

During WW2, Finnish organizations were again closed, as Finland was forced to accept German support to repel Russian invasion. But the heroic repulsion of the Russian invader during the Winter War also put Finns abroad in a new light. The leftists of the FOC and the churches found a common cause in soliciting aid and sending packages through Suomi-Apu (Finland Aid) to those suffering from the war in the home country.

In the post-WW2 era, a realigned Lumber Workers' Union carried on in the struggle to improve wages and working conditions, eventually becoming part of the new Canadian labour movement.

Thus in the first half of the twentieth century Finnish union activists had played a key role in creating the more equitable working conditions into which the new influx of their countrymen in the 1950s and 1960s entered.

Social historians have pointed out that a distinguishing feature of Canadian society in the North American community is the high membership of Canadian working people in labour organizations. Despite the expansion of the unorganized service sector and self-employment, one third of all working people belong to unions. In the US, by contrast, the union participation rate is only 11%. The postwar era has also seen the re-emergence of national unions still aspiring to the level they achieved before the Depression. In Canada, most union members (over 70%) belong to Canadian unions. Unions have

contributed to the more equitable distribution of wealth in Canada as well as a sense of social and international solidarity far beyond the sphere of their own membership. This includes national and provincial policies on workplace safety, pensions, unemployment insurance, and universal health care.

The highest ideals of the Canadian labour movement were expressed not only in organizing and strikes but in the everyday contribution members made through their work and daily lives to create a community where people can live out their lives in dignity and material security. To this movement Finnish labour activists brought the ideals of a transplanted nationalism. With time they learned to temper the leftist ideals for the independence of their own country to a land they never expected to be in but learned to call home.

In terms of numbers, the Canadian Finns were and still continue to be a minor immigrant group. Their total numbers (59,000 in 1971) have seldom exceeded even the number of immigrants arriving in Canada in a single year (121,900 in 1971). Considering this, their impact on Canada's left-wing labour and politics has been nothing short of remarkable. Of the many influences Finnish immigrants have had on their new homeland, the role they played in shaping the foundations of a modern Canadian labour movement may well be their most important contribution to building the Canada we celebrate in 2017.

*Ahti Tolvanen has lectured in Canadian Studies at the University of Helsinki, Finland; Tartu University, Estonia; and Nankai University, China. He has published widely on immigration issues, including a book on Finnish immigrants in Canada called *Finntown, A Perspective on Urban Integration: Port Arthur Finns in the Inter-War Period, 1918–1939* (Yliopistopaino, 1985). He is an alumnus and graduate of Canada's Lakehead University, and the University of Helsinki.*

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