Unorganized Labour versus Management: The Strike at the Chaudière Lumber Mills, 1891 *

by Edward McKENNA **

In the late summer of 1891, the Ottawa Valley timber trade was beset with labour problems. What had been an undercurrent of employee discontent quickly developed into a torrent of labour protest when twenty-four hundred men walked off their jobs in a dispute centered on the lumber mills of Hull and Ottawa at the region known as *the Chaudière.* [1] The action by these workers, who disrupted this important industry for almost five weeks, was probably the largest strike that had occurred in Canada up to that time. [2] In an attempt to force rescission of a wage cut and to achieve a shorter work day, the Chaudière mill hands began a struggle not only of considerable magnitude, but one with a number of extraordinary features. The strike was undertaken without the benefits of trade union organization and leadership, yet, once in progress, it attracted the local support of both craft and industrial labour unionists. The mill hands' attempt to improve their lot, occurring as it did in an area which reflected many of the ethnic and political delineations that marked Canada as a whole, nevertheless won the sympathies of the communities of Hull and Ottawa irrespective of language, religion or political differences. Despite these remarkable characteristics, the strike at the Chaudière lumber mills has received only cursory examination by labour historians. [3] An analysis of the strike, however, exposes the attitudes of management, labour and community in such a confrontation, and provides valuable insights into the extent of labour activity in Canada in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

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The Ottawa Valley has been described as "the cradle of the lumbering industry in Canada." [4] In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the

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1 The Chaudière is that area of Hull and Ottawa linked by the present day Chaudière Bridge, and includes Victoria Island.

2 For an account of an earlier dispute of major proportions and significance by organized workers, see Eugene FORSEY, "The Telegraphers' Strike of 1883", *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada,* Series IV, Volume IX, 1971. An organized strike almost as large as the dispute at the Chaudière was the Montreal carpenters' strike, May 1 to June 5, 1894. See Jean HAMELIN, Paul LAROCQUE, Jacques ROUILLARD, *Répertoire des Grèves dans la Province de Québec au XIX^e Siècle* (Montreal, 1970), p. 119.

3 See, for example, Charles LIPTON, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959* (Montreal, 1966), and HAMELIN et al., *op. cit.,* pp. 111-112.

4 Roland D. CRAIG, article on Ottawa Valley forest industries in Ottawa *Citizen,* August 16, 1926.

28,000,000 acres of productive forest land[5] drained by the Ottawa River supported a growing and prosperous timber trade. By 1874, the five largest lumber producers in Canada were located in the Ottawa Valley,[6] and in 1891, in the city of Ottawa alone, 2,514 men were employed in the production of lumber.[7] Situated on the Ottawa near the supplies of water power provided by the Chaudière Falls, Ottawa and Hull became the centres for the lumber industry in the Valley. Above the two towns were the vast supplies of fine timber, — to the east, via the Ottawa River, lay Montreal, Quebec City and the European market; to the south, via the Rideau Canal and by rail, lay the markets of north-eastern United States. With the steady demand for sawn lumber, these resources attracted a group of Americans from New York, New Hampshire and Vermont, who began cutting and shipping at the Chaudière in the early 1850's. Entrepreneurs like Henry F. Bronson, William G. Perley, Gordon B. Pattee and Ezra B. Eddy created highly successful businesses based on sawn lumber and lumber by-products. The immense timber hinterland allowed lumbermen, attracted to the region, to cease what often had been a semi-transient existence and to settle permanently in the timber towns. Thus, not only did the lumbering families of the Ottawa Valley contribute to the economic development of the area, but they also established themselves as energetic and often distinguished participants in community life.

Most significant to Ottawa and Hull were the men who controlled the lumber industry at the Chaudière. Among them was John Rodulphus Booth, one of Canada's greatest capitalists, who came to Ottawa from the Eastern Townships in 1857. A carpenter by trade, Booth was employed by E. B. Eddy before starting out on his own. His rise to millionaire-status began when he was awarded the contract to supply lumber for construction of the first Parliament Buildings. In 1882, Booth financed the construction of his own railway, the Canada Atlantic, which he continued to develop until, in 1890, it stretched 460 miles from Georgian Bay to Vermont. He was the only Valley mill owner involved in all aspects of the lumber industry, and his exceptional enterprise created at the Chaudière one of the largest lumbering operations in the world.[8] Booth's firm was a family concern, to which the progress and prospects of the Ottawa community were closely allied. Known as the "Chaudière Carnegie," this Presbyterian lumber king was associated with many local philanthropic activities.

In 1889, on his father's death, Erskine Henry Bronson took control of the family's Victoria Island firm. The Bronson and Weston Lumber Company, like its major Chaudière counterparts, produced over 30,000,000 feet of sawn lumber in 1870, and by the nineties, cut an average of 50,000,000

[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Census of Canada,* 1890-1891, Volume III (Ottawa, 1894), p. 294.
[8] R. D. CRAIG, *op. cit.*

feet.[9] A citizen of great repute in the community, Bronson was a past member of the Ottawa School Board and City Council, and an unsuccessful Liberal candidate for Carleton in the Federal General Election of 1882. In 1886, he was elected as Ottawa's provincial representative, and in 1890, was appointed to Premier Mowat's Ontario cabinet as Minister Without Portfolio. Bronson's credentials were impressive. He was a trustee of Queen's University, Treasurer of the Canadian Accident Insurance Company, and Vice-President of the Associated Charities of Ottawa.

The Perley and Pattee Company possessed the most distinguished representative of the Chaudière lumbermen. George Halsey Perley, born in New Hampshire in 1857, supervised his father's lumber business from 1890 until he was elected to the House of Commons as a Conservative in 1904. Perley rose to a position of prominence in the party, was a member of cabinet in successive Conservative administrations, and on several occasions served as Canada's acting Prime Minister. From 1914 to 1922, Perley was Canada's High Commissioner to Great Britain, and in 1915, he was knighted by the British monarch. Perley also took an active part in local social life, and, like J. R. Booth, he was a governor of St. Lukes Hospital in Ottawa.

Sharing the Quebec side of the Chaudière with the sawmill of Buell, Orr and Hurdman Company (another lumber concern with close American connections) was Ezra Butler Eddy. Eddy created a business so successful that he became the largest manufacturer of matches in the British Commonwealth. Active in local and provincial politics as a Conservative in the Quebec Legislative Assembly from 1871 to 1875, and was Mayor of Hull from 1870 to 1873, 1881 to 1884, and in 1887 and 1891. Like the other mill owners, he was a staunch Protestant, and prominent in local church affairs.

These men did not allow a competitive business spirit to prevent their combination on matters of mutual benefit. Booth, Bronson, Eddy and Perley were directors and customers of the Madawaska Improvement Company, founded in 1888 to facilitate the passage of logs on the Madawaska River.[10] Bronson and Pattee were President and Vice-President, respectively, of the Standard Electric Company of Ottawa, and the General Manager was C. Berkeley Powell, a partner in the Perley and Pattee firm. In 1891, Perley was Vice-President of Booth's Canada Atlantic Railway. By such associations, the Chaudière lumber industry was operated by a cohesive, powerful group.

The Ottawa Valley also was an important labour source in the nineteenth century. French Canadians, skilled as woodsmen and mill workers,

[9] A. R. M. LOWER, *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest* (Toronto, 1938), p. 50.

[10] Ontario Public Archives, *Madawaska Improvement Company Records.*

were recruited from the Ottawa area by employers from Eastern Canada and north-eastern United States. As A. R. M. Lower has described him:

> The French Canadian was the traditional lumberjack. As bushman, river driver and mill hand he was reliable, docile, cheerful, efficient and cheap. He had a pride of calling, a low standard of living and an authoritarian type of society behind him to keep him contented with his lot. On the cheap and efficient labour of the French Canadian... the forests of Eastern Canada from the Atlantic to the prairies had been exploited.
>
> These men for two generations [before 1900] had come mainly from the Ottawa Valley.[11]

Although the "cheerful" and "docile" French Canadians employed in the Chaudière lumber mills were not, as a body, participants in any organized labour activity before September, 1891, there had been considerable labour activity in the Ottawa area by that time.[12] During the period of the construction of the Parliament Buildings, skilled craftsmen imported from Great Britain brought a degree of labour organization not experienced before. By 1872, several trades had formed unions, and in December of that year a Trades Council was organized. In 1874, Ottawa elected the first labour candidate ever to hold a seat in either the federal parliament or a provincial legislature, when D. J. O'Donoghue became Ottawa city's provincial representative at Queen's Park. That same year, the Canadian Labour Union held its second congress in Ottawa. In 1876, however, with the disappearance of the Ottawa Trades Council, this brief period of vigorous labour activity seems to have ended. Although the Typographical Union had been established as an international affiliate since 1867, it was not until the 1880's that international unions began to emerge in Ottawa in significant numbers. By September, 1891, at least eight of these organizations had been established in the city. In addition, a similar number of purely local unions were then in existence. On the Quebec side of the Ottawa River, the Knights of Labour provided the organizational framework for union activity. By the time of the Chaudière strike, there were three local assemblies in Hull, as well as four established in Ottawa. The Knights had attempted to organize the Chaudière millhands as early as 1888, but the difficulties of organizing a seasonal, unskilled and often transient labour force prevented more than a small number from enlisting with the union.[13] The Knights' influence on these workers, until after the Chaudière strike had begun, was probably achieved indirectly through their newspaper, *Le Spectateur,* and by the creation of an atmosphere in which workers might be encouraged to improve their working conditions through collective action. Other labour activity was brought to the area by the Trades and Labour Congress, which held its convention of 1890 at Ottawa. In the federal

11 A. R. M. LOWER, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

12 The author is grateful to Senator Eugene Forsey, who kindly provided the information for these general comments on labour activity in the Ottawa area before 1891.

13 For example, of the more than three hundred men employed in the lumber mill of the Perley and Pattee Company, less than twelve were members of the Knights of Labour. *Le Spectateur,* September 15, 1891.

general election of 1891, James W. Patterson, President of the Ottawa Trades and Labour Council, contested the "Ottawa City" riding and received considerable support. [14]

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A severe winter delayed operations at the Chaudière saw mills in 1891. When work finally began in late spring, the mill hands were informed by the managers that because of the depressed state of the timber trade, wages would be decreased by fifty cents a week. As compensation, the hours of labour were reduced to ten a day. The men accepted the situation but were angered when their employers violated the agreement, operating for eleven and twelve hours a day. The mill hands appealed to the Knights of Labour for organizational and strike assistance in May, 1891, but were informed by the Knights that despite managements' precipitate action, six months notice was required before a strike could be sanctioned. As cutting would cease within six months, the Knights pointed out, there was little to gain by trying to force management to negotiate this season. [15] The mill hands, frustrated by "legitimate" means of changing their plight, continued to work under the disputed conditions throughout that summer.

The economic position of the Chaudière mill worker in 1891 was very poor, despite the magnitude of the industry in which he participated. In 1890, the mill hands' wages ranged from $7.00 to $9.50 per week, which were reduced to $6.50 ranging to $8.50 by the cuts levied in the spring of 1891. [16] The Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario in its *Annual Report* for 1889 revealed that at that time a lumber mill yardman worked 59.75 hours a week for wages of $7.39, [17] whereas the average single man in Ottawa received $9.80 for 58 hours of labour. [18] When his wages were reckoned against the annual cost of living, it was revealed that if the yardman relied on these alone he would show a yearly deficit of $10.13. [19] In the summer of 1891, the Chaudière mill hand worked from six a.m. to half past six in the evening, taking a break of three quarters of an hour at midday. His average wage was $1.06 a day. [20] The Irish Roman Catholic weekly, *United Canada,* claimed that it was easy to see the mill hands' cause for grievance:

> One has simply to look into the homes, or huts rather, where the great majority of these poor men spend their few hours of rest, out of every twenty-four. It is white slavery... [21]

14 *The Canadian Parliamentary Companion,* Part I-IV (Ottawa, 1891), p. 192. Patterson received 1,296 votes, placing fourth in a field of seven candidates.
15 The Ottawa *Evening Journal,* September 15, 1891.
16 *Ibid.,* September 14, 1891.
17 *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario, 1889,* Part IV (Toronto, 1891), p. 82.
18 *Ibid.,* p. 79.
19 *Ibid.,* p. 94.
20 The Ottawa *Daily Citizen,* September 15, 1891.
21 *United Canada,* September 26, 1891.

The Chaudière mill owners, on the other hand, were indeed a prosperous group. A. R. M. Lower has described the last thirty years of the nineteenth century as the "heyday" for Eastern Canada's lumbermen [22] and this fact was evident in Ottawa and Hull, where the Chaudière industry continued to grow and prosper. The development of the Booth, and Bronson and Weston firms into huge enterprises was evident to the community, and the construction of a new paper mill for E. B. Eddy, undertaken in the summer of 1891, testified to the continued expansion of the industry. The Ottawa mill owners increased their lumber production, valued at $1,560,000 in 1871, to one valued at $2,795,000 in 1891.[23] It is true that periods of depression punctuated these decades, and in 1891, the Chaudière lumbermen were in the throes of a temporary recession. With what they believed to be sound entrepreneurial logic, no doubt, the mill owners reacted by cutting wages to reduce costs. It is not surprising that when these managers failed to maintain the ten-hour workday, their employees' response was to consider strike action.

On Saturday, September 12, 1891, eight or nine men employed at Perley and Pattee's mill asked their foreman to have the wage reduction returned to them. They were refused, and at a meeting the following day, these men determined to strike if a further request was denied. Having received no satisfaction by Monday morning, this small group refused to begin work and encouraged their fellow yardmen to join them. Outside operations at Perley and Pattee's ceased, and the foreman responded by closing the mill. Three hundred and fifty men crowded into the loading yard, where they were addressed by G. B. Pattee, who claimed it was not his fault that wages were reduced — his firm was only following the policy of the other lumbering companies. If Pattee hoped this argument would deter the men, he was mistaken. The mill hands determined that if wages were established according to conditions shared by the whole business community, then strike action must follow the same communal pattern. The men set out from Perley and Pattee's yard, proceeding to each lumber mill in succession, urging the workers to shut off the water supplying the mills and to abandon their jobs. Eight hundred men joined them from J. R. Booth's mills, 300 more from the Buell, Orr and Hurdman establishment, and 500 workers from the Bronson and Weston Company were enlisted to create a throng of over 1,500 mill hands.[24] The walkout was orderly, but it was also an impulsive act, and a number of Ottawa police arrived at the scene, called, presumably, by nervous management. There were no untoward incidents, however, and the mill hands continued to collect their fellow workers from the docks and shipping yards adjacent to the saw mills. When all had gathered in front of Booth's premises, the strikers were

22 A. R. M. LOWER, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

24 *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario, 1892*, Part VI (Toronto, 1894), p. 38.

addressed by their leader, the popular and capable Napoléon Fauteux, a mill hand who, like the other men, was not a trade unionist. He demanded the higher wages paid in 1890 and a reduction in the hours of labour from eleven and three quarters to ten hours a day. The Ottawa *Citizen* reported that

> The men spoke jubilantly of their prospects, believing that as all the mills were closed, the employers would see the justice of their proposals. [25]

In this way the strike began — not as a carefully organized demonstration against the employers, but as a spontaneous protest against a long-standing discontent. As a result of the determination of a few aggravated mill hands, and the unwitting complicity of a hasty foreman and his intransigent superior, the protest rapidly grew into a strike of great proportions. Although the centre of the struggle was at the Chaudière, the strike involved nine firms and 2,400 men in the Ottawa area timber trade. [26]

The impact of the strike and the resoluteness of the mill hands was first evident at William Mason's mill at Mechanicsville, a suburb of Ottawa. On Monday afternoon a large group of strikers approached the mill and all work was stopped. Later that day, when operations started again, 1,300 men returned to ensure that work ceased, and after closing, William Mason advised the strikers that he was prepared to meet their demands. This manager's willingness to end the dispute was exceptional, [27] however, and because the mill hands wished to exact the same conditions from all the mill owners, Mason's offer did not alter the general situation. This determination was demonstrated that evening when 1,500 men met in Hull and were addressed by Fauteux and Mark Moore, of Sherbrooke. [28] Three thousand people gathered at Booth's mill in another assembly, where again, the demands for an increase in wages and a reduction in hours were made, and the men were exhorted to maintain solidarity and good behaviour. At these meetings it was decided to enlist the services of the Knights of Labour and the Ottawa Trades and Labour Council.

Reaction from the mill owners to the strike was, at first, defiant acceptance of the situation. J. R. Booth stated:

> It has come at last... I knew it would come sooner or later as it has been talked of for some time past. [29]

Booth's comment indicated an awareness of his employees' discontent, and an unwillingness to ameliorate their situation. Like Bronson, Booth claimed that the depressed conditions would not allow him to meet the men's demands. G. B. Pattee concurred, but was also illogically indignant. He

[25] The *Citizen*, September 15, 1891.
[26] *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario, 1892*, Part VI, p. 38.
[27] The *Citizen*, September 15, 1891.
[28] Moore's presence, and the continued cry for the ten-hour day, a popular trade union demand, might suggest that the strike did have, in fact, an organized basis. No evidence, however, could be found to support this view.
[29] The *Journal*, September 14, 1891.

knew that his workers had wanted their former wages and a reduction of hours, yet he was furious with them for not consulting with him before striking! He offered these opinions to the Toronto *Globe*'s reporter:

> It was an easy thing to put the devil in their heads. They would shortly regret what they were doing. This is the first trouble we've had in 30 years.[30]

Pattee agreed with the other mill owners, who claimed they "didn't care whether [they] cut another log again this fall or not," and he claimed that outsiders, specifically the Knights of Labour, were responsible for the strike.[31]

The mill owners' charge that outside agitators and professional organizers encouraged the men to strike was denied by the mill hands and repudiated by *Le Spectateur,* the Hull newspaper edited by Napoléon Pagé, Master Workman of the "La Canadienne" Assembly No. 2676, Knights of Labour.

> Il faut dire, pour être juste que les Chevaliers du Travail ne sont pas responsables de cette grève. Ils n'en sont ni les promoteurs ni les instigateurs.[32]

Although this important question cannot be resolved conclusively, it is clear that the strike was precipitated and sustained by unorganized workers. Once the walkout had taken place, Knights support, in the form of favourable comment by *Le Spectateur,* was given without hesitation (although the paper was critical of the timing of the strike). On their part, the mill hands never disavowed the Knights of Labour, despite that organization's refusal to aid in initiating strike action.

On the second day of the dispute, disturbances occurred when attempts were made to extend the strike to those workplaces in Hull where persons were employed more than ten hours a day. (These included women and girls employed by E. B. Eddy, and boys engaged in the saw mills.) At the construction site of E. B. Eddy's new paper mill, where a gang of labourers were working a thirteen-hour day, the mill hands were challenged by the owner himself. Fights broke out when Eddy and his managers attempted to prevent the men from entering the premises, and the Hull mayor was kicked and struck with a stone.[33] A number of Hull police arrived and a few arrests were made, but violence ceased when Eddy's men finally stopped work. Involved in similar incidents was C. B. Wright, owner of the stone quarries and cement works in Hull. His employees also worked over ten hours a day for the same wages as the mill hands, and were twice visited by a party of strikers.[34] Eventually, Wright's men were induced to leave their jobs. At Mason's mill, where operations had resumed, further disturbances took place. A large group of strikers forcibly halted the work of

30 The Toronto *Globe,* September 15, 1891.
31 The *Citizen,* September 15, 1891.
32 *Le Spectateur,* September 15, 1891.
33 The Montreal *Gazette,* September 16, 1891.
34 The Hamilton *Evening Times,* September 16, 1891.

some teamsters, and engaged in a scuffle with the owner and his sons. A posse of Ottawa police suddenly appeared but no arrests were made. [35]

During that day, September 15, a rally was held at the Chaudière, attended by many non-strikers (including a large number of police). The congregation was addressed by Napoléon Fauteux (now referred to as "Le Bonaparte des Chaudières"), by J. W. Patterson, President of the Ottawa Trades and Labour Council, and by ex-Ottawa alderman Frank Farrell, a member of the Ottawa typographical union. In a demonstration of labour unity, "one of the leaders held up a bundle of telegrams received from unions in different cities tendering aid if required" and Patterson stated that the mill hands "had the sympathy of all the working classes." [36] Later that day, it was reported, the Knights of Labour in Hull held a meeting at which a delegation was appointed to confer with the strikers' representatives. [37]

That evening, the strikers faced a serious threat from the mill owners, who closed ranks in opposition to their employees' demands. Despite earlier reports some of the managers had received the strikers' deputation favourably, all avenues to negotiation were shut off when it was announced that the militia was ordered out for the following morning to ensure that there would be no further violence. Alarmed, Fauteux, Patterson and Farrell unsuccessfully attempted to petition the Minister of Militia, Sir Adolphe Caron, to prevent the use of troops. The strikers' deputation met with Andrew B. Ingram, Conservative M.P. for Elgin East, and District Master Workman of the Knights of Labour, St. Thomas, who later conferred on their behalf with the Minister of Justice, Sir John Thompson. The strike leaders were informed that the situation could not be changed; the militia would be deployed as ordered. As Caron advised Laurier in the House the next day, [38] the strikers were told that the requisitioning of the militia as an aid to the civil power was not a federal concern, but the responsibility of local officials. One Tory journal gleefully editorialized on the mill hands' reaction:

> The knowledge that the red coats will appear in the vicinity of the lumber mills when the whistles blow calling the men to work, is not palatable to *les ouvriers*. [39]

Earlier that day, Lieutenant-Colonel W. P. Anderson, Senior Officer of the Active Militia in Ottawa, was handed a request for troops signed by E. B. Eddy, as Mayor of Hull, by C. B. Wright, who was also a local magistrate, and by T. Viau, another Hull magistrate. In his report to the Deputy Adjutant General, Anderson described how he was apprised of the situation:

> After consulting with Mr. Eddy and other gentlemen who were conversant with the particulars of the strike, I decided that it would be injudi-

35 The *Gazette*, September 16, 1891.
36 The *Citizen*, September 16, 1891.
37 The *Gazette*, September 16, 1891.
38 Sir Adolphe CARON, *Hansard*, 1891, Volume III, p. 5555.
39 The Toronto *Empire*, September 16, 1891.

> cious to call out less than 4 companies of Militia, and as I could only draw from 3 companies of my own Battalion, I thought it advisable to order out 2 companies of the Guards and 2 companies of the 43rd Rifles. [40]

Eddy did not restrict his advice to the matter of troop strength, the Lieutenant-Colonel reported:

> As Mr. Eddy was anxious that the troops should be on the ground before the hour of beginning work on Wednesday morning [September 16] the Parade was ordered for 5:00 a.m., at the Drill Hall. [41]

Despite his disposition to take advice, Anderson did not consult with the strike leaders.

Although all the ingredients necessary for a violent struggle were present, the next day passed in an atmosphere of surprising calm. The morning of September 16, the militia were issued with ten rounds of ball ammunition and at six o'clock, the four companies, largely made up of Ottawa civil servants, set off from the Ottawa drill hall. The troops marched across the Chaudière, greeted by taunting and jeering strikers who lined both sides of the street and congregated in front of the mills. At Hull, two companies were stationed at Buell, Orr and Hurdman's mill, and two companies were situated at the adjacent property of the E. B. Eddy Company. The presence of the militia allowed Hurdman's to attempt to operate their mill, but too few employees showed up to justify continuing work. At E. B. Eddy's, however, and at the stone works of C. B. Wright, normal operations resumed.

The strikers did not challenge the troops, and succeeded in avoiding a confrontation. With unwitting irony, the *Empire* reported that "despite the presence of the military, quietness and order prevailed..." [42] The *Journal* likened the task of the militia to "a quiet little picnic," [43] but the best summation of the troops' workday was provided by the *Canadian Militia Gazette.*

> Arrived at Hull, the militia were told off to four different yards, a company each, and there they spent the day, such games as could be devised on the spot helping to relieve the monotony. [44]

Anderson also reported that

> No demonstration was made during the day by the strikers, and the crowds passing along the streets behaved in the most exemplary manner. [45]

[40] PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA, *Records of the Department of Militia and Defence, Adjutant General's Office,* RG 9 II B1, 38255, Lieut-Col. W. P. Anderson, Senior Officer of the Active Militia, Ottawa, to the Deputy Adjutant General, September 17, 1891. Hereafter the Public Archives of Canada will be cited as PAC.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] The *Empire,* September 17, 1891.

[43] The *Journal,* September 16, 1891.

[44] The *Canadian Militia Gazette,* September 24, 1891.

[45] PAC, *Records of the Department of Militia and Defence, Adjutant General's Office, ... op. cit.*

By their order and good behaviour, the strikers validated their leaders' claim that the presence of the militia was unnecessary. According to the *Citizen,* Napoléon Fauteux insisted that the mill hands

> look after the young men and keep them quiet and not take liquor, and let the people say who saw them that they were not a band of roughs. Let them say that they were peaceable men, fighting for their rights. [46]

This tactic served to portray the mill owners as the heavy-handed party, and to attract public sympathy to the strikers' cause. Once the issues of violence and interference were resolved, even the *Journal* agreed that "it should be a question of humanity and justice with the mill owners to give their men a decent living." [47]

Fauteux and Patterson, accompanied by a committee of six mill hands, visited E. B. Eddy and offered to guarantee a sufficient number of good men to protect his property and employees, if he would agree to let the troops go home. But Eddy demurred, and later that evening, when Anderson urged that the magistrates dismiss the troops, the Hull mayor, with Wright and Viau, insisted that one company be billeted overnight at his premises. The magistrates said they anticipated trouble, as some persons involved in the previous day's disturbances were to be arrested. The evening passed without incident, however, and the next day the strike leaders implemented their plan to establish a peacekeeping force. The *Citizen* described their activities:

> Squads of strikers who have undertaken to prevent property from injury were at their posts, diligently performing their task, and none of them acted otherwise than as law-abiding citizens would do under the circumstances. [48]

The calling out of the militia was an event of considerable public concern, not only locally, for it also stimulated comment from outside the Ottawa area. The Toronto *Labour Advocate* asked:

> What do the working men voters of Canada think of the action of the Militia Department in parading an armed force through the streets in order to serve the purposes of the mill-owning sweaters . . . ? [49]

The Montreal *Gazette,* however, believed that the strikers had "divorced sympathy from themselves" when, it alleged, they attempted to drive from work men who had no quarrell with their employers. Such action "constitutes one of the few causes that warrants the use of military forces in police work." [50] The Hamilton *Times* disagreed, and dramatically declared:

> If a boss can call out the military to shoot down his employees whenever they go on strike, a change of law is urgently needed. [51]

46 The *Citizen,* September 17, 1891.
47 The *Journal,* September 16, 1891.
48 The *Citizen,* September 18, 1891.
49 The Toronto *Labor Advocate,* September 18, 1891.
50 The Montreal *Gazette,* September 17, 1891.
51 The Hamilton *Evening Times,* September 17, 1891.

In the English-language newspapers of Ottawa, the broader issue of the use of the militia as an aid to the civil power was not discussed, although the *Citizen* did allowed that "it is always regrettable that recourse to military force should be had... as it savours too much of coercion..." [52] The local French-language press was not so restrained in its commentary. *Le Canada* of Ottawa and *Le Spectateur* of Hull gave their whole-hearted support to the strikers. The militia's presence, *Le Canada* stated, "ayant été reconnue tout à fait inutile, et contraire au bon sens." [53] *Le Spectateur* did not approve of the disturbances at Eddy's and Wright's, and urged the strikers to maintain order. But it did not condone the calling out of militia, although the paper treated the issue with surprising levity: "Pourquoi avoir des soldats? Pas pour empêcher les moulins de s'envoler. Pas pour garder des grévistes non plus car ceux qui auraient besoin de garde seraient plutôt les soidisant soldats." *Le Spectateur* claimed that "toute la population est avec eux [les grévistes] et sympathise avec leurs idées dans la crise actuelle." [54]

The use of the militia contributed to increased striker solidarity, and was followed by encouraging news which helped to cement the mill hands' resolve. The Buell, Orr and Hurdman managers, who wished to resume full operations immediately, were rumoured to be willing to accede to the men's demands. One of the managers, a Mr. Avery, was quoted as saying that if he could meet with the men, "[he] was positive [he would] arrive at a satisfactory agreement in fifteen minutes." [55] Despite their show of force, it appeared to the strikers that certain mill owners were ready to negotiate, and that a general settlement could not be far off.

In an attempt to consolidate their favourable position with the public, the strike leaders repudiated those arrested earlier in the week. Now confident in the outcome of their struggle, the mill hands, some accompanied by their wives and children, attended another huge assembly September 17, and were addressed by William Keys, President of the Central Committee of the Knights of Labour, Montreal, and by D. J. O'Donoghue, currently of Toronto. More significant speakers perhaps, were Terrance McGuire, a member of Ottawa's considerable Irish Roman Catholic population, and Daniel Planchet, of Lower Town, the predominantly French-Canadian section of Ottawa. Like the other speakers before him, Planchet pledged his support for the strikers, but he also represented the sentiments of an entire community.

> Je suis venu... parmi vous, dignes et braves ouvriers, pour vous dire la profonde sympathie que les citoyens de la Basse-Ville ont pour la noble cause que vous defendez si vaillament. [56]

52 The *Citizen,* September 19, 1891.
53 *Le Canada,* September 18, 1891.
54 *Le Spectateur,* September 18, 1891.
55 The *Globe,* September 17, 1891.
56 *Le Canada,* September 18, 1891.

Fauteux, alternating between French and English for his audience of working men, closed the meeting with the following telling remarks:

> Thank God we French-Canadians under the British flag enjoy perfect freedom, but we want British pay for a fair day's work. Although some of the American mill owners might be displeased, he could not help winding up the meeting except by asking three cheers for the Queen. [57]

By the fifth day of the dispute, despite the hopes of the strikers, no negotiations had taken place between the two sides, whose positions had polarized. The mill owners issued a statement signed by the J. R. Booth, Bronson and Weston, Perley and Pattee, William Mason and Sons, and Buell, Orr and Hurdman Companies, formally replying to the mill hands' demands. They claimed that implementation of the workers' proposals would add twenty percent to their manufacturing costs. The depressed times, a result of poor English and South American markets, had cut their exports by two-thirds, stated the managers, and so their only concession was to guarantee that no striking employee who returned to work would be dismissed. [58] This unyielding posture was matched by the strikers' will to maintain their position. In a demonstration of strength, the mill hands, led by Fauteux, paraded through Ottawa in orderly fashion. As they proceeded along Wellington Street, a reporter observed, it took the 1,200 men eighteen minutes to pass the Parliament Buildings. [59] The strikers returned to the Chaudière, where speeches were made by Fauteux and Keys, and then Patterson read aloud the mill owners' statement rejecting their demands. Before stepping down Patterson told the men, that "as the masters would concede nothing, the Knights of Labor as an organized body would take up the matter and see them through it." [60]

That evening, a strike meeting was held in Lower Town at the George Street Labour Hall. According to the *Citizen's* reporter, several M.P.'s, Senators, aldermen and other prominent citizens were present. Speeches by labour leaders Keys and Farrell violently attacked the mill owners and those responsible for requisitioning the militia. Other speakers included ex-alderman Simard of Hull and Daniel Planchet of Lower Town, whose presence indicated the degree of sympathy for the mill hands among the French-Canadian communities of Hull and Ottawa. Patterson and Fauteux also spoke and maintained that the men faced a mill owners' combine determined to refuse their demands. Patterson noted that Avery of Hurdman's, who had been reasonable towards the strikers, was no longer in Ottawa. If Avery was here today, Patterson said, "he would break that combine now existing and start the mill in spite of them [the mill owners]." [61] Fauteux praised the men for having "surprised the Americans" by their orderly conduct. He reminded the meeting that on the first day of the strike,

57 The *Citizen*, September 18, 1891.
58 The *Journal*, September 18, 1891.
59 The Montreal *Herald*, September 19, 1891.
60 *Ibid.*
61 The *Globe*, September 19, 1891.

Pattee had told the men that if J. R. Booth would grant their wage claim, he would do the same. The inference that Booth alone was the stumbling block to the resolution of the strike had been made earlier as well. According to the *Journal,* it was rumoured that Booth was the only mill owner who declined to give in to the men, and that he had telegraphed to Halifax in order to secure the assistance of regular soldiers whose expenses he would pay. [62] Whether true or not, these rumours about Booth and his control of a mill owners' combine contributed to a widening gulf of hostility and distrust between the two sides. At the same time, as revealed by the George Street meeting, public opinion continued to mount on the strikers' behalf, and held that the mill owners should accede to the wage demands. The general feeling was close to that expressed by C. H. MacKintosh, Conservative M.P. for "Ottawa City," who said that "as most of the managers have in the past made money, they should consent to some degree of sacrifice in times of depression." [63]

Demonstrating the wide support for the Chaudière strikers, and its denial of political boundaries, mass meetings were held in Hull that weekend. After a meeting Saturday evening, September 19, at which the Knights of Labour officially took part, a crowd of 5,000 to 10,000 persons jammed the Main Street square on Sunday afternoon to hear a public discussion of the strike. [64] Hull's population of 11,264 people was almost totally dependent on the lumber industry, so that few citizens were unaffected by the dispute. This mass meeting was organized by Hull's merchants and businessmen, and was presided over by Charles B. Major, Warden of Ottawa County, with Alfred Rochon, Liberal member for Ottawa County in the Quebec Legislature, and a former mayor of Hull, the main speaker. Knowing that the people of Hull were sympathetic to the strikers' cause, Rochon did not hesitate to berate the Chaudière mill owners for their failure to grant the men the ten-hour day. Numerous speakers mounted the platform to voice their support for the mill hands, including a number of Mayor Eddy's town council, two-thirds of which supported the strike. [65] C. H. MacKintosh, and Ottawa mayor, Thomas Birkett, were also present and spoke. Several clergymen, Protestant and Roman Catholic, attended the meeting, some of whom had met earlier with the mill owners in an unsuccessful attempt to bring the two sides together. The strike had been the dominant topic in sermons delivered that day. While many of the clergy had deplored strike action, a few, like the Reverend Dr. E. B. Ryckman, of Dominion Methodist Church in Ottawa, supported the mill hands in a "scathing indictment of the present wage system." [66] None of those clergy present at the Hull assembly spoke out against the general resolutions of the meeting to support the strike, and to have Rochon present a petition to the Quebec

[62] The *Journal,* September 18, 1891.
[63] The *Citizen,* September 19, 1891.
[64] The *Citizen,* September 21, 1891. *Le Spectateur,* September 22, 1891.
[65] The *Journal,* September 19, 1891.
[66] The *Citizen,* September 21, 1891.

Legislature for a ten-hour day bill.[67] Before the assembly broke up, a committee was formed to negotiate with the mill owners on the strikers' behalf.

The Citizens' Committee consisted of Rochon, MacKintosh, Major, Patterson, Birkett and four clergymen.[68] No striker was a member of the Committee, which was preponderantly Protestant in composition, and, excepting the politicians and clergymen, there was no representative of the French-Canadian communities of either Hull or Ottawa. Other than Patterson, the only labour official, the members of the Committee were liable to be compromised by their position in the public eye, or by their business and social relationships. Mayor Birkett, for example, owner of a large Rideau Street hardware store, would be unlikely to press the strikers' case with too much energy, for the prominent and respectable citizens who managed the Chaudière were his important customers. In a similar position was Rochon, a lawyer who included among his clients the firm of Buell, Orr and Hurdman Company. This type of representation on the Citizens' Committee illustrated one of the unfortunate ironies of the strike. As public favour for the men increased, and their case was more widely publicized, they attracted public figures who were empathetic but not prepared to fight for the cause, who wished to stand at the head of this popular movement but not lead it into a confrontation with the mill owners. Such leadership was not discouraged initially, with the result that the strikers' leaders were removed from control of the protest, and the interests of the men were no longer represented with the same unanimity and purposefulness. This new leadership, though perhaps well-intentioned, merely served as a buffer group between managers and employees, preventing meaningful, direct negotiation.

The dangers of such a development were evident to some of the French-Canadian supporters. Criticizing outsiders like Keys and Moore, and even local union men, Patterson and Farrell, *Le Canada* felt that Planchet and Fauteux were able leaders who could manage the strike on their own.

> Les hommes des moulins ont eux-mêmes organisé le mouvement pour l'amélioration de leur position, ils n'ont pas besoin des conseils des agitateurs qui font des discours en l'air et leur font entre voir du secours à venir.[69]

The strikers did not want promises from trade unions, *Le Canada* continued, they wanted bread, and other necessities, which could be obtained through public subscription. It is possible that such statements were born of anti-

[67] Rochon was defeated in the Provincial Election which was held before the next sitting of the Quebec Legislative Assembly.

[68] The following clergymen were chosen:
Rev. D. Herridge of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa.
Rev. M. Whelan of St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Lower Town.
Rev. P. Provost of Notre Dame Roman Catholic Church, Hull.
Rev. M. Smith of St. James' Anglican Church, Hull.
There is no evidence to indicate how the committee members were selected

[69] *Le Canada,* September 19, 1891.

union and anti-English sentiments, but if these feelings existed, they neither mitigated nor deflected the support this newspaper consistently gave the strikers. *Le Canada*'s chief concern was that the strikers' energies not be channelled in fruitless directions by leaders of questionable motivation.

The Sunday meeting was a remarkable demonstration of public support for the strike, yet it produced few benefits for the workers. The *Citizen* reported that

> Every class in Hull is prepared to make some sacrifice... Merchants, bankers and trades people in general are unanimous in tendering their support. [70]

With this huge body of public opinion behind them, the Citizens' Committee met with the mill owners at the offices of the Upper Ottawa Improvement Company, near Bronson's establishments at Victoria Island, on Tuesday, September 22. After three and one-half hours of futile discussion, the Committee, convinced that management would make no concessions, reported back to the strikers. Reluctantly, the men were advised to return to work under existing conditions, in the hope that the mill owners would review the situation before operations began next season. The mill hands responded by reiterating their decision to maintain the strike until the demand for a ten-hour day was satisfied, although they offered to concede their wage claim. The Citizens' Committee, despite the popular support it represented, had achieved nothing, and disbanded.

The failure of the Committee did not dishearten the men, and the second week of the dispute was characterized by resolute activity on the strikers' behalf. *Le Spectateur* believed that the mill owners "devraient céder," and urged all citizens of Hull and Ottawa to assist the mill hands. [71] The Knights of Labour began to formally organize the men, and the "Chaudière" and "La Canadienne" Assemblies each voted $75. to a strike fund. The printers of the Government Printing Bureau raised another $30., the Ottawa Hackmen's Union $100., and small cash donations were received from individuals throughout the week. [72] Foodstuffs, such as tea, flour and pork were contributed by local merchants and private citizens, and two stores were opened, one in Main Street, Hull, and another at the Chaudière, from which goods could be distributed to the strikers. With this support, many of the mill hands were convinced that they could see out the strike. The *Journal* reported one man as saying that with seven or eight gallons of black strap, a barrell of flour and a little pork, he'd make it through the winter, such was his determination. [73]

On September 23, letters were mailed by the Ottawa Trades and Labour Council to labour organizations in other cities asking for "financial aid as

[70] The *Citizen*, September 21, 1891.
[71] *Le Spectateur*, September 25, 1891.
[72] See, for examples, the *Citizen* and *Le Canada*, September 21, 1891 and the Ottawa Daily *Free Press*, and *Le Spectateur*, September 25, 1891.
[73] The *Journal*, September 22, 1891.

quickly as possible." "The men, though not organized, are being rapidly put into an organized state," explained the Ottawa Council, adding that "the unions of Ottawa have felt it their duty to take the matter up and sustain the men." [74] Two days later it was reported that labour delegates from Ottawa would visit regions in the United States and Canada to seek support. The full extent of these delegations is not known. Patterson journeyed to Toronto the following week where he made an "earnest appeal" for assistance before the local Trades and Labour Council, [75] and Pagé undertook a similar mission to Montreal. But financial contributions from outside unions were not great. The official report of the strike stated that $1,500 was paid out to the strikers. [76] Donations from unions in other cities, such as the Knights of Labour in Montreal and Toronto contributed to this amount but most of the money was raised locally. [77]

Charles Lipton has claimed that the Chaudière strike "moved many trade unionists across Canada." [78] Although the official union attitude was benevolent, it was restrained, because the mill hands were largely unorganized workers who initiated strike action without union approval. T. V. Powderly, General Master Workman of the Knights of Labour, was in Toronto at the time, but did not visit Ottawa. [79] Indeed, Powderly repudiated the strikers.

> Speaking of the Hull strikers, Mr. Powderly said that while he sympathized with them they did not belong to his order and consequently he could not bring their case before the coming meeting of the executive board. [80]

The Toronto Trades and Labour Council declared the militia action of the previous week to be "an infamous and cowardly outrage," and called for workmen to respond "promptly and nobly if Ottawa called for help." [81] But the Toronto *Labour Advocate* betrayed the material hollowness of such well-intentioned sentiment, and suggested that the polls be used for protest instead of the strike weapon. The mill hands, the *Advocate* wrote,

> will have to learn sense by experience, and at the cost of much unnecessary suffering to themselves and families. It is deplorable, but it cannot be helped. [82]

The *Advocate*'s sympathy contrasted with the active support organized workers in Quebec were prepared to provide. Napoléon Pagé elicited from

[74] The *Citizen*, September 23, 1891.
[75] PAC, *Minutes of the Toronto Trades and Labour Council, 1881-1893*, MG 28 I 44, p. 288, October 2, 1891.
[76] *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries... 1892*, Part VI, p. 38.
[77] The *Free Press*, September 24, 1891, The *Citizen*, September 25, 1891.
[78] Charles LIPTON, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
[79] *Le Spectateur*, in its issue of September 15, stated that Ottawa was included on Powderly's itinerary, but *Le Canada*, on September 26, reported that Powderly "a déclaré hier à Toronto qu'il ne pouvait aucunement venir en aide aux grévistes des Chaudières."
[80] The *Empire*, September, 1891.
[81] The *Labor Advocate*, September 25, 1891.
[82] *Ibid.*

the workmen of Montreal a promise that they would not handle lumber shipped from the Chaudière while the strike was in progress. [83]

Organized workers in Ottawa and Hull provided the mill hands with leadership and financial assistance, but their support ended there; they were not prepared to extend the strike to other trades and industries, despite indications in Hull of widespread labour discontent. Pagé felt compelled to deny that the Knights of Labor were involved in attempts to strike the construction site of a new church in Hull, [84] and the *Globe* reported that girls employed by E. B. Eddy had staged a sudden walkout when a daughter of one of the striking mill hands had been dismissed by that firm. [85] During the second week of the strike, *Le Canada* reflected the indignation of the French-Canadian community towards labour conditions in Hull, when it reported claims that children were employed by Eddy on a twelve-hour night-shift for which they received 25 to 40 cents remuneration. [86] Labour leaders chose not to exploit fully these circumstances, however, and restricted their activities to attempts at negotiation with the Chaudière employers.

The prospects of resolving the dispute appeared to improve on September 24, when, in fact, the result of that day's activities was the worsening of relations between the strikers and the mill owners. After a strike meeting the previous evening, a foreman of one of the mills circulated a message urging the men to report to work, promising that a favourable settlement would be reached. A return to the mills was sanctioned by the strike leaders, and when the six o'clock whistles blew at the Chaudière the following morning, a large number of men gathered expectantly at the old bandstand opposite Eddy's works. After an hour of fruitless waiting, the strikers learned that the mill owners would allow an extra quarter hour for lunch if the men returned to work. The offer was summarily refused, and, as *Le Canada* commented:

> Il a facile à comprendre que les hommes ont refusé avec indignation une proposition si saugrenue, si dérisoire, si blessante à leur malheur actuel et si insultante. [87]

J. R. Booth vehemently denied the *Citizen*'s report that he deliberately deceived the men, [88] but the mill hands believed the owners had attempted to trick them, and were further embittered. No settlement seemed imminent now, and such was the apparent resistance of the mill owners to any effective compromise, that the Montreal *Herald*'s reporter, after Thursday's "false alarm," termed the Chaudière dispute a "lockout." [89]

83 The Quebec *Morning Chronicle*, September 24, 1891.
84 The *Citizen*, September 21, 1891.
85 The *Globe*, September 19, 1891.
86 *Le Canada*, September 23, 1891.
87 *Le Canada*, September 25, 1891.
88 The *Citizen*, September 26, 1891.
89 The *Herald*, September 25, 1891. The *Citizen*'s reporter had sporadically referred to the dispute as a lockout from as early as September 18, 1891.

Despite the antagonism between the mill owners and the men, a number from both sides abandoned the struggle midway in the second week of the strike. The firm of Sheppard and Morse, which operated a sawmill not of the Chaudière but affected by the dispute, granted their men the ten-hour day and their former wages. On September 29, *Le Spectateur* announced that three firms, including William Mason and Sons, had agreed to the ten-hour day, [90] although the newspaper also reported that "Les Messieurs Hurdman, Buell, Orr et Cie, J. R. Booth, Bronson et Weston et Perley et Pattee ont tenu plusieurs caucus depuis samedi." A small number of mill hands (the higher-paid saw filers from the Bronson and Weston mills), made an attempt to return to the mills, but were restrained by other strikers, who threatened to tar and feather them if they tried to break ranks again. About twenty strikers were hired to work on sewer construction in Hull, marking the beginning of a drift to other work by many of the men. At a meeting on September 24, the strikers decided to encourage those who could find employment elsewhere to take the jobs. Labour bureaux were organized for Ottawa and Hull, as job offers were received daily from employers in the Ottawa and Gatineau valleys, Brockville, New York and Michigan. On Monday, September 28, the *Journal* noted that "the Chaudière mill hands appear to be thinning every day," and by the thirtieth, over 600 men were reported to have left the area for other employment. [91]

Though there was a reduction of the number of mill hands, it was not a result of a weakening of the strike nor a sign of a return to work at the Chaudière. The mills remained idle, while organizational and relief activity continued to be effective. The Knights of Labour predicted that 700 men would join their "La Canadienne" Assembly in Hull, and another 1,500 men would sign up with the "Chaudière" branch. [92] Subscriptions were collected, and the strike fund continued to receive donations from local unions and philanthropic individuals and associations. Charles Devlin, Liberal M.P. for "Ottawa County," sent a letter of support to Pagé, and enclosed twenty dollars for the fund. [93] Two hundred families were relieved daily, and at the end of the third week of the dispute, four days' provisions were distributed to 296 households representing 1,567 people. [94] The efficiency of the relief office exacted an acrimonious comment from one unsuccessful labour agent from Cornwall, who remarked that "one thing is certain, that they will not work as long as they get enough to eat." [95]

During the third week of the strike, the mill owners themselves faced certain difficulties. Lumber stacked and ready for shipping was required

90 See also the *Citizen*, September 30, 1891.
91 The *Journal*, September 30, 1891.
92 The *Free Press*, September 24, 1891.
93 *Le Canada*, September 30, 1891.
94 The *Journal*, October 5, 1891.
95 The *Journal*, October 1, 1891.

by impatient customers. The Bronson and Weston firm seems to have attempted to avoid this contingency by dealing some of its cut timber to the Export Lumber Company, [96] an American-based shipping firm which granted their workers' demands on the second day of the strike. [97] A great deal of lumber could not be moved, however, and the Bronson Company was unable to fulfil orders received during the dispute. [98] This problem was common to all the strike-bound firms, and by the end of the third week, the smaller mills and shipping yards and the Buell, Orr and Hurdman Company had granted their employees the ten-hour day and resumed full operations. But the mills of J. R. Booth, Perley and Pattee, and Bronson and Weston Companies, where a majority of the strikers were employed, remained closed to the men except under the old terms, despite the pressure to return to normal business. It was indeed a lockout. Rather than negotiate for an acceptable compromise, the owners of these mills tried to circumvent the strikers.

All week rumours circulated that the Perley and Pattee Company, and the Bronson and Weston Company, were offering board and $1.50 a day to men from outside the area who would work in their yards. [99] The mill hands reacted by organizing parties to prevent the arrival of strike-breakers, but on September 30, enough men were engaged to permit shipping to begin. The strikers attempted to stop operations, and interfered with the workers at the Perley and Pattee mills. Ottawa's Police Chief McVeity was called in and he immediately summoned almost the entire Ottawa police force. [100] Still the strikers refused to make way, with the result that "the police made room by using their batons in lively style." [101] The men were driven back amid scuffling and stone-throwing, and it was not until Fauteux arrived that order was restored. Two men were arrested, and shipping resumed. Meanwhile, twenty-five men returned to work at Bronson's, and some work began at J. R. Booth's establishment.

The strikers' position was weakened considerably by the resumption of shipping, but business at the Chaudière was far from normal, and a strong, militant group of mill hands ensured the strike continued. The day following the clash with the police, 600 strikers marched into the Bronson and Weston Company yards, and the scabs and office staff employed at shipping quickly abandoned their tasks. Police stationed at Bronson's were powerless to act, but at the other mills sufficient numbers were on hand to

[96] PAC, *The Bronson Papers,* MG 28 III 26, Vol. 117, Bronson and Weston Lumber Company Letterbook, Bronson and Weston Lumber Company to Shipton Green, September 17, 1891.

[97] The Hamilton *Evening Times,* September 16, 1891.

[98] PAC, *The Bronson Papers,* Vol. 197, Bronson and Weston Lumber Company, Correspondence. A. Heidritter and Sons to Bronson and Weston Company, October 10, 1891.

[99] *Le Canada,* October 5, 1891.

[100] The *Herald,* October 1, 1891. Only those police on emergency duty were not present. The Ottawa regular force numbered 35 men.

[101] The *Herald,* October 1, 1891.

prevent the strikers taking further obstructive action. Close co-operation existed between the mill owners and police, who conferred each morning on that day's protective measures. On October 3, the Ottawa police commissioners swore in twenty special constables for the purpose of guarding the mills,[102] and the following day, the entire Ottawa police force was present at the Chaudière.[103] These arrangements should have satisfied Perley, who had been so incensed by the strikers' attempt to halt shipping, that he had threatened to have the militia called out again.[104]

The use of official, organized force against the strikers angered many citizens, particularly in the French-Canadian communities. Newspaper accounts of the skirmish that occurred earlier in the week between the constabulary and strikers detailed the action of club-swinging police and noted that innocent bystanders were beaten.[105] *Le Spectateur* was outraged and the *Citizen* translated one section of the Hull paper's attack:

> To the great surprise of all it was on the side of authority that aggression came... if these brutal officers will insist upon carrying on like maddened dogs and desperadoes, they must be muzzled and rendered powerless by prompt appeal to the proper tribunal.[106]

The rhetoric of *Le Spectateur* is poor evidence on which to make a judgement of police behaviour, but its opinions are a measure of the anger felt by the strikers. The authorities justified the employment of police in this manner by the need to prevent violence between striking and non-striking workers, but the striking mill hands claimed that the only violent scenes were those provoked by over-zealous policemen. The evidence to support this charge was displayed in Hull.

> Dans un magasin de la rue Principale sont exposés les bâtons, les gourdins, instruments de boucherie, dont se sont servis les officiers de police pour terroriser la foule inoffensive des grévistes mercredi dernier [le 30ième Septembre] et pour frapper bestialement quelques pauvres ouvriers, pères de famille.[107]

As shipping continued at the Chaudière, the strikers appeared to falter. Dissension became manifest when Fauteux fell into disrepute among many workers who believed him to be too moderate. Napoléon Pagé was now the most prominent spokesmen for the strikers. On October 7, the relief stores, created to assist the men and their families, closed. Two days later, the *Journal* reported the strike a failure. The remaining men appeared "dejected, and it is evident that the spirit has to a large extent gone out of the strike."[108] But if the determination of some of the men wavered,

102 The *Herald*, October 3, 1891. The public, of course, paid for these constables.
103 The *Free Press*, October 2, 1891.
104 The *Journal*, October 1, 1891.
105 One of these unfortunate individuals was to take McVeity to court for his action, although the magistrate dismissed the case. The *Free Press*, October 5, 1891.
106 The *Citizen*, October 1, 1891.
107 *Le Canada*, October 1, 1891.
108 The *Journal*, October 9, 1891.

a great number of strikers remained resolute, so that the mill owners were prevented still from resuming normal operations.

At the end of the fourth week of the dispute, strike action continued to be effective and mill owner resistance to the men's demands continued to depend on the active assistance of the police. E. H. Bronson confirmed this fact in his letter to the Board of Police Commissioners of Ottawa of October 9.

> We [the mill owners] understand that it has been suggested, that the greater portion of the police force, now on duty at the Chaudière, be withdrawn on Saturday night. [October 10].
>
> In that connection we beg to say, that some of our men are now returning to work, and we anticipate that before many days the mills will be all again in operation. This end, however, can only be obtained, in our judgement, by the maintenance in its present strength of the police force about the mills and yards.
>
> Some of our men were, this morning, prevented from crossing the bridge by a large number of strikers congregated upon the Hull side, who stand ready to cross and give us trouble the moment there is the slightest relaxation in the present police vigilance. The withdrawal of any considerable part of the force would mean the loss of the ground already gained.
>
> Under the circumstances, therefore we desire ... that not a man will be withdrawn until the strikers disperse or resume work. [109]

The commissioners granted Bronson's wish, and police remained on duty at the Chaudière at least another week. [110] As Bronson's letter proves, there was no need for the mill owners to negotiate with the workers, nor fear continued strike action, as long as the police were at their posts.

In its fifth week, against the obdurate resistance of the mill owners and the prolonged hardship of so many days without wages, the strike crumbled. On October 12, all the saw mills were back in operation, although no concessions were granted by the Chaudière triumvirate of the Booth, Bronson, and Perley and Pattee companies. [111] Because of the large number of men who found employment elsewhere during the dispute, only 1,100 workers manned the Chaudière. Altering their earlier inflexibility on the issue of wages, and their stated determination not to operate the saws again that season, the mill owners were forced to pay the wages of 1890, granting the strikers' original claim to a fifty cent a week increase. A shrunken management reported to the *Journal* that they made this concession "principally from the fact that the men had returned of their own free will." [112] When the Bronson men were informed that the ten-hour day was still denied them, they walked off their jobs again. These men received no support from their fellow workers, and public sympathy was exhausted. They were

[109] PAC, *The Bronson Papers*, Vol. 117, E. H. Bronson to the Board of Police Commissioners of Ottawa, October 9, 1891.
[110] The *Journal*, October 16, 1891.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] The *Journal*, October 13, 1891.

prevented from making any effective demonstration by "a large squad" of police, [113] and at the end of the week, the Bronson men capitulated. In a small, misleading notice published October 19, marking five weeks of struggle, the official end of the Chaudière strike was announced.

> At Friday night's meeting of the Toronto Trades and Labour [*sic*] Council, delegate D. J. O'Donoghue, read the following telegram from Mr. J. W. Patterson, President of the Ottawa Trades and Labour Council of Ottawa: "Strike ended today. Victory. Will write." Loud applause followed the reading of the telegram. [114]

If a victory was achieved, it was a hollow one. The timing of the strike kept the mill owners' losses to a minimum, enabling them to deny a great portion of the strikers' demand. In an official report of the dispute, the mill owners described their losses as "nominal" while the mill hands sacrificed $150,000 in wages. [115] In the same report, the Chaudière Assembly of the Knights of Labour admitted the wage loss but claimed success because the mill owners were forced to grant the wage increase and allow a small reduction in the hours of labour. This statement was a rationalization of defeat — the ten-hour day had been the rallying cry of the strikers, and the largest firms, employing most of the men, did not grant this demand. It was not until 1895 that the hours of labour at the Chaudière mills were permanently fixed at ten a day. [116] Thus, it appears remarkable that this strike, of such questionable outcome, was maintained for so long a period, unless its social as well as economic implications are considered.

The mill hands' determination was sustained by the conviction that they were being unfairly exploited by a group of prosperous entrepreneurs who could afford to meet their demands. The Toronto *Labour Advocate* expressed the opinion of many working men:

> barring the C.P.R. millionaires, these timber limit barons are the most opulent body of men today in this country, and their treatment of our poor and simple folk [should] not pass unchallenged. [117]

As the strike progressed, this contrast between the managerial class and their workers was drawn with greater definition, providing increased solidarity between the strikers, and encouraging public sympathy. The mill hands had a cause with which all workers could identify themselves, and one that charitably-minded citizens could conscientiously support.

In the English-speaking community, however, many regarded the strikers in the same light in which the mass meeting at Hull, September 20, was viewed by the *Citizen*'s reporter.

> There is something in the spectacle of a congregation of working men in orderly array gathered to hear with attentiveness the advice of those who tender their counsel, to compel the respect of every beholder.

113 The *Journal*, October 15, 1891.
114 The *Citizen*, October 19, 1891.
115 *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries . . . 1892*, Part VI, p. 40.
116 The *Canada Lumberman*, Volume XVI, Number 6, June, 1891.
117 The *Labor Advocate*, October 2, 1891.

Such favourable comment smacked of condescension and paternalism, and like much of the support from the English-speaking community, reflected the need of one class to absolve itself of responsibility for the wrongs perpetrated on another, rather than a willingness to affect the changes necessary for a just settlement of the dispute. The English-language press was concerned with the welfare of the wives and children of the striking mill hands in the coming winter, whose hardship would be increased by the men's wage loss, and by the deficiency of waste lumber which the women normally salvaged for firewood. A charitable approach was preferred to a more critical analysis of the issues — no firm stand was taken on behalf of either of the disputing sides. The *Journal,* in an attempt to explain, without indicting any party, the reasons for the mill hands' meagre wages and long hours of labour, went so far as to assert that "the work is healthy — that is one consolidation." [118] The *Citizen,* most favourable to the strikers, never criticized the mill owners directly until the second week of the dispute, and the *Journal* and *Free Press,* even more reticent, usually ignored the social and economic implications of the strike in favour of comments on the temperance and order of the men. The *Journal,* for exemple, when criticizing the strikers, reported that at one meeting "a French orator a trifle the worse for whiskey mounted a saw log and called for three cheers." [119]

Hints of a racialist quality to the dispute occasionally appeared in the press, but remained the vaguest of intimations. It was true, however, that the strike was sustained by the large degree of support received from the French-Canadian populations of Hull and Ottawa. [120] The French-language newspapers, a majority of the Hull council, and a number of community leaders pledged their unqualified support for the mill hands. This racial identification played an important role, in a positive sense, in maintaining the ranks of the strikers, but it also gave a significant mitigating element to the effect of the strike. The consolidation of the French-Canadian community, like that of the mill owners, helped to deny meaningful dialogue between the two parties.

There were important reasons for the united front displayed by the managerial class, and for their strong resistance to the workers' reasonable demands. The strikers confronted an imposing group, powerful and prosperous capitalists whose reputations were firmly established by their considerable services to the community. With the knowledge that the Chaudière lumber kings had made fortunes from trade in the Ottawa Valley, the people of the region remembered when lumbermen paid "highly remunerative" wages, [121] and the mills had a record of providing good employ-

[118] The *Journal,* September 15, 1891.
[119] *Ibid.,* September 14, 1891.
[120] What percentage of the strikers were Irish Roman Catholic and their effect on the strike is unknown.
[121] A. R. M. LOWER, *op. cit.,* p. 109.

ment. By initiating the first dispute with the mill owners since the establishment of the Chaudière lumber trade, the strikers not only disputed the "right" of an owner to be the sole determiner of how his business was to be conducted, but also threatened his status as a responsible community leader. The strikers publicly challenged the managers' positions as paternalistic employers and benefactors to the community — for the Chaudière mill owners to grant the strikers' claim would have been an act similar to a public confessional in which their honourable reputations would be denied. The problem was clearly illustrated by the comments of certain strikers at the time of the meeting of the Citizen's Committee with the mill owners.

> Les patrons savent, disent encore les grévistes, que la sympathie du public est pour nous, et que leur réputation pourrait en souffrir, s'ils avaient cédé aux demandes du comité des citoyens, qui avait été les trouver, pour régler le différend existant. [122]

Publicly criticized for their practices as employers, for their use of militia and police, and described as alien Americans and exploiters of men by the strikers, it is not surprising that the owners combined and determined not to acknowledge this criticism by acceding to the men's demands. As Patterson observed, "the employers are standing more on their dignity than on the merits of the case." [123] For this reason, rather than for economic exigencies, the mill hands' cause was determinedly frustrated, and the dispute for so long unresolved.

While the immediate results of the Chaudière strike were not totally satisfactory for the mill hands, the long-term effects of this dispute were beneficial to the workers of Hull and Ottawa, and proved the importance of a strong labour union. Organizational activity did not cease with the strike and, in March 1892, a District Assembly (No. 6) of the Knights of Labour was established. Composed of over 2,000 mill hands and general workmen, the Assembly was headed by J. W. Patterson, and the secretary was E. Ouellette of Lower Town. In the years immediately following 1891, the existence of this strong movement eventually brought the Chaudière mill owners to the bargaining table with the Knights of Labour, where most disputes were resolved by negotiation. [124] In addition to efforts to secure better wages and working conditions, labour activity in Ottawa broadened to include the establishment of a workers' newspaper, the *Free Lance*, in 1893, and to involve increased labour participation in local political affairs. [125]

As knowledge of the extent of labour activity in Canada in the last decades of the nineteenth century increases, Canadian historians will be

[122] *Le Canada*, September 25, 1891.
[123] The *Journal*, September 21, 1891.
[124] PAC, *The Bronson Papers*, Vol. 200, Bronson and Weston Lumber Company, Correspondence, J. W. Clarke, District Recording Secretary, Knights of Labor to E. H. Bronson, May 27, 1895.
[125] PAC, *The Bronson Papers*, Vol. 701, "Memoranda and clippings on political career, 1894-1896."

forced to re-assess past interpretations of this period. Is not the Chaudière strike, and the increased labour activity it stimulated, indicative of a more broadly-based working class movement than is usually acknowledged by our historians? Those who have sought to explain early Canadian trade union developments with reference only to international influences, and, more generally, to view the tensions prevalent in Canadian society as products solely of their political or ethnic characteristics, perhaps would profit by an examination of other events like the Chaudière strike of 1891.