therefore be it
Resolved – That we are opposed to all political parties that do not adhere to the principles and programme of the revolutionary working class, whose slogan is “No compromise, no political trading,” and whose goal is the unconditional surrender by the capitalist class of the ownership of the mines, mills, railways, etc. that wealth may be produced for use instead of for profit. This will involve the emancipation of the working class.
Mary “Mother” Jones and Lucy Parsons

Unlike Ginger Goodwin and Joe Naylor, “Mother” Mary Jones only lived briefly in Canada, and Lucy Parsons never did, but both travelled there as prominent figures of their time, taking part in speaking tours, drawing crowds and inspiring local activists and strikers. Lucy Parsons visited Vancouver several times between 1909 and 1914, but was blocked at the border in 1913. Mother Jones came in 1914, although border officials also tried to block her. When she was granted passage, she travelled up and down Vancouver Island and to Vancouver giving speeches during the Big Strike of 1912-14.

In some ways, where Mother Jones or Lucy Parsons lived (or spoke) mattered little, although it did shape their perspectives and experiences. It is clear they believed that the evils of capitalism, be it in West Virginia, Chicago, Cumberland or elsewhere, operated in the same destructive ways. Having witnessed state violence at Haymarket, on the picket lines, and frequently subjected to harassments and arrests, both were very critical of the state and its armed enforcers of laws designed to protect the hoarding of wealth and power. Skilled orators and intelligent speakers, they powerfully transmuted their own experiences and lessons learned into rousing speeches that suggested there were ways to fight back, to gain power through collective action and organizing. And, that there was hope.

Jones and Parsons, along with other women politically active at the time, demonstrated that women did not need to stay in the shadows, and that they could take active roles in “public” life even when legally barred from certain professions or from holding certain rights. That, in turn, helped inspire and support other women to engage in ways that pushed boundaries and defied convention.

The photograph of Mother Jones speaking to striking Nanaimo coal miners is an incredible contrast to most pictures from that strike where, with few exceptions, only men are featured. In the audience listening to Mother Jones speak are young girls and women crowded together. Who they were and their own stories of why they came to listen to her are unknown, but when Mother Jones spoke of the violence and death of the 1912-13 Paint Creek - Cabin Creek strike or the Ludlow, Colorado Massacre, both involving the United Mine Workers of America—
the same union organizing on Vancouver Island — surely it resonated among them all.

Of course, there existed women in British Columbia who put their bodies and lives on the line during labour battles, who sought out ways to contribute to activist causes, and who held organizing meetings to support striking men and to organize themselves. Looking at the Big Strike of 1912-14 reveals that women destroyed private property, harassed scab labour, and in one notable woman’s case, forced a jail to release her husband through intimidation made more real by the axe she carried in her hand.

Likely some of those same women are in the photograph with Mother Jones. However, their stories are not easily accessible or well-documented. Due to their status as very public figures, a much larger selection of primary documents and secondary sources exist connected to Parsons and Jones. Their histories, alongside Ginger Goodwin and Joe Naylor, provide examples of women pushing against the confines of “respectable” behaviour, developing sophisticated analysis of the systemic causes of poverty and exploitation, and working directly to make change.
Lucy Parsons was born into slavery in 1851 and witnessed the revolutionary acts of the Civil War required for it to end. And yet, one master was replaced with another; instead of a brutal plantation owner making cruel decisions about her life or the lives of loved ones, it became the state and defence of capital that took on that role, tearing her from her husband, Albert Parsons. These experiences fuelled her actions and lent fire to her words in a way that lasted until her death in 1942.

Albert and Lucy met in Waco, Texas, in a post-emancipation world of promise that fell short as pro-slavery, anti-Black forces increased their efforts and violence escalated. By the winter of 1873-74, they moved to Chicago, living in the poorest working-class Chicago neighbourhoods, immersed in the violence of poverty, with its evictions, starvations, high mortality rates, imprisonment, and exploitation.

In 1877, a massive railroad strike spread out from West Virginia to several states in response to repeated wage cuts. Lucy and Albert became involved after witnessing the actions of the volunteer militia recruited to “restore” order when the strike reached Chicago. By the time the strike was over, 20 people had been killed. Although already involved in some of the emerging working-class movements of the time, including the Social Democratic Party and Workingmen’s Party, Parsons later cited this 1877 strike as one that cemented her commitment to labour struggles.
Lucy moved on to help organize women into the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union. She was an organizer and speaker for the Working Women’s Union, writing for a variety of socialist publications. Increasingly, she saw the intertwined nature of state and capital and how they worked together as a site of oppression and repression and gravitated towards the emerging anarchist movement in Chicago.

Both Albert and Lucy joined the Knights of Labor (KOL), an industrial union formed in 1869 distinct for its inclusion of “unskilled” workers, meaning those without a recognized trade, women, and workers of colour. Notable for its efforts organizing African-American workers, it was not perfect. On the west coast of Canada and the United States, union organizers there participated in the growing exclusionary politics attacking workers of Chinese heritage.

By 1884, the Knights, craft unions, and Lucy and Albert were fighting for the 8 hour day with demonstrations and marches planned for May 1, 1886 to signal the beginning of an international movement. Large crowds took to the streets. On May 3, momentum continued as protesters joined striking workers at Chicago’s McCormick Harvester Factory. When the end of shift whistle blew, signalling when scab workers would be leaving, the crowd pushed forward towards the gates. The police fired on them, killing two people. People gathered the next day in Chicago’s Haymarket Square in protest. As the protest wound down, people drifted away, including Lucy and Albert, who went to a tavern in a nearby block. With only a few hundred people remaining, a bomb went off, lobbed in the direction of the police. The police opened fire indiscriminately, killing several workers and even some of their fellow officers.

No direct evidence linked the bombing to anyone targeted for arrest by police. Indeed, most of the eight labour activists and anarchists arrested had not even attended the Haymarket meeting and could not possibly have thrown the bomb. However, the bombing launched the first of America’s “red scares,” the use of propaganda and police repression to create fear and support for smashing labour and the left.

The trial of the eight unfolded amidst panicked, inflammatory rhetoric about anarchists and foreigners and many previously sympathetic labour supporters began to distance themselves from the the arrested, including the leadership of the Knights of Labor and craft unionists such as Sam Gompers, who sought personal respectability above solidarity. It was clear
that the labour activists were on trial for their ideas, not their actions. Despite the lack of evidence, all eight were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. Three successfully appealed their sentences, one, Louis Lingg, committed suicide in his cell, and four, including Albert Parsons, were hanged on November 11, 1887.

Vowing to take up his cause, Lucy responded by dedicating her life to keeping his memory alive while working towards total system change, stating that “I, too, expect to mount the scaffold. I am ready.” When the police, the government, the press, and the conservatives in the labour movement tried to silence her, she doubled down: “Before we can have peace in a society like ours, rivers of blood will have to run.” The blood of her husband had already contributed to the flow, and calling for the blood of those who she held responsible for killing him was not something she shied away from. She refused to temper her positions to cater to respectability politics: “I don’t want to be respectable,” she wrote, “I want to be wholly disreputable and die so, and so do we all, I hope.”

In 1905, Lucy Parsons became a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, joining twelve other women in attendance, including Mother Jones, at the founding convention in Chicago. She and Jones were the only two women registered as delegates and Parsons was the only woman to address the convention, putting her name on the speakers list upon discovering no women were slated to speak at all. In the accompanying abridged transcript of her speech, notable highlights are her analysis of women’s place within capitalism and also her call for the sit-down strike as a means to wrestle control back into the hands of workers.

For the rest of her life, when Lucy made an appearance to speak, she was typically met by police and government attempts to intimidate her or prevent her from taking the stage. Taking up the cause of free speech became part of her speaking tours. In Vancouver, BC, direct action to defend free speech on the streets reached a flashpoint in 1909 and 1912. When Lucy Parsons took to the soapbox there on May 13, 1909, her very presence was a direct challenge to police attempts to silence and disperse the highly public disobedience of their authority. Returning in 1914, after being turned back at the border a year before, Parsons again took to the stage, talking about the French Revolution, women, free speech and other topics that inspired action and resistance.
By the 1920s, Parsons was a member of various organizations and continued keeping the memory and lessons of Haymarket alive while supporting labour and left causes. In the last two decades of her life, Lucy worked with the Communist Party (although her membership is a subject of debate) and threw energy behind the defence of Sacco and Vanzetti, two anarchists ultimately executed by the state, as well as the “Scottsboro Boys,” nine African American teenagers falsely accused of rape.

While she remained active, new generations appeared that did not know of her activism and she began to fade into obscurity. Yet those in the know continued to support her and come see her speak, sometimes attracting new audiences along the way. In the 1930s, historian and radio show host Studs Terkel had the opportunity to hear Parsons speak, forever leaving an imprint:

> And sure enough, I heard Lucy Parsons speak a couple of times. I’ll never forget. It was Lucy Parsons. An old, old woman was speaking, tattered clothes, sort of genteelly dressed, poorly dressed, but genteel. And she spoke, but she was fiery when she spoke. And they passed the hat. And someone passed her flowered hat around. I remember a guy dropping a buck in. “Oh, my god, this guy!” This guy’s an old, battered Wobbly. I knew him; he lived at the hotel. He didn’t have much, though he dropped a buck in. He said, “I’m doing this for Lucy Parsons.”

When Lucy Parson died in a house fire in 1942 at the age of 89, the police made it clear that they had not forgotten who she was either. They immediately began sifting through the rubble and pulling out writing, books, and other material. In all, a rumoured collection of 3000 items was removed, handed over to the FBI and never seen again, an incredible loss of history. Once described as “more dangerous than a thousand rioters” in 2004 it was made clear that her memory remains a powerful force, one that some would like to have remain buried. When Chicago underwent a review of park names for gender balance—at the time, only 27 of the city’s 555 parks were named after women—the Fraternal Order of Police balked at the idea of naming a park after an anarchist. Despite attempts to block it, Lucy Ella Gonzales Parsons park is located at 4712 W. Belmont Avenue in Chicago, just over a mile away from the site of her death.
What Freedom Means

The change from the present method of obtaining one's living is inevitable, because it has become a necessity. We now live under the pay system, in which if you can't pay you can't have. Everything has a price set upon it; earth, air, light and water, all have their price. And he who hasn't worked, let him starve. Love, honor, fame, ambition, all the noblest and holiest aspirations and sentiments of humanity are bought and sold. Everything is upon the market for sale; all is merchandise and commerce. Land, the prime necessity of existence, is held for a price, and the homeless millions perish because they cannot pay for it. Food, raiment and shelter exist in super-abundance, but are withheld for the price.

The productive and distributive forces of nature, united with the power and ingenuity of man are reserved for a price. And humanity perishes from disease, crime and ignorance because of its enforced, artificial poverty. The mental, moral, intellectual and physical qualities are dwarfed, stunted and crushed to maintain the price. This is slavery, the enslavement of man to his own powers: Can it continue? The change is inevitable because necessary. Free access to all the productive and distributive forces will alone free the minds and bodies of men. There are certain things that are priceless. Among these are life, liberty and happiness, and these are the things which the society of the future, the free society, will guarantee to all for the return of a few hours labor per day. When labor is no longer for sale, society will produce free men and women, who will think free, act free, and be free. Crime and criminals will flee from such a society, because the incentive for crime will be gone.

--Lucy E. Parsons
Speech by Lucy Parsons

...I wish to state to you that I have taken the floor because no other woman has responded, and I feel that it would not be out of place for me to say in my poor way a few words about this movement. We, the women of this country, have no ballot even if we wished to use it, and the only way that we can be represented is to take a man to represent us. You men have made such a mess of it in representing us that we have not much confidence in asking you; and I for one feel very backward in asking the men to represent me. We have no ballot, but we have our labor....

We are exploited more ruthlessly than men. Wherever wages are to be reduced the capitalist class use women to reduce them, and if there is anything that you men should do in the future it is to organize the women. And I say that if the women had inaugurated a boycott of the State Street stores since the teamsters' strike, the stores would have surrendered long ago. I do not stand before you to brag. I had no man connected with that strike to make it of interest to me to boycott the stores, but I have not bought one penny’s worth there since that strike was inaugurated. I intended to boycott all of them as one individual at least, so it is important to educate the women...

My view may be narrow and theirs may be broad; but I do say to those who have intimated politics here as being necessary or a part of this organization, that I do not impute to them dishonesty or impure motives. But as I understand the call for this convention, politics had no place here; it was simply to be an economic organization, and I hope for the good of this organization that when we go away from this hall, and our comrades go some to the west, some to the east, some to the north and some to the south, while some remain in Chicago, and all spread this light over this broad land and carry the message of what this convention has done, that there will be no room for politics at all.

There may be room for politics; I have nothing to say about that; but it is a bread and butter question, an economic issue, upon which the fight must be made. Now, what do we mean when we say revolutionary Socialist? We mean that the land shall belong to the landless, the tools
to the toiler, and the products to the producers. Now, let us analyze that for just a moment, before you applaud me. First, the land belongs to the landless. Is there a single land-owner in this country who owns his land by the constitutional rights given by the constitution of the United States who will allow you to vote it away from him? I am not such a fool as to believe it. We say, "The tools belong to the toiler." They are owned by the capitalist class. Do you believe they will allow you to go into the halls of the legislature and simply say, "Be it enacted that on and after a certain day the capitalist shall no longer own the tools and the factories and the places of industry, the ships that plow the ocean and our lakes?"

Do you believe that they will submit? I do not. We say, "The product belongs to the producers." It belongs to the capitalist class as their legal property. Do you think that they will allow you to vote them away from them by passing a law and saying, "Be it enacted that on and after a certain day Mr. Capitalist shall be dispossessed?" You may, but I do not believe it. Hence, when you roll under your tongue the expression that you are revolutionists, remember what that word means. It means a revolution that shall turn all these things over where they belong—to the wealth producers.

Now, how shall the wealth-producers come into possession of them? I believe that if every man and every woman who works, or who toils in the mines, the mills, the workshops, the fields, the factories and the farms in our broad America should decide in their minds that they shall have that which of right belongs to them, and that no idler shall live upon their toil, and when your new organization, your economic organization, shall declare as man to man and woman to woman, as brothers and sisters, that you are determined that you will possess these things, then there is no army that is large enough to overcome you, for you yourselves constitute the army. Now, when you have decided that you will take possession of these things, there will not need to be one gun fired or one scaffold erected...

I wish to say that my conception of the future method of taking possession of this Earth is that of the general strike; that is my conception of it. The trouble with all the strikes in the past has been this: the workingmen, like the teamsters of our cities, these hard-working teamsters, strike and go out and starve. Their children starve. Their wives get discouraged. Some feel that they have to go out and beg for relief, and to get a little coal to
keep the children warm, or a little bread to keep the wife from starving, or a little something to keep the spark of life in them so that they can remain wage-slaves. That is the way with the strikes in the past.

My conception of the strike of the future is not to strike and go out and starve, but to strike and remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production. If anyone is to starve—I do not say it is necessary—let it be the capitalist class. They have starved us long enough, while they have had wealth and luxury and all that is necessary....

So when we come to decide, let us sink such differences as nationality, religion, politics, and set our eyes eternally and forever towards the rising star of the industrial republic of labor; remembering that we have left the old behind and have set our faces toward the future. There is no power on Earth that can stop men and women who are determined to be free at all hazards. There is no power on Earth so great as the power of intellect. It moves the world and it moves the Earth...

I hope even now to live to see the day when the first dawn of the new era will have arisen, when capitalism will be a thing of the past, and the new industrial republic, the commonwealth of labor, shall be in operation. I thank you.
PREAMBLE

to the Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1908

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars.

Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries, if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, “A fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work,” we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, “Abolition of the wage system.”

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.
Mother Mary Jones, (c. 1837–1930)

“Let me tell you this, you will never get anything from the capitalist that you don’t make them give you. Capital not only assumes the power of the government, but it exercises it and turns you out unless you assume that power yourselves and exercise it. You have to do more than have the power, you have to know that you have it.” 1913

When Mary “Mother” Jones spoke it was impossible to not take her seriously, despite her small stature and grandmotherly appearance. As soon as she began to talk, a fiery condemnation of the ills of capitalism and the need for organized collective strength and power poured forth.

Her first-hand experiences of tragedy allowed her to tap into a much larger current of suffering born of poverty, disempowerment, and class relations. Her teacher training and exposure to ideas through the labour movement equipped her to use these lessons and transmit their urgency to others, over and over again.

Born in County Cork, Ireland, Mary Jones came to Canada in 1851. Like others migrating en masse from Ireland at the time, her family was moving to escape the horrors of the Great Potato Famine that eventually killed approximately one million people between 1845-1849. In Canada,
Mary trained first as a dressmaker and later as teacher, before moving to the United States to work. She eventually moved to Memphis, where she worked as a teacher and met her husband, George Jones, a member of the International Iron Molders Union.

In 1867, a yellow fever epidemic swept the region. While the wealthy were able to flee, left behind were workers and the poor, many unable to afford a nurse. Jones’s four children and husband died in succession, leaving her alone, quarantined, listening to the constant sound of the “grating of the wheels of the death cart.” Left without a family, at a time when no social safety net existed, members of her husband’s union rallied to her support, paying for the funerals and offering up public recognition and condolences. In turn, Jones nursed other victims of the fever until the epidemic subsided.

She returned to Chicago and tried to rebuild her life by opening a dressmaking business that catered to the city’s wealthy. Immersed in a world of contrasts, her experiences reinforced her positions on class:

“Often while sewing for the lords and barons ... I would look out of the plate glass windows and see the poor, shivering wretches, jobless and hungry, walking alongside the frozen lake front... The contrast of their condition with that of the tropical comfort of the people for whom I sewed was painful to me."

The process of rebuilding her life was cut short again in 1871, during the Chicago fire that killed approximately 300 people and left more than 10,000 homeless. Everything she owned was destroyed. Instead of retreating in despair, Jones again gravitated to the labour movement, attending Knights of Labor meetings and listening to speeches in a burned out building. She soon decided that she wanted to take a more active role in tackling the issues affecting working people and signed up to become a member.

With her sense of home never stable, home became wherever she was needed. “I live in the United States, but I do not know exactly in what places, because I am always in the fight against oppression, and wherever a fight is going on I have to jump there...so that really I have no particular residence...my address is like my shoes; it travels with me wherever I go.”
The plight of working children did not escape her notice and she fought for them as if they were her own. She went undercover at various times—while she still could—taking jobs in places children worked to see first hand their conditions. What she found was appalling but certainly not unusual at the time.

"Little girls and boys, barefooted, walked up and down between the endless rows of spindles, reaching thin little hands into the machinery to repair snapped threads... They replaced spindles all day long, all day long; night through, night through. Tiny babies of six years old with faces of sixty did an eight-hour shift for ten cents a day. If they fell asleep, cold water was dashed in their faces; and the voice of the manager yelled above the ceaseless racket and whir of the machines."

Child labour was a frequent practice at the turn of the 19th century. Jones saw the exploitation of children as one of the greatest ills of capitalism. In 1903, she traveled to Philadelphia where 46,000 textile workers—an estimated 10,000 - 15,000 of them children—were out on strike. Resistant to any legislation that hindered profits, employers sought to maintain the status quo, particularly for these segments of the workforce that received significantly less pay.

In response, Jones organized 200 children and supporters to participate in a walk to New York, stopping to make speeches and raise money for
the strikers along the way. In the blazing heat, they marched. Thousands of people reportedly were in attendance and as the children took to the stage and held up their crushed hands with missing fingers, no words were really needed.

Although the strike itself was ultimately unsuccessful, a spike in organizing around child labour led to short-lived legislation in 1914 providing some labour standards for American youth under 16. Less than two months after the April 20, 1914 Ludlow, Colorado Massacre, which resulted in the death of 14 miners, 11 woman & 2 children at the hands of the militia, Mother Jones travelled to British Columbia. Initially denied entry into Canada on June 5, she travelled to Ladysmith, one of the Island-wide hotspots of the Big Strike involving the UMWA, the same union operating in the Colorado coal mines. On June 7 she travelled to Cumberland to speak to striking miners before going to Victoria on June 9, Vancouver on June 10, and then on June 12 spoke to a crowd at the old Baptist building in Nanaimo. Exact transcripts of her talks are not available but the following composite speech is drawn from the different reports from those events.

Many photos exist, but there is only one known recording of Mother Jones speaking, filmed on the occasion of her self-claimed 100th birthday, on 1 May, 1930. In it, she speaks with slow measured determination. "... And I long to see the day when Labor will have the destinies of the nation in her own hands and she will stand a united force and show the world what workers can do."

While this hope for a better future has yet to be accomplished, the life and legacy of Mother Jones continues to inspire others to “fight like hell” for similar goals while refusing to be silenced.

<table>
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<th>Have you ever stopped to think that for the $12, $15 or $18 you have been earning each week for the past five or ten years, you have been producing for the man who employed you four or five times that sum? Did you know that he has been stocking up for years the overplus of your production, so that he can make a clean profit from it without the expense of paying you wages?</th>
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<td>-Mother Jones</td>
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We know Mother Jones spoke at least six times on Vancouver Island to striking miners. However, there is no complete transcript of her talk. Below, we have assembled a version of her talk from quotes gathered from multiple sources at the time.

As many of you know, just as I was set to board the Canadian Pacific steamer Princess Charlotte in Seattle for Victoria, I was stopped at the gangplank. The Canadian immigration officers told me I was forbidden from entering Canada and that the chief of British Columbia’s provincial police had sent instructions to keep me out because I “would be a disturbing element.”

One old woman of 82 was able to frighten men who were by nature moral cowards. Without a pistol or gun, I was able to frighten them half to death. When they heard I was coming they said “Keep the old woman out by any means.”

I am past 80 years and have never been charged with a crime, and so I cannot understand why I was prevented from entering a friendly nation. I do not blame the man who stopped me, for he had his order from higher up. It is merely carrying out a policy that means ‘You shall not educate my slaves’ but it is a mistaken view and is bound to fall finally. I had been invited to come here and did not know that I was committing any wrong in accepting your invitation.

Why did they want to keep me out, what do they not want you to hear? The truth.

At no time has so much wealth been produced by the workers and at no time has it been taken from them so boldly or rapaciously as at present.

Men’s hearts are cold. They are indifferent. Not all the coal that is dug warms the world. It remains indifferent to those who risk their life and health down in the blackness of the earth; who crawl through dark, choking crevices with only a bit of lamp on their caps to light their silent way; whose backs are bent with toil, whose very bones ache, whose happiness is sleep, and whose peace is death.

From earliest times the brains of men have laboured to bring rest to the human races. In the last fifty years, by improved machinery, more wealth has been created than for hundreds of years previous, yet still workers have to strike for a bit more bread or for better conditions of life. A class of robbers had been created at the same time—not a happy class by any means, who lived in dread lest the workers should awake. They tried every means to hypnotize the workers to rest nullified as they are, and to keep them divided.
There are two parties in this conflict that we are seeing spread: on one hand the workers, now waking from their sleep, on the other, the high class burglars, supported by the armed forces of the state as they hoard the wealth workers have created.

Jones arrived in BC only a few weeks after she witnessed the horrors of the Ludlow massacre, when state troops who had been called out by the John D. Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and iron company opened fire on striking miners and their families, killing more than twenty of them. The miners and their families were members of the United Mine Workers of America, the same union as the strikers on Vancouver Island.

I bring you the sympathy of the Colorado miners. You have to fight the same battle in British Columbia. Our boys who keep civilization going, want a share of the profits, more bread, better schooling, happier conditions. They say, No, you can't have it. We strike and they come back at us with guns and soldiers hired to shoot us. They government of Colorado belongs to Rockefeller, the governor is his pliant tool. Millions of dollars went to the military to serve against the workers. The old regime is coming down. The people suppose they will do as they did fifty years ago. In twenty-five years we have changed the complexion of things in America. In the end the working class will have learned to stand up like men with their arms folded.

Clasp hands, help the striking miners, join forces, read, study, and think. Similar tactics are being used here as they were in the States, and I want you to know that you have my full support and sympathy. To win, you need to bring together members from all unions. Organized labour has that most powerful weapon that we need to be willing to use: the general strike.

"Mother" Jones, organizer of the U. M. W. of A., delivered an address in the Union Hall on Sunday forenoon. There was a large gathering. She is a vigorous old lady, and a good speaker, and has the courage of her convictions.

The Cumberland News, June 14, 1914.
Further Reading


Hinde, John. 2003. *When Coal was King: Ladysmith and the Coal-mining industry on Vancouver Island.* Vancouver: UBC Press.


