



Lumber strikers at Finnish Labour Temple, July 1935. Donor: S. Kaukola. Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, MG8,D,1,1,G,I13. Lakehead University Archives.

izations in Canada up to that time. By the early 1930s well over 50% of all Canadian workers had joined three national unions. The most influential part of this movement was the Workers' Unity League, which had brought in large numbers of unemployed and immigrants. It was a historic achievement in the struggle for a national labour movement in Canada. By then the Finnish labour activists had lost their public image as "foreign agitators" and had become respected allies in the struggle for work and wages which involved more and more Canadians as the Depression deepened. By 1936 collective agreement provisions were becoming part of Ontario's provincial policy to improve conditions for workers in the lumber industry.

With the rise of Fascism in Germany, the Canadian Communist Party was directed in the mid-thirties from Moscow to adopt a new internationalism. They were ordered to discontinue separate Canadian organizing and support the affiliation of all unions with the continental labour movement through the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The new slogan became "A United Front against Fascism."

As the Depression deepened, immigration dwindled and deportations became a prominent phenomenon on Canada's migration scene. The numbers of deportees, among them radical Finns, rose to exceed over one third the numbers of admitted immigrants during the 1930s. Other leftist Finns went off to fight in Spain. Among those who remained the new internationalist policy led quickly to disunity within the broad labour movement and to disaffection of most Finnish activists with the Communist Party. Strikes witnessed intense competition and often confusion, particularly in Northern Ontario where Finnish organizers of Syndicalist and WUL factions repeatedly fought parallel strikes on separate organizing principles. At the same time, the communist left declined as a political force and was soon overshadowed by the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the predecessor of the New Democratic Party (NDP).

This also coincided with the falling into public discredit of the hard austerity policies of Prime Minister R.B. Bennett's Conservative government. There is much evidence that after Bennett's demise Mackenzie King's Liberals were able to draw considerable support from Finns in areas with a leftist identity.