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**The Workers' Educational Association: A Study in Social Change and Resistance in  
Canadian Working Class Culture**

**Amanda Benjamin**

**A Thesis**

**In**

**The Department**

**Of**

**Education**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Workers' Educational Association: A Study in Social Change and Resistance in Canadian Working Class Culture**

Amanda Benjamin

Concordia University, 1999

This thesis examines the effects of the Workers' Educational Association of Toronto (WEA) on social change in Canada between 1917-1945. This study attempts to establish the social importance of this organization in the history of adult education in Canada. The WEA was an educational organization that attempted to provide a link between labour and learning by making educational opportunities available to the working class. The data for this study were obtained from an analysis of the Ontario and Canadian WEA archives. The thesis first examines the history of the WEA and demonstrate its place in the history of adult education in Canada. Secondly, this study suggests that the WEA was the impetus for change in Canada, and in particular for Toronto's working class. The study found that the WEA used a form of critical pedagogy to achieve its goals which brought about social change. This study reinforces the usefulness of critical pedagogy as an approach for adult education when social change is an objective.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Introduction**

**“Before persons can change their behaviour and their society, they must first be enlightened as to the possibility” Michael Welton (1989).**

**This study examines the development of adult education in Canada and illustrates how the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) served as an impetus for social change. More specifically, the study focuses on: 1) the development of adult education in Canada; 2) the history of the WEA and its specific education programs; and 3) how the WEA’s educational programs and activities can be seen as using a critical pedagogical model which served as a vehicle for generating social change. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the WEA in Toronto in order to establish the contributions this singular organization may have had in creating change within working class Canadian culture, through its innovative educational practices and its resistance to status quo educational practices. Basically, the argument presented is that social change has and can occur through adult education.**

**It is important to note that in this study I am using Lawrence Cremin’s (1976) definition of adult education in which he suggests that adult education is an intentional educational form that involves the transmitting of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a variety of sites. This thesis offers a different perspective of the WEA in that it attempts to place the organization and its educational programs within a working framework that will help us examine the greater social connection this organization had on working class**

culture in Canada. Just as the WEA tried to create the “link” between labour and learning, this study attempts to demonstrate an additional link between adult education and social change.

An offshoot of its British counterpart, the British WEA, the Canadian WEA was formed in Ontario in 1918. Founded in conjunction with University of Toronto president Sir Robert Falconer, the WEA was established in order to create educational opportunities for the working class (Radforth & Sangster, 1987). From its philosophical beginnings, the WEA was meant to provide “a link between labour and learning” by making higher education available to the working class (Annual Reports, 1944, Ontario Archives, henceforth OA).

Brown and McIlroy (1980) note that the historical purpose of the WEA was to provide the conditions for self-education of working adults. As such, the WEA emerged as an alternative to other conventional university extension programs that relied on more traditional methods of educating, such as lecturing and test banking. The WEA offered small seminar type courses which were meant to “educate for citizenship” and to teach workers not only how to be good citizens, but to resist the established working class societal structures in Toronto at the time (Welton, 1987).

One of the major perceptions of adult education is that it is often the impetus for social change (Selman, 1995). When examining social change I have tried to keep in mind that society is not static; there is always constant change. Therefore, it is important to explore the types of influence that adult education has in the evolution of present social norms and practices.

## **Methods and Modes of Inquiry**

One of the problems with researching the history of the field of adult education is that much of adult education history has not been recorded. As Radforth and Sangster (1987) note, “There is an invisibility in regards to education thought and practice in Canadian historical writing”(p. 1). Thus, historical accounts of events and changes to our society pertaining to adult education have been neglected. One of the important methodological features of this study was a conscious effort to “fill in” some of the gaps in modern historiographical writing.

The primary data sources for this study were found in the Workers’ Educational Association papers at the Ontario Archives (OA). The primary source material consisted of documented minutes of the organization’s meetings, detailed annual reports, financial records, and two serials, *The Link* and *Labour News*. The OA contains several series of materials starting at Series A, which contains the organizations minutes and annual reports, and ending with Series H, which contains the reference materials of the organization (see Appendix A for a listing of archival material). In this text I do not specify the specific archival series of the material as most of the material quoted comes from Series A of the archives. Other important sources of primary data were the National Archives of Canada (NAC) which contain many of the personal notes of some of the organization’s key players, and the National Library of Canada (NLC) which consists of the WEA’s serial *The Link*.

From a revisionist historical perspective this thesis takes existing histories and archival primary source material and places this data within an interpretive framework.

This framework suggests some of the possible reasons for the changes that occurred within the organization and an explanation of the types educational practices offered to the workers.

One of the problems encountered with this study was how to operationally define change and how to determine what is natural evolutionary change from those changes that are purposely precipitated and intended to be revolutionary social changes. As part of the data collection, the WEA's minutes were examined to look for what could be considered a critical pedagogy or transformative and liberatory educational practices. The WEA serials *The Link* and *Labour News* were examined for the type of articles published to determine the ideas and types of resistance that were suggested for workers. The WEA offered many innovative educational programs during its tenure (i.e. *Labour Forum* and *Outdoor Ramblings*), and these programs were examined in an attempt to analyze their educational purpose. Therefore, as the research was conducted I tried to focus on the impact of those changes that seemed to be purposeful rather than those that might be construed as coincidental.

It is considered that change is something we look at retrospectively with an understanding that all material contains some author bias. It was not possible to operationalize the effects of the WEA in terms of large-scale changes, although it is the belief of this author that it is possible to make predictions. Through the examination of the short-term data outlining the contributions of the educational programs it is only possible to look at the changes that occur between 1917-1950, as such there were two

ways to examine the data. The first strategy was to look at the mathematical statistics of the organization and predict what change occurred from an examination of the changing statistics and the rise of trade union involvement in the organization. The second strategy was to examine the educational programs of the organization to determine how these programs resemble a critical and transformative pedagogy and what contributions they make to our society.

### **The Educational Importance of the Study**

The importance of this study is to establish the contribution of the WEA to the social history of Canada. I believe history can provide a vantage point from which to understand present trends and practices, and to examine whether the past speaks to the present (Welton, 1987). By looking at specific cases such as the WEA, and examining how adult education began to make its mark in working class organizations, we can begin to look at the importance of adult education as a social action movement in Canada (Welton, 1987).

Thus, the emphasis here is on how the workers in Toronto changed as a result of the WEA. The evidence indicates that workers became more empowered and they began to demonstrate what they had learned by becoming more involved in the organization and its educational programs. One of the suggestions is that the workers met the objectives of the organization: they became an empowered more educated citizenry (See Appendix B).

Another important feature of this study is the educational contributions the WEA made to Canadian adult education history. Thus, the intent is to, (1) contribute to the expansion of the present knowledge of Canadian adult education history, (2) highlight the



effect that one organization can have in terms of creating social change and social history, and (3) determine what in particular we can learn from the history of adult education, and how that information may be used to improve current workers' education programs.

At the same time as looking at the positive impact of the WEA it is important to note that this was not a wholly idyllic organization. This was also an organization of great internal turmoil. The WEA was purported to be a catalyst for change by those that formed and guided the organization. Its purpose was to prepare workers to take positions of responsibility in labour unions and other political structures, as well as in their own lives. However, whether the WEA contributed to any kind of social change is still under dispute (Welton, 1987). The organization originated in a time of labor militancy and radicalism that was unprecedented. There are clearly documented disputes between the University of Toronto and the WEA as well as between the key players of the organization. One of the questions that arose during this investigation is whether an organization that is in turmoil internally can still be catalyst for change.

The WEA's serials *The Link* and *Labour News* emphasize the wide reaching effects this organization had on Toronto workers such as an increase in knowledge about striking and other labour issues. There are other important factors that suggest social change considering the significant number of participants from trade unions in the early years of the organization, and the educational programs' steady increase in enrollment numbers. The introduction of a highly successful radio program (*Labour Forum*) presented on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) exemplified specific attempts by the WEA to reach workers in the Toronto community as well as surrounding

areas. *The Link* printed articles that were intended to teach workers how to fight for their rights and become active in their communities. A wide variety of articles were offered to promote resistance to established governmental structures and the workers were instructed on topics such as how to strike legally. In my examination of the educational programs of the WEA I believe that these programs and writings were intended to teach workers how to resist with the hope that resistance would help create change for the working class.

Questions of how and what kind of social change occurred must be pursued in the context of educational progress. This thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter two examines the development of adult education in Canada and offers a literature review of the history of adult education in Canada outlining the importance of filling in some of the gaps in the history of adult education in Canada. This chapter also briefly reviews some of the available literature on labour and workers' education in Canada as well as the available literature on the WEA in Canada.

Chapter three offers an overview of the history of the organization and provides the necessary framework from which an analysis of changes within the organization can be extrapolated. This chapter offers as complete a picture of the organization between 1917 and the 1950s as could be created from the WEA archival data and the secondary sources available. The purpose of this section is to discuss the major events and people of the organization while concentrating on the educational programs and curriculum of the WEA. This chapter also explores the decline of the WEA and its place in adult

education history as well as the evolution of the WEA as a Canadian educational organization.

Chapter four examines different theories of social change in order to offer a framework for the examination of instances of change in the history of the organization. First is a literature review of social change and society – focusing on those changes that are intended compared to those that just happen. Here I briefly summarize the development of some theories that attempt to explain social change. This is introduced simply to provide some theoretical background. Next, the literature on critical pedagogy is examined as a model for social change and transformative education, and lastly the WEA is examined in light of its place in the literature on social change.

Chapter five examines the indicators of social change and efforts of the WEA to create social change. This chapter highlights different types of data collected from the archives that trace the WEA from an organization of social control to one that stimulated change. First, as an indicator of change, the organization's statistical information about the population of the organization and enrollment in courses will be considered. Secondly, to highlight the efforts for change *The Link* and *Labour News*, *Labour Forum*, and *Outdoor Ramblings* will be determined. This chapter points to how critical pedagogy can be used as an explanatory model to explain how the WEA's educational programs might have contributed to social change in Canada. Finally, social change in the overall context of the WEA is explored.

Chapter six outlines the findings and conclusions and points to the results and looks to creating a new discourse on social change. Here I will offer my own theory of

how critical pedagogy fits as a model to generate social change. I also speculate on the impact the WEA has had on workers' education in Canada suggesting that the past is a good way to understand our present. The conclusion offers an analysis of what this information says about the future practice of adult educators and how we can learn from this past to inform our future.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **A Brief Account of the Development of Adult Education in Canada**

This chapter critiques the literature that examines the history of adult education in Canada and briefly introduces the WEA. This review of some of the literature on workers' and labour education points to the rich involvement of Canadians in the development of this field. The available literature on the WEA in Canada is presented indicating what has already been written about the organization and highlighting the importance many historians have placed on the WEA and its contribution to the development of adult education in Canada.

#### **Literature Review: The History of Adult Education in Canada**

All historical writing involves reaching, to some extent, for some understanding of the people and events being described (Selman, 1995). For many academics such as Gordon Selman (1995), adult education is intimately linked with the struggle of humanity for freedom and dignity, for progress and development – for the good life. Since the 1960s, there has been an attempt by such academics to fill in the gap of Canadian adult education history. They have thus begun to define what we think adult education is and, in fact, tried to determine the boundaries of the different adult education movements. Cotton (1964) saw two traditions of adult education 1) the social reformist tradition which sees adults as the key to improving society, and 2) the professional tradition which looks to use adult education to meet the individual needs of adults. It is the first tradition, the social reformist tradition that is of most importance in this inquiry. It is this social

action vein of adult education that is responsible for many of the workers' educational organizations such as the WEA that have been recorded in Canadian history.

The inquiry into specific organizations such as the WEA must begin with an examination of the evolution of the history of adult education in Canada. Selman (1995) divides the early history of adult education in Canada into three "periods"; 1867-1914, 1915-1935, and 1935-1960. Before 1867, adult education was largely a period of scattered, informal beginnings under private and voluntary auspices. At this time, Selman indicates, there was a heavy reliance on institutional forms that were imported from elsewhere, which could be considered something like "an adult education colonization" (i.e. Mechanics Institutes, and the YMCA which both hailed from Britain). From 1867-1914, adult education was still largely a private effort – but steps were being taken for expansion into the public sector. Study groups, institutions and associations devoted to cultural and educational matters gained importance at this time. There was an increase in agricultural extension and three important organizations had their origins in the late 1800s. 1) The Women's Institutes, 2) The Canadian Reading Camp Association, later to be known as Frontier College, and, 3) The Cooperative Movement in Nova Scotia (Caisse Populaire) (Selman, 1995).

In the latter half of the 1867-1914 period that Selman describes, the population of Canada was small and the country was in the midst of a depression. Adult education was mainly in voluntary or private hands. The three significant innovations at this time were 1) Frontier College (in which University students were used to teach isolated camp workers to read using cooperative structures to help pass on the learning) 2) Women's

Institute Movement, and 3) The Antigonish Movement (which was extension work in co-operation with St. Francis Xavier University). In this era we began to see universities provide extension programs, although Selman (1995) suggests that there is little writing about what was going on in this era.

The period of 1915-1939 saw the beginning of much of the conscious adult education movement. St Francis Xavier University, the WEA, Sir George Williams (which is now Concordia University), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the National Film Board (NFB) all became important examples of the conscious educational movement in Canadian history (Selman, 1995).

After 1935 we began to see greater development in the adult education movement. Important organizations such as the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE), founded in 1935, began to appear. We saw initiatives like Farm Radio and the Citizens Forum, which combined broadcasting, print materials and local listening/discussion groups all on a national scope (Selman, 1995). Some of the other important program trends included considerable expansion of the university extension programs, with a steady growth of vocational education for adults and recreation for adults (i.e. arts and crafts/leisure). The focus on the social importance of adult education began to come to the forefront and people began to question what exactly adult education had to offer them.

All of the previous adult education initiatives and organizations are important to consider when examining the social action function of adult education in Canadian history. Many of the previous programs paralleled the WEA. They were adult education initiatives meant to create change by educating adults. The WEA was not exclusive in its

pursuit of education for those who would not normally have access. One of the things that made the WEA unique, in comparison to these previous programs, was that it was one of the first organizations to be associated with a university extension program and then separate from the university and go out on its own. Like the Mechanics Institutes and Frontier College, the WEA was associated with a university. What made the WEA different from organizations like the Mechanics Institutes was its refusal to play the political games associated with universities. As a result of the desire to stay apolitical, the WEA's chose to separate from the university regardless of the loss of funding. This act defined a difference between the WEA and some of the other adult education initiatives that were also occurring at this time.

Another area of comparison is the purpose of the curricula. Although all of the organizations were built on the premise that educating adults would create change in society. The purpose for the WEA was not to teach basic skills like Antigoniish, reading or writing like Frontier College, or technical skills like the Mechanics Institutes, the WEA instead meant to provide a general education with the idea that this liberal education would improve workers overall lives (Radforth & Sangster, 1987). The comparison of the WEA's educational programs to critical pedagogy does not suggest that they were the only organization using teaching strategies that resemble a liberatory pedagogy, but the focus on a liberal education for workers is what separates the WEA from other adult education initiatives.

It is important to note the comparisons that can be clearly made between the WEA and other adult education initiatives in Canadian history. This was time of great growth



and change in Canadian adult education history. The WEA, however, stands out in several areas. Its decision to stay apolitical and leave the safety of the university, and its choice of liberal education as the purpose of its curriculum all suggest that the WEA was a unique organization that contributed to a transformative pedagogy for Canadian workers. One that I argue resembles the model of critical pedagogy discussed in chapter 4.

Another area of adult education history that must be considered is funding. The Carnegie Corporation, created by industrialist Andrew Carnegie, was a major contributor to adult education organizations. Part of the provisions in the organizational charter for this corporation was to help develop Canadian adult education activities. Previously, much of this organization's funding went to the development of libraries, although later the chairman decided that libraries alone could not carry out the foundation's purpose of disseminating knowledge for general use. As such, the corporation began to help fund individual adult education initiatives (Selman, 1995). It is important to note, in relation to this study, that the Carnegie Corporation also provided funding for the WEA.

The phenomenon of university extension programs became very important as we look at Canadian educational history. As a result, it has become important to examine what adult education really offered the public at large. Houle & Nelson (1956), in their examination of extension programs, looked at the relationship between university extension and public affairs. They described four groups of people in adult education and predicted their involvement in adult education activities. The importance of their work was that it distinguished the different groups of people who were involved in adult

education. One group that they defined was those adults who chose to play an active part in citizen action with respect to public issues. It is this group of adult learners that is of greatest interest to this examination of adult education and social change.

A firm understanding of extension programs is important to this inquiry, as this is the program designation with which the WEA began. Extension, as defined by Selman (1995), has two meanings that are used in North America: 1) agricultural extension, which relates to services provided to those who live in rural and small town settings and is often vocational in emphasis (i.e. vocational, social, and cultural programs for rural people) and, 2) university, which often refer mostly to adult education activities as university extension. The term was borrowed from Great Britain and it involves universities providing (in another place or at another hour of the day) a version of many of the same kinds of programs delivered to their “regular” students on campus. It should be noted that extension programs for universities are also thought of as continuing education (Selman, 1995). The WEA is a good example of the latter definition of an extension program and this type of program has become an important area of study for adult education historiographers. This brief account of the major historical periods of adult education gives us a foundation to begin to look at some of the scholars who have studied these different eras.

Michael Welton (1987, 1989) is one of the leading figures who examines the importance of studying adult education history. His work recognizes the complexities of adult education history. He suggests that there is invisibility in regards to adult education thought and practices in Canadian historical writings. He questions whether history can

provide a vantage point to understand present trends and practices. Does the past speak to the present? Welton believes that we are in the process of constructing our past (Welton, 1987).

Welton (1987) points to the value of the history of adult education as a foundational knowledge base that provides depth to contemporary field discourse. He believes the past is important in three ways, 1) to aid critical thinking by providing a lens to view the present and its difference from the past, 2) to give advice to groups shaped by relations of power and caught up in the rigors of identity – difference politics and social action, and 3) to become a way to theorize about education and community connections, a use that should drive us to consider how explanations are constructed from evidence. Indeed, questioning the value and contribution of adult education history we can reconstruct our past, and in this case perhaps offer a new view of workers' education and its connection to social change.

Despite important Canadian innovations in the field of adult education, our contribution to research in this field is severely underdeveloped. In the critical approach to this history we have what Welton (1987) calls, a “romance” with our past accomplishments. He even suggests that Canadian history is biased towards a political history. As such, now we are beginning to look at social history, and adult education as a part of that social history.

Andre Gracé (1998), in a paper that examines the reasons to study history, outlines what makes contemporary life and learning different. He notes that historical research reveals how education itself is shaped and is most productive in the intersection

of the personal, political and pedagogical. He suggests that it shows educators that what goes on inside the education system is inextricably linked to the context of shaping communities and the larger world. Gracé points to several other important authors such as, R.A. Carlson (1980), who highlights the tendency of adult education research to focus on present and future – the past, he suggests, appears “irrelevant or, at times, even subversive” because it deeply questions the values of contemporary practice. Gracé also cites J. B. Whipple (1964) who characterized the post World War II historian of adult education as a researcher who engaged in a conscious process of systematically revealing the past. Historical research served the emerging adult education enterprise in three ways: 1) it provided knowledge of an emerging enterprise that contributed to the adult learners’ understanding of adult education as a complex field, 2) it expanded the knowledge of adult education as a disciplined field, and 3) it provided a method of organizing the past that assisted adult educators to execute responsibly their functions in the present.

The history of adult education in Canada is a little talked about field. Some of the previous scholars have reminded us of the importance of this type of inquiry. It is with the understanding of the importance of the past that this work proceeds, and perhaps adequately highlights the importance of this inquiry in the field of adult education history.

### **The History of the Workers’ and Labour Education Movement in Canada**

There are several different terms that are used to describe the education of workers. "Workers’ Education" describes the movement from its beginnings until the 1940s, whereas "Labour Education" began to be used in late 1930s, and became the

predominant term used after World War II. "Labour Studies" was first used in 1960s, and has since then gained acceptance in the field as the description of how modern workers are educated (Dwyer, 1977). There are three distinct historical periods that accompany these terms. "Workers' Education" was brought to the US (and Canada) from Great Britain where it was, and still is, used to describe the movement for the education of workers.

Michael Welton's (1987) publication, *Knowledge for the people: the struggle for adult learning in English-speaking Canada, 1828-1973*, was a turning point in Canadian historiography. Welton points out that the publication of the book, *Canadian education: A history* by J. D. Wilson (1970), was the beginning of Canadian historiography because after this publication there was an emergence of academic material examining education history and social history. This book did not succeed in redefining the boundaries of education. Welton on the other hand, has had a profound effect on the field of adult education history and workers' and labour education. Much of the writing in this field comes back to his groundbreaking works.

Welton (1987) notes that Canadian educational historians would have found few works from which to draw upon the labour movement as a learning site. So what is Canada's working class tradition of adult education? The fragmented evidence suggests that Canada has a weak university based liberal adult education tradition, and that voluntary associations providing knowledge for the working people have met with resistance or indifference (Welton, 1987). However, MacPherson (1979) submits that if educational historians had looked at agrarian and cooperative learning movements, and

known how to think about the role of learning in social movements, they would have begun the process of recovering a vital and dynamic popular adult education tradition.

Jim Lotz and Michael Welton's (1987) study of the New Brunswick Antigonish Movement suggested how Canadians have used the adult education movement as a vehicle to protest against poor economic conditions and as a way to improve those conditions. This is a good beginning in which to examine how workers might in fact have caused social change, although in this case the focus was on union struggles and confrontations rather than on the far-reaching effect their educational programs had on our social structure.

O'Donnell (1990) points out Bryan Palmer's (1979, 1987, 1992) studies in which this well known labour historian criticizes the "first generation" of labour historians for their preoccupation with "traditional concerns" such as key personages, central events, major developments. O'Donnell suggests that Palmer rarely looks beyond the culture of skilled working men, and much of his study is tightly focused on union movements and conflicts to the exclusion of the other working-class experiences or the effects on the people themselves.

There is a distinct lack of information on the effects of the educational programs of those in the Workers' Education field who are actually workers. Another important area of research is Patricia Shulz's (1975) study of the East York Workers Association (EYWA). Her study established the importance of the educational programs of Workers' organizations. Shulz highlights some of the educational programs of the EYWA such as public lectures and debates, and relief programs. Educational programs were clearly an

important part of the labour movement, and studies such as these begin to highlight the educational importance of these organizations and their implication for social change.

Within the literature on workers' education there is a subset that looks at education for citizenship. Many of the organizations that were teaching workers considered the purpose of education as helping the workers to become a better citizenry. Education for citizenship had concentrated on several elements which were felt to be relevant to the action of citizens in a democratic society: 1) the development of intellectual capacity and understanding to support independent thought (liberal education), 2) knowledge about the ways in which the political system operates, how decisions are made and change achievable, 3) skills of participation, leadership and organization which are involved in operating effectively within the system, and 4) the promotion of knowledge about particular issues on which community must make decisions (Selman, 1995). Also important in the area of general citizenship education are the activities of two public corporations: the National Film Board (NFB) and the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC). Both corporations had outstanding records over the years for informing Canadians about public affairs (Selman, 1995). The WEA used the mantra of education for citizenship in their statement of purpose. This is an important section of adult education history to be considered.

Paul O'Donnell's (1990) thesis points out some of the central debates in education historiography. He points out that few studies look at the extent of university extension programs in Canada or examine the motives of the education officials as well as the student usage of facilities, the types of educational programs offered and whether these

motives complimented each other.

D'arcy Martin is another important contributor to Canadian labour education history. He covers the labour education chapters of Selman's (1995) book and notes that, "to look at labour education in Canada is to open a vibrant, volatile, and significant chapter of adult education history"(p. 149). For Martin, the history of labour education in Canada, then, is tangled within the social action current of adult education.

All of these previously outlined debates must be considered as the inquiry into the WEA proceeds. It is from this base, the examination of the relationship between labour, workers, and education that we can begin to look at those scholars who are writing specifically about the WEA in Canada.

### **The WEA in Canada**

Peter Sandiford (1935), in his survey of adult education in Canada, describes the WEA as an informal provider of education with ideas that had "not caught on" in the rest of Canada. The one exception to this rule was in Ontario where there was a moderate number of WEA members (close to 2,000 at its peak), and this is in large contrast to British WEA, where in 1935 there were 59, 663 people in 2, 902 classes. The purpose as Sandiford describes it, was to bring higher education to industrial workers and farmers in order that they may acquire the knowledge essential to intelligent and effective citizenship. Thus, workers would be enabled to think for themselves and to express their thoughts fluently and correctly. As Sandiford illustrates it, the workers were not interested in vocational education or belated elementary education; in fact, he describes the WEA as claiming to offer adult education in its basic form. From Sandiford's



description, the WEA was considered strictly a continuous study group that was financed in three ways: 1) the provincial government of Ontario through the Department of University Extension at the University of Toronto, 2) the Carnegie Corporation, and 3) membership fees. Interestingly, Sandiford was writing at the same time as the WEA was reaching its most vibrant period.

One of the best studies of the WEA is offered by Ian Radforth and Joan Sangster's (1982) article, *A Link Between Labour and Learning: The Workers' Educational Association in Ontario, 1917-1951*. This article is primarily a historical account of the WEA's contribution to both the University of Toronto's Extension Program and the Ontario Trade Union Movement and offers both a balanced and critical analysis of the organization's history. Its main focus is to highlight the evolution of the organization and the effect the University of Toronto played in its development. The authors suggest that the WEA originated as an object for social control for those with colonial ties who were trying to forward their imperialist doctrines. The importance of this article is that it accounts for the WEA's rise and fall in popularity, examining both the positive and negative influences many of the key people had on the organization's development. Although the authors offer a comprehensive view of many of the events that occurred in the organization's history, they fail to highlight the sociological importance the educational programs played in Torontonians and Canadian working class culture. They define the history of the organization, both the positive and negative influences, but they do not examine the effect the WEA's educational programs had on workers. Perhaps, this could be an important continuation of their research.

Radforth and Sangster's chapter in Welton's (1987) book covers some of the basic background information about the WEA. They note many of the major events in the WEA's history, highlighting how the WEA originated in a time of labor militancy and radicalism that was unprecedented. They comment in the beginning that the WEA was a propaganda vehicle for imperialist doctrines. Radforth and Sangster suggest that the founders, several of whom emerged from the British WEA, tried to create loyalist ties to Britain by mirroring the British WEA's ideologies. However, the suggestion of loyalist ties seem to fade away from the historical accounts of the WEA once it became firmly established as a Canadian organization. Radforth and Sangster further speculate that the University of Toronto, in response to the suggestion of British loyalty, saw the purpose of the WEA as combining radicalism and adult education to guard the status quo. This view of the WEA also faded from historical accounts, possibly due to the strain and the eventual severing of the relationship between the WEA and the University of Toronto. They do note that some workers were suspicious of education and the social mores being imposed and did not ascribe to the view that interests of capital and labour could be reconciled.

Paul O'Donnell's (1990) thesis *Gender, Class, and Adult Learning: The WEA of Toronto* takes both a top and a bottom view of the WEA in an attempt to illuminate the agenda of the WEA. O'Donnell attempts to give insight into the educational interests of the men and women who took WEA courses. This study suggests that the ideals of the workers who were educated by the WEA were not necessarily the same as those shaping and defining the organization. The importance of this work is that it suggests that the

further analysis of the WEA needs to be encouraged in order to explore issues of class and gender.

In the 1970s Netto Kefentse (1975) looked at the WEA in the 1920s, and J.A. Blyth (1976) examined the WEA to the end of 1972. Both of these works must be considered in the examination of the relationship between the WEA and the University of Toronto. These works examined the volatile relationship between the WEA and the University of Toronto and focused on the conflicts between the two bodies. Although, neither author saw the WEA as successful, still it is important to recognize their addition to the written material available on the WEA.

Welton (1989) notes that history has not strayed much beyond formal and public schooling practices. Looking at the WEA and informal schooling practices takes us beyond and into new territory for Canadian educational history. Much of the work in this field looks at the struggles of what Welton calls the common people, who want life and problem-centered pedagogy, against dominant interests who want to determine the content and process of their subordinates learning. The danger in this view (ideological populism) is that identification with the person, group, or movement may prevent the historian from looking at all aspects of the research. We must be careful of taking one worldview and examine what is silenced in the text.

We often look at children's schooling in terms of social reproduction and resistance but Welton (1987) points out that adult education is in fact more central to societal reproduction, resistance and transformation than the education of children. By examining the history of adult education in Canada we are able to see how, "Resistance to

and transformation of societal structures emerge from the adult population, and is premised upon men and women's ability to learn new ways of seeing the world and acting within it" (Welton, 1987, p. 10). In fact society can be seen as a vast school. The emerging literature on social class and education suggests that we need to take both a top and bottom view of workers' education. We must begin to examine both those that controlled the organizations and those that chose to be educated within these organizations.

Briefly then, it is important to recognize the different points of view available in the literature on the WEA and offer a summary of the development of adult education in Canada. The WEA's own sources are available but they are extreme in promoting their positive accomplishments. Radforth and Sangster (1987) offer perhaps the most neutral view of the WEA, along with O'Donnell (1990). This study attempts to pick up where other academics left off by examining the far reaching and innovative programs that were initiated by the WEA and the effect these programs had on the workers in Toronto, Ontario and Canada at the time. The following chapter provides a more detailed account of the history of the WEA in Canada.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **The History of the Workers' Educational Association: The Archives**

This chapter examines the origins of the WEA from its beginnings in Britain and situates its place in the working class history of Toronto and Ontario. Specifically the focus is on the evolution of the organization, the major events in the WEA's history, its mission statements, and an introduction to the innovative educational programs that have defined the WEA as an organization that educated workers.

#### **The Overview**

The conceptual origins of the Canadian WEA are based on the British model and their philosophy that educating the working class and providing for the self-education of adults was important. In 1903, Albert Mansbridge who was a clerical worker active in the co-operative movement in Britain formed the British Workers' Education Association (Radforth & Sangster, 1987). Mansbridge felt that the working class must be better educated in order for a democratic society to function properly and, moreover, that the creation of a workers' education organization would help workers prepare to take their place in society (Radforth & Sangster, 1982).

From its inception the British WEA was meant to provide "a link between labour and learning" by making higher education available to the working class (Mansbridge, 1944). Brown and McIlroy (1980) note that the historical purpose of the association was to provide for the conditions of self-education for working adults.

In 1913, the idea of the WEA emerged in Ontario, although it is important to note that specific action was not taken until a few years later (Radforth & Sangster, 1987). It was not until four years later, in 1917, that Albert Mansbridge, the same who established the British WEA, encouraged the formation of the WEA in Canada. This organization, from the founder's views, would hopefully provide a liberal education for workers. A liberal education, Mansbridge thought, would improve society by contributing to a new "concordat" between Capital, Labour, and State (Welton, 1987).

As the history of the organization unfolds, the division in these different modes of thought would perhaps lead to the WEA's undoing. The organization's key players were never able to reconcile their political thinking enough to present a solid united front. It has been suggested that after the initial period of the WEA's inception there was a fundamental paradigm shift. Instead of seeing the WEA as a way to further imperialist doctrines, it was seen as a way to link labour and education, which in fact was the goal of all the organization's key proponents (Radforth & Sangster, 1988).

Regardless of the WEA's questionable philosophical beginnings, in the winter of 1917 twenty enthusiastic workers met with Professor W.S. Milner at the University of Toronto to discuss Aristotle's Politics. After this first official meeting the WEA made great progress and trial classes were held in April 1918. In that following spring the WEA was established in Toronto and by the fall there were sixty members registered and eight evening classes had been mounted.

For the next two decades the WEA began to increase in popularity, membership

increased and the educational offerings boomed. The WEA survived several administrative changes and a movement away from the University of Toronto's extension program in order to become an autonomous organization. Central to the WEA's educational offerings were the tutorial class, public debates, summer programs, radio programs and a film library. The educators were dedicated to teaching workers how to think critically, and many of the workers were excited to obtain the education that had been denied to them in their youth considering many of workers joined the labour force early in their teenage years (Radforth & Sangster, 1987). The focus for the WEA's tutors became teaching *how* to think, instead of *what* to think, and this was revolutionary - since it drove workers to look to resist and eliminate injustices.

When Mansbridge helped to form the WEA he believed that a workers' education movement would succeed if the workers themselves controlled the organization and were involved in the educational options available to them. The WEA emerged as an alternative to traditional university extension programs, which relied on more conventional methods of educating such as lectures. The University of Toronto's personnel thought that the WEA would indoctrinate some of its workers with a working class culture and economic way of thinking about the intellectual commercial establishment. They thought that some of the students would become leaders in the labour union movement to the advantage of the establishment (WEA Minutes, September 1931, Ontario Archives, henceforth known as OA). Some of these events are highlighted in this description of the association's history.

## **1917-1919: The Beginning Years**

The first meeting of the WEA of Ontario was called to order by Sir Robert Falconer on April 29, 1918. Falconer felt that the time was opportune for such an organization and a resolution was passed unanimously to form the Workers' Educational Association. After this first initial meeting in which the organization was formed things moved rather quickly. At the first annual meeting several important decisions were made. The first was a resolution stating that the basis of membership for the WEA be made up of Trade Union Locals, Toronto District Labour Council, The University of Toronto, Educational Groups, and General Members. This decree of membership established the foundation of the organization that was meant to educate workers. In May of 1918, the first constitution was presented in order to give structure to the organization and it outlined some of the following:

**Object:** The association is established to provide an opportunity for workers to obtain the benefits of University Education, and assist them to acquire the knowledge which is essential to intelligent and effective citizenship. To that end Political and Economic Science, History, English Literature, and other subjects may be taught.

**Membership:** Two classes of membership. A) General members, who shall be admitted to special lectures and privileges. B) Students who shall form study groups.

**Finance:** Controlled by the Executive Council. 1) University (By annual Grant) 2) Trade Council (by annual Grant) 3) Trade Unions (by local union affiliated to association shall pay 5\$ per member per annum 4) Educational Bodies (same as Trade Unions) 5) General Membership (Shall not pay less than 50 Cents per annum), and 6) Subscriptions may be received from any person in sympathy with the objectives of the association.

**Lecturers:** Appointed by the executive council and paid.

**Education:** Educational work organized on the basis of A) Student membership (Lectures, Discussion lectures, and Essays), and B) General membership (special popular lectures). (WEA Annual Reports, May 1918, OA)



This constitution created the shape from which the WEA was to evolve into a large thriving educational body. Although there were many internal changes to the people who would run the organization, this was the basic structure that the controlling members worked from for the next 30 years.

One of the first goals of the association's founders was to establish a thriving membership. In June of 1918, the WEA's tentative executive sent out a circular to summon a meeting of all local union delegates for the purpose of forming the permanent executive council. As a response to this circular the secretary reported in the minutes that practically no responses had been received from local unions (WEA Minutes, June 1918, OA). As such, the WEA began with a weak foothold in the local unions and in the beginning had difficulty in enticing the unions to endorse this sort of education for their workers.

Another issue that presented an obstacle for the WEA in the beginning was deciding on where to hold its classes. The Toronto Board of Education refused the WEA's request for use of their classrooms using the excuse of an acute shortage of coal during the winter months. Regardless of some of the initial "difficulties" the WEA persevered. The executive council of the WEA forged on and instead of folding in the face of many obstacles they started submitting the names of tutors who might teach the classes at the University of Toronto. By 1918, there were sufficient students enrolled in classes to provide for six study groups on the following subjects: Economics, Canadian History, Psychology and Logic, Political History (early), Teachings of John Ruskin, and Public

Finance and Banking. With the advent of these classes the WEA sent an announcement to all members about the commencement of classes as well as official notification to the local press in order to attract a larger population of students (WEA Minutes, September 1918, OA).

During the first few years there were many discussions about the WEA's welfare and whether it would succeed and thrive as an organization that educated workers. The WEA executive began to discuss how best to promote the welfare of the association and issues of advertising and informing the public of the educational offerings became important. With increasing membership in mind, two lectures for the general membership were offered in Astronomy and Biology. Ultimately, despite the low number of courses and class size, the WEA Executive felt the first session of the association had proven very satisfactory. Eighty men and women had joined the WEA during the 1918-1919 session and sixty members had enrolled in the study groups (WEA Minutes, June 1919, OA).

With membership on the increase the WEA expanded and began to offer greater diversity in their courses. Courses such as, the Constitutions of English Speaking People, the works of John Milton and a variety of other subjects were offered in order to try and meet the educational needs of their burgeoning constituency (See Table 1). The WEA executive felt that the type of subject chosen by students indicated that students were attracted to those study groups that are essential to effective and intelligent citizenship (WEA Minutes, June 1919, OA). In conjunction with the previous table it was noted that

the course on Canadian Political History had the highest enrollment. It was felt that

**Table 1: The WEA of Toronto Courses offered from 1918-1929**

Subject	Times Offered	Years Offered	Subject	Times Offered	Years Offered
Astronomy	1	1	Journalism	9	6
Biology	1	1	Labour Problems	1	1
Civics	4	4	Metallurgy	1	1
Drama	3	3	Politics	3	3
Economics	21	10	Psychology	16	10
Eng. Com & Lit	18	10	Public Speaking	10	8
Finance	7	6	Rhetoric	3	2
French	3	2	Science	1	1
History	7	6	Sociology	3	3
Hygiene	1	1	Trade Union Law	1	1

N.B.: No data available for 1920-1921, (WEA Annual Reports, 1930, OA)

“a proper understanding of the growth and development of the political institution of Canada is the surest guarantee of their continued stability and development” (WEA Annual Reports, June 1919, OA). The year-end budget for 1918-19 was \$1,342.35.

## **The 1920s**

The 1920s were the formative years for the WEA. For this reason this section will be split into the following sections: membership, courses, educational innovations, and political issues in order to explore the organization at a deeper level.

### **Membership**

One of the distinguishing factors of the 1920s, for the WEA, was the development of the association in terms of the organization’s membership. One of the objectives of the original constitution of the WEA was that the organization’s intended membership was to be made up of local trade unionists. Interestingly, the WEA officials noted that there

were very few members from Trade Union ranks at the beginning of the 1920s. In June 1923, the executive committee resolved to offer incentives to help entice trade unions to join the WEA. If a Trade Union chose to affiliate with the WEA and paid membership dues, the Trade Union would then be able to send a number of students to the WEA classes. With incentives such as these, and encouragement from those union members who were already involved with the organization, it becomes clear that as the decade progressed there was in fact a sharp increase in the number of members with union affiliations. By the end of 1929 there were almost 100 union members of the WEA.

In the early to middle 1920s, we begin to see other major cities in Canada join the ranks of the Toronto WEA. Windsor, Hamilton and Ottawa all started local chapters of the WEA. In fact, there were so many students that the classes were filling up and they had to start splitting classes offering several sections of the same course. By January 1924, there was an even greater variety of courses being offered all around Ontario, such as:

Ottawa - English Literature, History, Economics  
Hamilton - Economics, Public Speaking, Civics, English Literature, Psychology (beginners), Psychology (advanced).  
Brantford - English Literature  
Galt - English Literature  
Windsor - Economics  
Kitchener - Economics  
Toronto - Journalism, Social Evolution, Economics (beginners)  
University of Toronto - Economics (advanced), Psychology (beginners), Psychology (advanced), Public Speaking, Finance, English Literature, Rhetoric.  
Scarborough Bluffs - Economics.  
Satellites around Toronto- Psychology, English Literature, Economics, Hygiene.  
(WEA Minutes, January 1924, OA)

By 1925-26, there were over 800 members in the Toronto and Hamilton chapters of the WEA. With the increase in members there was also an increase in political maneuvering. In 1927, the organization began to feel the first hint of dissent from the political bodies surrounding the WEA. One of the first attacks came upon the organization's membership. The WEA was attacked, as was described by WEA executive in the minutes of their annual meetings (1942), by the University of Toronto's administration. Particularly the executive singled out William Dunlop, the University of Toronto's head of extension programs, who proposed a plan to limit membership from trade unionists and those with union occupations. This was an interesting development considering it was the WEA mandate to provide education for workers, and especially targeting those workers who belonged to trade unions and councils.

In 1927, there were 435 members of the Toronto chapter and at this time only 42 were trade unionists. The type of occupations of the WEA members varied from: bookkeepers, stenographers, postal workers, clerks, carpenters plumbers, salesmen, clothing makers, operators, tailors, chemists, silversmiths, electrical workers, accountants machinists, molders, industrial workers, to librarians and married women (Minutes, April 1923, OA). Limiting the membership of those with trade union affiliation would have severely hampered the objectives of the WEA that were specifically targeting these workers.

Another area of the membership that demonstrated a significant increase at this time was female membership which boomed in the middle 1920s. The percentage of

women in the Toronto chapter was between 25-50% and Hamilton was even higher at 75%. To summarize the statistics of the organization it is important to note that there were several important membership issues that arose in the 1920s: the large increase in membership numbers, the affiliation of trade unions and the large number of trade unionists involved in the organization, and the increase in the number of women who were actively taking courses.

### **Courses**

In the 1920s, with the increase in membership, the organization underwent some transformations in the types of courses that they offered. By 1921, the courses continued to expand and the topics diversified: Trade Union Law, Growth of the British Empire, International Finance, Political Philosophy, Marxian Economics, Logic and Psychology, English and Rhetoric, Biology, and British History (WEA Minutes, April 1923, OA). By 1925, the courses offered by the WEA showed even greater diversification into areas such as, Finance, Journalism, Modern Drama, and Social Psychology. As the WEA grew, so did the diversity of courses that were offered. A woman's study group was organized in 1921 in order to meet the needs of the burgeoning number of women who were becoming involved with the WEA (WEA Minutes, September 1921, OA).

By April 1927, William Dunlop of the University of Toronto, opened discussions concerning the composition of the association's courses. He felt that those for whom the classes were created were not attending many of the WEA classes, and Dunlop suggested a change to class formats similar to those offered at the University of Toronto. This

caused great fear for the WEA executive, and they felt that if classes were decentralized, that membership would start to fall off. Some of the statistics from the Ontario Archives suggest that even with the wide variety of classes available many of the classes had poor attendance. There were students registered in all of the classes but attendance was problematic.

Attendance by working people with trade union affiliations increased significantly by 1928-1929 school year. There were 212 members of the WEA of which 206 (146 men and 66 women) were working. Classes were larger than the previous year and of the 212 members attending classes only 19 members discontinued classes right after the first few nights, and 40 did not return after the Christmas holidays (See Table 2). Attendance was still an issue for the independent educational organization. A large number of students would start taking classes but few actually attended for the full year.

**Table 2: Enrollment in WEA Courses Versus Attendance First and Second Terms**

Courses	Enrollment	Attendance %	
		First Term	Second Term
Labour Problems	22	57	52
Composition	51	74	50
Metallurgy	23	86	43
Chemistry	27	88	44
Psychology	66	64	49
Economics	34	78	60
Public Speaking	53	72	41
Current Events	34	87	64
Literature	26	82	76

(WEA Annual Reports, 1930, OA)

## **Educational Innovations**

The 1920s saw the beginnings of several of the WEA's educational innovations. The first innovation was a move towards mass media. In May 1922, the Executive began talking about giving one of their lectures on the radio. With issues of advertising and encouraging workers to become members still very prominent, the WEA looked for ways to increase membership. They even distributed circulars at the Canadian National Exhibition, and the WEA started to advertise in papers like the Telegram and the Star. The Executive was always concerned with bringing the work of the WEA to the notice of workers and radio offered a venue that could reach a large number of people. The WEA executive began to examine the feasibility of the radio as a method of both teaching workers and creating an awareness among the population who were possible members of the association.

Another important innovation was the expansion of the WEA courses to different satellite locations so that more members could attend classes. The WEA began to offer classes at different satellite locations, which in effect was bringing education to the people. By March 1923, the push began to make the WEA a more Province wide organization and they amended their constitution to state that the classes should be made up predominantly of working class men and women.

With so many courses in full swing, the WEA began to look for alternative ways to educate workers. They began to talk about summer courses that would be retreats out of the city, or as they were often known as *Outdoor Rambles*. These retreats offered an



alternative from regular classroom based courses and offered an opportunity for more intensive learning situations without the distractions of every day life.

Another important innovation was the introduction of an in-house journal. By 1927, the Executive Committee resolved that the journalism class would create a journal that would be the link between labour and learning. When asked to subscribe to the venture, the general members of the WEA did not respond. The journalism students decided to run the paper on their own. Thus, in the 1920s several significant educational innovations were conceived as the WEA saw the rise of programs such as radio lectures, satellite learning locations, *Outdoor Ramblings*, and the in-house journal *The Link*.

### **Political Issues**

One of the significant political issues that occurred in the 1920s was that two of the original founders W.S. Milner and A. Glazebrook left the WEA. This was the beginning of an era in which the executive changed many times, making decisions difficult with many opposing factions competing for power. Issues of funding became prominent and discussions began about approaching the Ontario government for grants. In 1922, the minutes reflect that there were three important issues: 1) the form and method of advertising that should be adopted, 2) the advisability of commencing a course of popular educational lectures, and 3) outlining a scheme for enlisting the interest of the workers and locals in the education provided by the WEA (WEA Annual Reports, April 1922, OA). Mansbridge expressed the opinion that the WEA movement in Canada had been much too slow and that he thought the time was ripe when Toronto should start the

movement for an all Canadian organization.

By April 1923, the Executive submitted a new plan for the organization, with this plan came a new constitution for a provincial organization. This provincial body would have representatives from all WEA chapters across the province and would hopefully lead to the WEA expanding all across Canada. The WEA was trying to create a strong foothold in Canadian educational organizations and hopefully encourage labour groups from across the country to participate. A provincial body was one way to legitimize what they wanted to do.

Stability would never really be easy to achieve for the WEA and by 1927 Dunlop felt that the organization “urgently” needed changing. His belief was that education was changing and his idea was to have a WEA class that was a round table class where students were included in the discussions and not just listening to lectures. Membership was still an important issue and Dunlop suggested personal solicitation to increase the number of member in the WEA. At this time there were only 77 students enrolled in classes, and he also pointed out that organized labour in Ontario did not take the type of interest in education that the organization desired. One of the specific purposes of the WEA was to bring closer relations between universities and trade unions. At the end of the 1920s the WEA had not managed to really succeed at meeting that goal.

### **The 1930s**

In the 1930s, the WEA expanded across Canada, and Drummond Wren joined the WEA. Wren would be one of the most influential members of the association during its

most successful decade. Several important changes occurred in the early 1930s. For one, the leadership of the WEA was strengthened with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. Secondly, in 1937, there was a change in the way the WEA advertised and informed the population of their courses. The WEA began to use the Toronto based CBC radio station to teach workers, and its radio program, *Labour Forum*, become one of the associations greatest educational innovations. This move towards radio was a marked change in the way the association worked. They were able to reach an increasing number of workers.

Along with educational changes came significant political turmoil and at this time Dunlop, the head of the University of Toronto's extension programs and WEA liaison, slashed the WEA's grant from the University of Toronto by 75%. With the cut in budget, as well as many philosophical differences, the relationship with the University of Toronto continued to be strained, although they were still attempting working together.

The 1930s saw an increase and greater diversity in the types of trade union membership. The push to entice membership from these union bodies began to succeed. Some of the Trade Unions affiliated with the WEA were: typographical, plumbers and steam fitters, carpenters, machinists, iron molders, electrical workers, stonemasons, marble setters, glass workers, railway car men, photo-engravers, sheet metal, printing and pressmen. This influx of membership from the Trade Unions was significant because in the previous years the majority of workers taking courses came from the stenographic and clerking professions. This group, although workers, was not the intended membership of

the organization. The WEA was instead looking to reach the heart of the unionized worker's organizations that consisted of traditional unionized professions such as electricians, carpenters and railway workers.

By the middle 1930s, the face of the organization began to change with the introduction of more technical courses geared towards workers in the trade unions. With the increase of these technical courses there was also a great increase in trade union membership. It is interesting to note that at the same time that trade union membership was increasing, the membership growth of those from other occupations did not increase, and in fact, there were significant decreases in membership from outside the trade union ranks. With the change and increase in membership the WEA found it necessary to again

**Table 3: The WEA of Toronto Courses offered from 1929-1939**

Subject	Times Offered	Years Offered	Subject	Times Offered	Years Offered
Art	5	5	Math	2	2
Chemistry	1	1	Metallurgy	2	2
Co-operation	1	1	Music	2	2
Crafts	3	3	Philosophy	5	5
Current Events	11	7	Physiology	2	2
Economics I	12	8	Political Science	5	5
Economics II	6	5	Psychology I	12	8
Economics III	5	5	Psychology II	7	7
Eng. Comp & Grammar	24	10	Psychology III	3	3
Eurythmics	1	1	Public Speaking I	12	10
Finance	1	1	Public Speaking II	5	5
History	6	5	Science	7	7
Household Economics	1	1	Sociology	4	4
Labour Problems	4	4	Trade Unionism	2	2

(WEA Annual Reports, 1940, OA)

broaden the types of courses that were being offered (See Table 3). Courses that were thought to be more relevant to the workers in the unions were added to the curriculum, as such the WEA tried to add more technical courses to their curriculum. Notably courses such as Labour Problems, English Composition, Industrial Psychology, Metallurgy, and Economic Geography were added to the regular already existing courses.

With the influence of the Trade Union driven courses, one important ramification was that there was a marked increase in men and a decrease in the number of women who were taking courses. It was felt that now the WEA had established a “REAL” workers organization. The lack of members from other fields was blamed on a lack of connection to that field. It was noted in the minutes (1929) that the executive did suggest steps to encourage workers from outside trade unions to participate.

One of the notable results of the large selection of courses available to students was the increase in the number of students who were taking WEA courses for the first time. Table 4 indicates the percentage of first year students as compared to those in their second and third years of taking courses. One of the most interesting indicators of this table is the extremely large number of students taking what might be considered the core courses of Composition, Economics, Psychology, and Public Speaking. These courses proved to be the most popular for students. The WEA seemed to succeed in their goal of providing general liberal arts education for workers. As the WEA began to offer more courses and members of trade unions who were taking courses increased, the courses became more technical. Even with this increase in technical offerings those courses that

could be considered to offer a liberal education

**Table 4: Enrollment in Second and Third Year Courses, 1929-39**

Subject	Enrollment Combined	Percentage %
Composition	634	
1 <sup>st</sup> year	604	95.3
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	31	4.9
Economics	1175	
1 <sup>st</sup> year	722	61.4
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	289	24.6
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	164	14.0
Psychology	1622	
1 <sup>st</sup> year	1126	69.4
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	398	24.5
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	98	6.0
Public Speaking	847	
1 <sup>st</sup> year	645	76.2
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	202	23.8

(WEA Annual Reports, 1940, OA)

still stayed increasingly popular. This is demonstrated in Table 4, which indicates the large number of students enrolled in the Composition, Economics and Psychology courses.

By 1930-31, the WEA executive felt that the transition years had passed. There was a marked increase in the number of workers from other industries largely due to the concerted effort of the organization to pull in this population. There were a large number of printers and pressmen, electrical workers, carpenters, machinists, retail, telephone employees, and clerks, workers who were not typically associated with hard core trade union affiliation. New courses, such as, Appreciation of Music, Science of the Modern World were created in order to provide a broader education for workers. One of the

important educational innovations at this time was the formation of a summer camp in Muskoka, a players club, and it was even suggested that they form an orchestra or choir. By the middle 1930s, the WEA began to look a little like a social club.

The WEA was an organization that was constantly evolving and the constitution of the organization was constantly changing. In the 1930s, there was again another proposed constitution. This constitution focused on promoting a cultural education and the objective and classes were proposed as follows:

**The objective:** to co-ordinate the district workers' educational association in Ontario formed for the purpose of promoting cultural education among working men and women.

**Approved classes:** In order to constitute a WEA class, the following condition shall remain requisite; that the class shall consist of working men and women exclusively. The word "worker" shall be deemed to include all trade union members and their wives and all men and women engaged in occupations similar to those followed by trade unionists.  
(WEA Minutes, July 1932, OA)

One of the striking omissions from this description of the organization's objective in comparison to the first proposed constitution is the lack of reference to the benefits of university education. This change is symbolic of the WEA's strained relationship with the University of Toronto. This troubled relationship is well documented in the minutes of the organization. The University's removal of funding, and the WEA's refusal to bend to political desires of the University were well publicized. Indicative of the difficulties between them, the two organizations would eventually fracture their relationship. The other notable change in the previous constitution was the militancy towards who could attend the classes. Only workers and their wives could attend classes and they had very

specific definitions of what constituted a worker.

The WEA was a constantly evolving body. Only two years after their last change in constitution the WEA was incorporated in 1932 (See Appendix B for objectives for incorporation). The declaration on policy was as follows:

The established policy of the WEA is the preservation and extension of the democratic structure of our society to the end that it may continue to work for and provide educational and cultural avenues through which the working class may be helped to gain greater happiness, security, and dignity. The WEA is absolutely non-partisan in any organizational differences that may exist in the labour movement. This is fundamentally necessary if it is to carry on its task. The WEA does, however, seek to find a common denominator in all problems affecting the workers and to promote education among the working class.  
(WEA Minutes, September 1931, OA)

This statement defines the WEA as a transformative organization. The goal was to seek to find the common denominator in the problems that affect workers. This statement is in many ways indicative of the organization's philosophical beliefs in the 1930s, when they were at the peak of popularity and influence. The association's goals, that education would help workers to gain happiness, security, and dignity, were altruistic and perhaps ahead of their time. These beliefs were echoed in speeches to the members at the annual meetings (see Appendix C for William Dunlop's address to the WEA).

### **The 1940s**

By the 1940s, there were 24 associations across Ontario, with Toronto established as the strong center. There was increased involvement in both radio and film and a print bulletin called *Labour News* was established. The CBC radio program *Labour Forum* was able to expand, and there was even a slight increase in governmental support in the early



1940s. However, by 1942 the WEA was cut out of the University of Toronto's budget. This meant that they lost most of their governmental support; any funding that was given to them from the government was given and administered through the University of Toronto's Extension program. George Sangster, a key WEA figure in the 1940s, fought against governmental and university control citing that under the original aims of the WEA control by government or university officials was unacceptable to the labour oriented portion of the executive. In fact, it appeared that they would rather have the organization disbanded than go against the belief that this organization **had** to be under the control of the workers only.

From 1947-1949, funding problems only increased. The situation was not helped by the fact that the country was at war and there were increasing fears about communism. The WEA's political leanings began to be questioned, and the "red scare" affected the WEA in many different ways. Many in the organization's executive were accused of being communists despite the WEA's published constitutions that described the organization as politically non-partisan. It is important to note that many members of the executive could be traced to participation in groups with very clear socialist leanings.

One incident that did not help the WEA's claims was the raid on the Montreal chapter of the WEA by police. Unfortunately for the Ontario WEA, the Montreal group was found to have communist literature in their offices, and this only intensified the belief that the WEA was a communist organization. The WEA's Ontario executives were quick to separate themselves from the Quebec chapter and continued to claim non-

political leanings, although the implications of communism never really left the association.

The 1940s, was a time of great instability and challenges for the WEA. Problems surfaced regarding the WEA periodical *Labour News* related to inaccuracies and plagiarism, accusations that were unfortunately found to be true. By 1942, the provincial grant administered through the University of Toronto was totally removed and then restored due to public outcry. Regardless of the internal and external political turmoil, the WEA continued to forge ahead in their attempts to educate workers. The education programs focused again on branching out and still attempted to offer mass education projects such as, motion pictures, film strips, *Labour Forum*, discussion groups, and tutorial classes. The summer school, which had begun in 1932, continued and flourished so much that in 1942 the WEA purchased the property in Port Hope.

**Table 5: The WEA of Toronto Courses offered from 1939-1949**

Subject	Times Offered	Years Offered	Subject	Times Offered	Years Offered
Camera Club	1	1	Philosophy	3	3
Current Events	4	4	Photography	1	1
Dance	7	6	Political Science	7	6
Economics	6	5	Psychology I	8	7
Eng. Comp & Grammar	11	8	Psychology II	1	1
Gymnasium	1	1	Public Speaking	10	8
History	5	5	Russian Language	1	1
Interior Decorating	1	1	Science	3	3
Journalism	1	1	Sociology	6	6
Labour Law Problems	9	7	Theatre	1	1
Music	5	5	Trade Unionism	1	1

(WEA Annual Reports, 1950, OA)

The courses offered by the WEA also continued to flourish. Table 5, indicates the longevity of many of the courses that were offered. Particularly notable are the English Composition and Grammar course, the Public Speaking course, and the Labour Problems course. Many of these courses were held yearly with more than one section offered for students to attend. In its strongest days, the WEA was truly an educational opportunity for those who participated in its classes.

### **The 1950s and the Decline of the WEA**

The 1950s saw the beginning of the end for the organization as a force in workers' education in Canada. Again, the internal politics caused dissension amongst the organization's key players, with one group opening discussions about creating closer union ties. There was much anger associated with this idea, as the WEA had been particularly adamant about trying to keep their political leanings neutral. In 1951, Drummond Wren resigned after accusations of communism that could not be shaken. In the 1950s, the Canadian political scene saw a rise in union affiliation and a decline in interest and support of the WEA, and as Radforth and Sangster (1989) point out, the WEA's greatest problem is that it failed to become the educational arm of the labour movement.

The WEA existed as a strong force in Canada for almost 40 years and offered a variety of courses and other educational programs for workers. With the rise and demoralization of Universities and other educational institutions, and insinuations of communism, the WEA was unfortunately no longer able to offer the variety of courses or

draw the number of students it had in its prime years. By the early 1950s, the WEA was, as Radforth and Sangster (1987) describe it, a mere shadow of its former self. The lack of students and the failure to become the educational arm of labour lead to its ultimate demise. Despite the failing of the WEA, many of those who have studied the organization have noted that the WEA experienced a time of great influence on the Ontario labour scene and the resonance of their educational practices was felt for years after (Radforth & Sangster, 1982).

### **The WEA's Place in Adult Education History**

The WEA in Canada holds an interesting place in Canadian history books. Generally, it is included in the section in the text that discusses labour and workers' education, although not much is really said about the organization itself. As an organization that taught adults, the WEA was truly influential, particularly in Toronto and the surrounding areas. There are several things that are clearly known about the WEA. It was a major source of knowledge for union activists, and they offered a wide range of inexpensive non-credit classes for workers that were taught by University professors. The large increase in students taking WEA courses indicated an interest and need for these types of courses for the Toronto working class culture, and finally the increase in diverse educational programs suggest an exciting and innovative curriculum. The popularity of these programs suggests that the organization had a particular influence on the workers who were involved in the educational programs. However, important questions remain on whether the WEA caused what could be called a social change.

The importance of the WEA for the history of adult education is that the organization was one of the first of its kind in a university milieu which viewed the education of adults as something important and as something that could cause change in people. The WEA was committed to social and collective action, tempered by academic caution, and the desire to maintain broad support from the government and the public. The following chapters emphasize that the WEA's focus was on teaching workers how to think, instead of what to think. Perhaps this made them revolutionary and even drove workers to look to eliminate injustices. The next chapter examines the issues of social change in society and begins to suggest that critical pedagogy is in fact the best model from which to examine the WEA in terms of being a changing force in Canada.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Understanding Social Change in Society**

It is important to note that social change is a rather ubiquitous term. It is thrown around in scholarly works without much thought as to what it perhaps means. This study views the definition of social change as a social difference in behaviour before and after a transition (Moore, 1963). The purpose of this chapter is to first offer a brief literature review of the different theories of social change starting with several of the different sociological models of change. Secondly, I suggest a way to view social change and adult education in our society. Thirdly, I look at critical theories and specifically suggest critical pedagogy as a model from which to begin to examine the WEA's educational programs.

#### **Literature Review: Theories of Social Change**

There are certain basic sociological theories that we use to examine social change. Because the literature so clearly emphasizes the origins of various sociological theories, I briefly discuss the theories set forth by some sociologists. These theories fall into three categories that describe how social change occurs: 1) society as an organism, 2) society as equilibrium maintenance and, 3) society as a dialectical or conflict model. The importance of these three models is that not only do they show the ideological differences in thought about social change, but they also show the historical progression of the different theories of change.

August Comte was the first scholar to use the term sociology. Comte, it can be said, outlined some of the first functional theories of social change (Ritzer, 1983). He

posited that it is possible to understand nature and society through scientific study, and as a connection to this thought, he theorized several different stages of society that were experienced before reaching this scientific state (Moore, 1963). The first stage, the theological stage, emphasizes the religious side of the physical world, and the second stage, the metaphysical stage, is characterized by the belief in abstract forces. The final stage, the positivistic stage, is the ideal stage and is characterized by the belief in science. From Comte's view intellectual disorder was the cause of social disorder (Ritzer, 1983). This disorder occurred when earlier ideologies (like the theological and metaphysical states) continued to exist in a positivistic or scientific age (Ritzer, 1983). Social change from this view occurs when positivism becomes the reigning ideology, and this for Comte was an evolutionary process.

Comte's work was very influential on many of the sociologists that followed him. His work was the basis for many of the sociological theories about how society works and changes. The following four models best exemplify the different models of thought that developed from the work of Comte.

### **Society as an Organism**

The first model, that of society as an organism, begins with Emile Durkheim's (1938) work. Durkheim is often considered the father of modern sociological theory and particularly the functionalist model of society. For Durkheim, "the facts of social morphology are of the same nature as physiological phenomena" (p. 112). From this view, society consists of interrelated parts all working together like an organism. Galt and Smith (1999) highlight Durkheim's notion that the goal of society is to function like

an organism with all of its functions working harmoniously together. Galt and Smith further explore Durkheim's (1964) view of society as organism when describing that the purpose of an organismic structure is for all of the organs to function together to ensure the life span of that organism. Therefore, from this view which can be considered a functional view, society is about creating harmony between all of the parts. Change in this case would occur as metaphor similar to that of organismic growth, and would have to be examined in light of biological processes. The organism grows or changes through the interrelations or interactions of all of its parts, and the reaction of these parts is one view of how social change occurs.

Herbert Spencer (1967) also regarded society as more like a biological organism which, as it evolves, becomes more differentiated. Spencer can be considered a Social Darwinist in that he adopted the view that societies' social institutions are like plants and animals in that they adapt to their environment and, as such, only the fittest will survive (Ritzer, 1983). In this view of society, change would occur as the natural evolutionary process where the structures of society would differentiate to meet the needs of the functions of the society and vice versa. This structural-functional approach to society also typifies the organismic model of social change.

### **Society as Maintaining Equilibrium**

Similar to the organismic model, the equilibrium model of social change relies on functionalism or structural functionalism, as it is sometimes known as. Functional theory begins with the works of Durkheim (1964) and Spencer (1967) but is continued in the works of Talcott Parsons (1949, 1971) and Robert Merton (1968). Functionalism in



sociology can be explained as an analysis of the way different parts of society have functions which maintain stability as a whole (Robertson, 1987). That is, each part of society has a function or a role in the whole system. Parsons (1949) views society as trying to maintain a stable state. From the functional perspective, all parts of society fulfill a specific function, and when the state is unstable there is a struggle to regain stability and this is when change occurs. For Parsons it was societies' structures and their relationship to each other that was important. These structures, are mutually supportive and work towards maintaining equilibrium. Change, from this view, would be an orderly process and, as Ritzer (1983) describes it, Parsons adopted a neoevolutionary perspective of social change.

Merton's (1968) model of structural functionalism, in comparison to Parson's, took into account the different values and interests of the subgroups of society. What was functional for one group, from Merton's perspective, may not be valuable for another. As Galt and Smith (1999) describe, social change for Merton would be a concern with the functional requisites for its "persistence and the range of possible variation in terms of functional equivalents for fulfilling those requisites"(p. 45).

Moore (1963) critiques functional theories of social change and proposes some amendments to these theories. He notes that several functional assumption have been severely challenged because they involve the integration of social systems. The basis for the rejection of these theories is that, as Moore describes it, functional theorists assume that everything works out for the best. Moore (1963) points out two problems with this theory: 1) social systems, and particularly large-scale ones such as entire societies, exhibit

discordant elements, and 2) one element may not contribute to the survival of the system – it may even be dysfunctional, and it may destroy the society or it may not have any effect on it. With many of the criticisms of functional theory an alternative model of how society functions emerged based on these shortcomings.

### **Society as a Conflict or Dialectical Model**

If Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer can be considered the fathers of modern structural functionalism, the work of Ralf Dahrendorf (1959, 1968), Randall Collins (1975) and Marx (1964) can be considered the major influences on conflict theories of how society works.

Conflict theory grew out of the disillusionment of the functional model of society. Contrary to the functional view of society as static, or at best moving towards equilibrium, conflict theorists see a society as different spheres contributing to disintegration or change (Ritzer, 1983). Dahrendorf (1959, 1968) proposed that society had two faces, conflict and consensus. From this view conflict and consensus interplay with each other. This would mean there could be no conflict without consensus or, vice versa, consensus without conflict. Change in this case would occur somewhere in between these two faces of society. One of the limitations of this theory of society, Turner (1975) suggests, is that it only takes into account one portion of social life. Turner argues that there is a theory needed for both consensus and dissension.

For Randall Collins (1975), conflict is the central process of life. He states that social structures are inseparable from the people who live within them. People are constrained by the social forces within which they live. As such, Collins' focus was on

social stratification as an institution that affects every part of a person's life. Collins' work, based mostly on Marxian and Weberian ideologies, saw the relationship between status groups as the guiding force for change in society. Collins uses Weber's (1947) concept of social stratification in which he highlights status groups, which are composed of groups of people such as families, friends, religions, or educational affiliations. Class, culture and power influence these status groups, and Collins' point is that there is an implicit struggle that exists between status groups and because of this struggle society is always in conflict. Collins' work can be considered a viable alternative to functional models of society although one of the limitations of Collins' theory is that he does not consider interconnecting groups and social limitations (Blau & Merton, 1981).

The Marxian view of conflict (1964) became the groundwork for many neomarxist theorists who look at the relationship of conflict to society. Marx saw society in terms of revolutions and conflicts, with change at the heart of society. Marx posits that change occurs from class struggle. Neomarxist conflict theories then are an important model to examine when looking at the ways in which society is hypothesized to change because they take into account the effect of social class and even socialization on changes that occur in society. The conflict view of society grew out of the stability views held by the functionalists, and this contrasting view of society depicts struggle and conflict as normal features of society (Wotherspoon, 1998).

### **Another View of Social Change**

It is important to note that the previous models are only a starting point from which to examine social change in society. There are other ways of examining change.

Marris (1975) for example makes the case that all real change involves loss and anxiety and struggle. Interestingly, Marris does note that the failure to recognize this phenomenon is natural and inevitable.

Moore (1963) offers six characteristics of contemporary social change. His first point is that for any given society or culture, rapid change occurs frequently or “constantly”, and highlights that society is not static and we can expect things to develop and change. The second point is that changes are neither temporarily nor spatially isolated. More specifically, changes occur in sequential chains rather than as moments of “temporary” crisis followed by quiet periods of reconstruction. The consequences tend to reverberate through entire regions or virtually the entire world. The third point is that since contemporary change is probably “everywhere”, and its consequences may be significant “everywhere” it has a dual basis. The fourth characteristic is that the proportion of contemporary change that is either planned or issues from the secondary consequences of deliberate innovations is much higher than in former times. The fifth point is that accordingly, the range of material technology and social strategies is expanding rapidly and the net effect is additive or cumulative despite the relatively rapid obsolescence of some producers. Finally, the normal occurrences of change affects a wider range of individual experience and functional aspects of societies in the modern world – not because such societies are in all respects more “integrated” but because virtually no feature of life is exempt from the expectations of normality of change.

Moore points out that persistent patterns of action, even very rapid and complex changes, have sources and consequences that are delimited rather than random, and

therefore may be understood and predicted. He encourages that by examining monthly, weekly, or daily occurrences – we can find patterns, and Moore states that, “The persistence of patterns gives order and constancy to recurrent events” and order is marked by change (p. 5).

From this view there would be two types of change: 1) moment to moment sequences of prescribed actions, and 2) the difference in behaviour before and after the transition (Moore, 1963). In this case change might be looked at in terms of day to day events or even between distinct periods of time. One way to examine both day to day and periodic changes would be to look at written materials to examine transitions, and examining these written materials for how the outlooks/beliefs of an organization or group of people changed. Although, when looking for indicators of change, an important distinction must be made between a) sequence of small actions that comprise the pattern, and b) the system and change within that system (Moore, 1963).

The above are general theories explaining social change. The following section discusses various studies on the relationship between adult education and social change.

### **Adult Education and Social Change**

The connection between adult education and social change has often been examined in light of the philosophical stance that adult education should be promoting social change and, furthermore, that adult education is and should be transformative (Ehrlich, 1993). However, the focus of this study is not on examining the role adult education should play in changing society or social change as the objective of adult education. Instead, this study is investigating social change as something that has

happened inadvertently as a result of adult education. Therefore, the intention is not to question the philosophy of adult education, or to examine if social change was the purpose of the WEA. Instead the purpose is to examine the sociological implications of an adult education program, based on the presupposition that adult education not only responds to changes happening in society but is also an impetus for change.

For instance Jarvis (1985), in *The sociology of adult and continuing education* said that “recently we recognize that the education of adults might be an instrument for social change” (p.2). This is an important concept in this thesis since one of the assumptions being made is that education does in fact create social change. Very few systematic attempts to analyze the education of adults from the perspectives of social theory have been clearly undertaken, and often there is difficulty in deciding precisely what is the phenomenon under consideration. Jarvis (1985) points out that firstly, education is more likely to be affected by social forces than it is to be a force for change, although this does not preclude education from being an agent in structural change and, secondly, that change is the norm in society and status is no more than a heuristic model in the study of society.

Poonwassie (1991) suggests that one ideal action of adult education in Canada is to influence social change. Poonwassie notes, no society is static and change is constant and what he suggests is that the rate of change is increasing. Another role of adult education in Canada has been to assist people in their adjustments to these changes. Changes in society create needs and Poonwassie indicates that one purpose of adult education is to respond adequately and creatively to these needs. A hypothesis that

follows from this statement is that if adult education responds to change can it not also be the precipitator of that change.

Welton (1987) notes, "Resistance to and transformation of societal structures emerges from the adult population, and is premised upon men and women's ability to learn new ways of seeing the work and acting within it"(p. 10). For Welton adult education must always be considered in attempts to understand the larger process of social conflict and change.

Selman (1995) notes that the "The social movement aspect of the field [adult education] refers to all conscious efforts to improve the nature of society by means of adult education and its wider application in the community" (p. 29). The goal of any scientific field is to advance verifiable propositions concerning the relations among variables. The pursuit of the goal requires a reliable description or identification of the variables; often this task involves forming definitions. As such, one driving question of this study is to consider what happens when it is the education of adults that is creating this change. Can an adult education organization be both the precipitator of this change and the responder to change?

It is an examination of critical pedagogy that can perhaps best answer this question. Many of the previous theories of how society grows, evolves and changes are based on this antiquated notion of how society works. My suggestion is that education is perhaps the most central reason for change in a human beings life. It follows that an educational model of change is needed in order to examine what contributions and impact educational organization such as the WEA might have on social change.

## **Critical Pedagogy as a Model to Suggest Social Change**

Critical theories are those that examine sociological influences and recognize that experience and knowledge are interrelated and politically charged. Barakett (1999) explains that knowledge must be used as a practical tool for change; it must be used to transform nature and politics to change social conditions. These concepts address the notion of historical inevitability and of class struggle, as well as mechanisms of domination that take place within the confines of the labour process (McLaren, 1989). Critical theory, and the practical application of this theory, critical pedagogy, provides insights for the study of the relationship between theory and society and how we can begin to look at the WEA as a precipitator of change.

Critical theory enables the educational researcher to see the school not simply as an arena of indoctrination or socialization or a site of instruction, but also as a cultural terrain that promotes student empowerment and self-transformation. It emphasizes the dialectical aspects of society, that is how opposing forces can create change. The understanding of opposing forces which exist in schools permits us to see schools as sites of both domination and liberation, and in addition, question the social functions of knowledge (McLaren, 1989).

Paulo Freire's work (1970, 1985) is considered to be the basis of critical pedagogists' work. He sees education as social action that can either empower or domesticate students. From Freire's viewpoint, critical pedagogy is fundamentally concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge. Power comes from everywhere, it is already there and it is inextricably implicated in the micro-



relations of domination and resistance. Power relations are inscribed in what is called a discourse or a family of concepts (Foucault, 1980). Accordingly, empowerment is the process by which students learn to question selectively and appropriately those aspects of dominant culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and transforming themselves (Freire, 1970).

According to Freire (1970) there is a passivity among people who are oppressed which he refers to as a culture of silence. He argues that battling oppression will lead those who are oppressed towards humanization. Freire developed an educational theory of liberation where teachers, or educators, could address the problems of students' lives and is based on a mutual dialogue between both teacher and student. Through this dialogue, and reflecting together, he suggests that we can act critically to transform society. In fact, if we teach in a way consistent with critical pedagogy, we are transforming and changing as we teach.

Critical pedagogists, such as Freire (1970, 1985) and Giroux and McLaren (1989), argue that this pedagogy empowers students. Empowering education, as Shor (1993) describes it, creates democratic discourses that can promote critical and analytical learning processes. Critical pedagogy, from Freire's conception offers a concrete way to begin to think about transforming society. In this pedagogy students are able to rethink their place in society and how, in fact, they might contribute to transforming it.

Shor (1993) explains that students experience learning as something they do rather than something that is done to them in a classroom echoes the ideology of critical pedagogy. He further states that education is political and schools are a place where

individuals, and society, and in fact even knowledge is constructed (Shor, 1993). Critical pedagogy can help us to explore how knowledge is constructed and how it affects the structure of our lives and our society. This theoretical standpoint is often looked at in terms of children's schooling, but is perhaps more central to the education of adults who hold the majority of power and ability to effect change in our society.

Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) write about the roles of the teacher or educator as transformative intellectuals. From their description, teachers can educate towards freedom, justice and equality. Their work offers a strong basis from which to view educators, not only those in schools but also those in other formal educational groups, as not just clerks, but as agents of change in our society. For Giroux (1983, 1988) critical pedagogy is an attempt to empower students through more than just simply teaching. Teachers, from his view, must provide students with organic connections to their lives. Perhaps, as Barakett (1999) notes, this view is more idealistic than realistic, but it provides the basis from which to view the whole act of education as transformative.

Basing a curriculum on cultural politics consists of linking critical theory and pedagogy to a set of stipulated practices through which teachers can dismantle and critically examine dominant educational and cultural traditions. Freire's (1970) model of social change highlights, "the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality" (p. 27). Selman (1995) observes that in Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, he suggests that there is no neutral education. Either education is a force for change or it reinforces status quo. This is when critical

pedagogy can be used as a model to explain social change.

Critical pedagogy is often explored in terms of the effects it can have within the educational systems and schools. Perhaps one of the bigger opportunities left open in the theory of critical pedagogy is to examine how critical pedagogy, or educational programs that echo its ideology, might work in an adult education association. The theoretical standpoint of critical pedagogy becomes a strong model to examine the effect of educational programs on society.

Critical pedagogy is an appropriate model with which to examine the WEA because it provides a framework from which to view what the educators were trying to accomplish. The courses were in discussion formats with the tutors present to facilitate the discussion. None of the courses had a grading component. The focus was on learning for learning's sake rather than for the attainment of a grade. The educational programs, which will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter, are perhaps the best examples of how the WEA resembles a form of critical pedagogy.

The *Labour News* was both formed and produced by the WEA students. The learning in this case was in the hands of the students, allowing them to bring their own perspectives into the learning environment. The purpose of the serial was to inform other students and the general public about how to empower themselves. *The Link*, was similar to *Labour News* in its attempts to empower and liberate WEA members. It included contributions from the students. *Labour Forum* provided learning opportunities for a large number of students, and it was an inclusive. The *Outdoor Ramblings* program provided an environment that was removed from the regular power constructs associated

with classrooms. It provided opportunities to learn in a situation where the students and teachers could come together as equals.

Critical pedagogists recognize that society is oppressive, exploitative, but holds the potential for social transformation. The WEA recognized the nature of society as being both oppressive and exploitative, and through its educational programs tried to find a way to liberate students using a model of education that is what could be called a critical pedagogy.

### **The WEA and its Place in Social change: Looking for Social Change**

One of the major perceptions of adult education is that it is, and can be, the impetus for social change (Selman, 1995). When considering social change it has been stated that society is not static. There is always constant change. Therefore, an important point to consider is the types of influence that organizations such as the WEA have had in the evolution of present social practices. It is possible to observe the effects that the WEA has had on Canadian society and propose that the WEA has had a significant effect on Canadian educational practices.

The fundamental question is whether the WEA contributed to social change in Canada and what evidence supports this view? To situate the WEA as a vehicle for social change, the approach is to examine the organization's educational practices through the framework of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, and specifically the works of Paulo Freire (1985, 1970), Peter McLaren (1989, 1999) and Ira Shor (1993), provide a model from which to begin looking at education as a transformative process that not only affects people, but also affects societies. By establishing this connection

through an analysis of its educational programs, it is suggested that the WEA in Canada was an influential force in changing Canadian society.

In order to situate the WEA as an organization that created change, events that changed the direction of the organization were examined. One of the problems with this approach was that essentially the definition needed to be operationalized. In many areas of social science the measurement is not advanced, so the refinement of measurement could have consisted of two kinds of efforts: 1) developing mathematical and statistical techniques for determining relationships, or 2) examining, making observations and recording phenomena or events in question. In considering both of these methods several variables were examined. It was decided that the archival data met the qualification of providing enough long and short term written material from which to base a conclusion. One of the guiding questions in the examination of the WEA's educational programs was whether they contributed to the stability or survival of a system.

Change is so much a part of the natural order that it is taken for granted. When looking at Freire's model for how change can and does occur, I would argue that when a pedagogy based on this model is used to teach large numbers of students, social change necessarily occurs. The WEA's educational programs, because of their resemblance to critical pedagogy, provided the conditions for transformative learning and social change in Toronto's working class culture. If we assume a learning orientation, we teach and people change. It is through the establishment of this model that I believe I can suggest why WEA is an example of how and why changes occur as a result of education. Chapter 5 clearly indicates how critical pedagogy is an adequate model to explain social

change when we closely examine the WEA because it demonstrates why and how people change as a result of education. The next step in this investigation is to look at the educational programs introduced in the WEA. In light of the sociological theories of social change and I specifically consider critical pedagogy as an educational model for change. The following chapter addresses this important issue.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Indicators, Efforts and Social Change in the WEA**

How do we know something is changing? This chapter explores some of the indicators and efforts of the WEA in creating change. First the statistics are examined as an indicator that change did occur. This analysis is followed by an examination of the educational initiatives of the organization. An in-depth look at four important educational programs of the WEA, *The Link* and *Labour News*, *Labour Forum*, and *Outdoor Ramblings* will highlight the efforts of the organization to create change. These programs are then examined in terms of critical pedagogy as a template or model for change and explored for what parts of the program represent an ideology consistent with that of a transformative pedagogy. Finally, this chapter notes the indicators and efforts of the WEA as a precipitator of social change.

#### **The Statistics of the Organization**

In attempting to operationalize how change might have occurred it became clear that one valid way to examine how social change could be established would be to examine the statistics of the organization. The assumption is that if the number of participants in the courses showed distinct increases or decreases, this might indicate that something was happening within the organization and outside of it. The statistics of the organization were looked from several different viewpoints. The following highlights several of these approaches.

The first approach was to look at the number of people involved in taking courses

in the organization. The purpose of Table 6 was to explore whether there were any large increases in the membership's participation in educational programs over both a short and long period of time. A significant change in population might signify an increased popularity, or a quantifiable effect on the population of people who are joining the organization and attending classes.

**Table 6: The Number of Members Enrolled in Courses in Toronto, 1917-1942**

School Year	No. of Members Taking Courses in Toronto
1917	8*
1917-18	20
1918-19	60
1924-25	435
1927-28	170
1928-29	212
1929-30	230
1930-31	322
1931-32	540
1932-33	702
1933-34	718
1934-35	761
1935-36	866
1936-37	802
1937-38	847
1938-39	902
1939-40	610
1940-41	506
1941-42	485

\*Unofficially taking courses  
(WEA Annual Reports, 1945, OA)

This table looks specifically at the WEA membership in the Toronto area and consists of those members who were actively taking courses. Significantly, there was a fair increase in the number of members taking courses between the years 1918-19, and 1924-25. It is also important to note that there was a drop in members in the 1924-25 academic year



from 435 members to 170 members. After 1925 the number of members who attended WEA courses again steadily increased until it peaked in the 1930s. At this time there was a larger numbers of members increasing on a yearly basis. These statistics support the conclusion that the WEA was increasingly influential in the 1930s. By the end of 1938, there were 900 members taking courses in Toronto alone. Importantly, these figures do not include those people who were members of the organization who did not take courses. With the advent of World War II in the 1940s, the membership began to drop, decreasing perhaps the influence the WEA experienced in Toronto at the time. The inference from the previous table was that there were two major increases in membership during two distinct periods of time, 1918-25 and 1930-38. Interestingly these dates correspond with many of the major events and initiatives experienced by the organization that were outlined in a previous section.

Again it is important to stress that the WEA did not just exist in Toronto. The influence of this association was particularly felt across Ontario. In Table 7, the number

**Table 7: WEA Membership Taking Courses in Toronto and Canada, 1917-1942**

School Year	No. of Members in Toronto	No. of Members outside of Toronto
1930-31	322	297
1931-32	540	371
1932-33	702	626
1933-34	718	795
1934-35	761	916
1935-36	866	1146
1936-37	802	1392
1937-38	847	1708
1938-39	902	N/A

(WEA Annual Reports, 1945, OA)

of students taking courses in Toronto is compared to the number of students taking

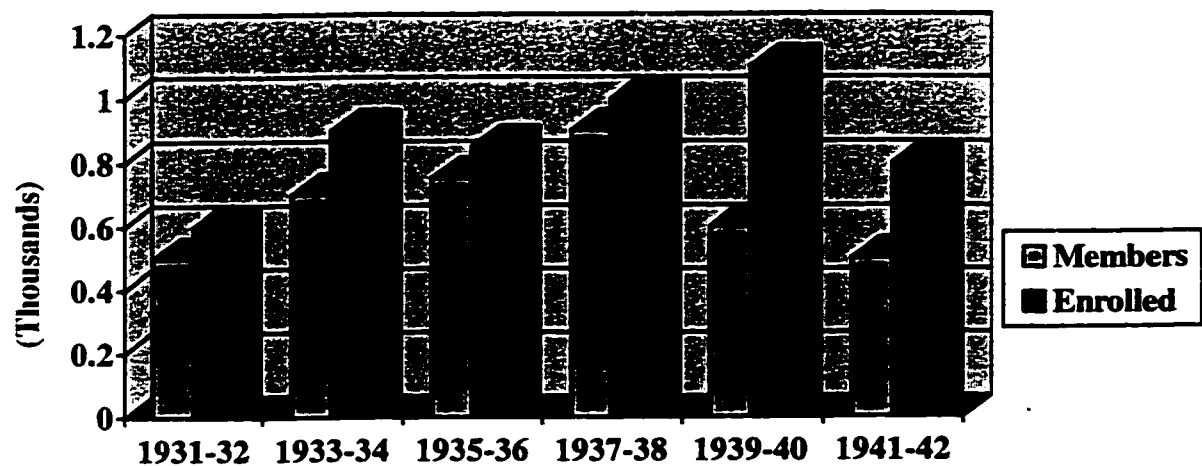
courses in other locations in Canada between the years 1930-39. It is important to note that data for the number of students taking courses outside Toronto were not found for the years prior to 1930, and after 1939. Thus, the comparison is limited to the years 1930-38. The examination of this time period is most significant when considering this was the decade in which the WEA experienced the highest membership of all of its years of existence. Significantly, from this table we can see the large numbers of members taking courses from across Canada. These numbers indicate that the WEA was experiencing some success in attracting membership of workers across Canada. In 1937-38, at one of the WEA's highest points, there were 2555 members taking courses in one single school year. It can be inferred from these numbers that a large number of workers were aware of the WEA and interested in actively taking courses. One of the suggestions of the following section is that it is the effect of those actively taking these courses that was a driving force towards social change in Canada. What the statistics suggest in support of that inference is that there were a fair number of participants taking courses that were experiencing a transformative pedagogy.

As stated previously, not "all" members of the WEA were actively taking courses. One of the significant effects of the WEA was that, in fact, a large number of members were actively involved in taking the courses. Crucially, there were more members taking courses than those that were not. O'Donnell (1990), compared the Toronto WEA's membership who were not taking courses to those who were members but not taking courses. He found that there were a significantly higher percentage of WEA members who were taking courses than not (See Figure 1). This would seem to suggest that the

majority of members were actively involved with the educational initiatives of the organization. One of the indications of this thesis is that education, especially transformative education creates social change, and considering the large number of WEA members taking these courses the suggestion becomes that the large number of members

taking courses is an indicator that social change did occur.

**Figure 1: Toronto WEA Membership compared to Student Enrollment**



O'Donnell (1990)

The final statistical area to be explored is the number of trade unionists enrolled in the courses as compared to other workers'. The mission statement of the association was to bring educational opportunities to workers. As the association evolved, the definition of workers changed, and as described in a previous chapter, the organization's executive intended to entice workers from trade unions to participate in the educational offerings. With increased advertising and solicitation of trade union workers there was a marked increase in those members enrolled during the early 1930s, who were members of trade

unions (See Table 8).

**Table 8: Trade Unionist Enrollment Versus Other Workers', 1924-1930**

Session	Registered	Trade Union	Other	Clerks	Book/ Stenographer	Other	Men	Women
1924-25	435	42	-	-	-	-	-	-
1927-28	170	26	67	27	25	25	84	86
1928-29*	212	56	94	26	24	12	146	66
1929-30	230	97	84	30	13	6	178	52
1930-31	322	132	136	35	18	5	243	122
1931-32	540	225	264	25	24	2	418	122

- information not available

\*19 discontinued classes after first few nights and 40 after Christmas Holidays  
(WEA Annual Reports, 1930, OA)

The number of trade unionists who were enrolled in courses continued to increase for much of the 1930s. One of the indications of these numbers is that not only was there a quick yearly increase in the number of members, but there was a significant increase in the number of trade union members enrolled in courses. The indication is that both the trade union workers and their employers felt the courses would be useful. This would suggest that the educational programs were at least partly effective in their goals of having some impact on people in working class jobs in Toronto at the time. This table also reflects the increase in the number of women who were enrolled in courses.

In looking at the statistics of the WEA there is an indication that some significant processes were happening. The educational programs, on the other hand, point to the efforts by the WEA to create change. It is these programs that clearly document how social change might have occurred as a result of the educational opportunities offered by the WEA.

## **The Educational Programs of the WEA**

The WEA had a number of diverse educational opportunities. They offered a variety of courses that they believed would help workers become an educated and informed citizenry. As noted previously, the courses spanned a diverse range of topics reaching from Psychology, Politics, and Labour Issues, to Music, Creative Writing, and Hygiene. At a time when education was not easily available for working class people, the WEA offered several significant programs aimed at reaching both the workers in the Toronto area as well as workers from across Canada.

It is perhaps the following educational innovations that had the largest impact on the students: The serials; *The Link* and *Labour News*, created by the WEA and the students for the organizations' members and the community at large; *Labour Forum* was a radio program intended to teach students at a distance and inform the general public. The *Outdoor Rambles* program, which took students to a summer school setting, offered both recreation and learning opportunities. In order to examine the educational practices of the WEA more fully, the three previously described educational programs will be examined because of their closeness to the philosophy of critical pedagogy.

### **The Link and Labour News**

The WEA's serial, *The Link*, emphasized the wide reaching effects this organization had on Toronto workers. *The Link* printed articles that were intended to teach workers how to fight for their rights and become active in their communities. A wide variety of articles were offered to promote resistance and transformation for workers on topics such as how to strike legally and the social purpose of education (National

Library of Canada, henceforth NLC, *The Link*, 1936).

*The Link*, which existed in the 30's and 40's, was the House organ of the WEA, and was used as a forum to draw attention to workers' opportunities and issues in the labour movement. Articles on why workers' education was important and why education for its own sake was important were commonly found on the first page of the periodical. Unlike *Labour News*, which examined general issues relevant to the labour force, *The Link* was really the WEA's mouthpiece. News about the organization's events and what courses were available, and what community connections were being made were all reported in this periodical (The Link 1936, NLC). *The Link* provided a way to connect all the various chapters of the WEA which were spread across Ontario and rest of Canada.

Many of the articles stressed the benefits of the WEA for workers, and it was clearly cited how the WEA could bring workers together. Norman Knight of *The Link* wrote in the 1938 issue, "They all agree [trade unions] on the urgent need for workers to educate themselves, not only to fight intelligently in their own interests, but to take a larger share in the life of the nation as a whole" (p. 1). Statements such as these are consistent with many of the issues of *The Link* that are still available from the NLC, although it is important to note that this is not a complete survey as a limited number of the WEA's serial survived to be archived in the NLC.

The purpose of the WEA student publication *Labour News* was to provide labour with interpretations of current restrictive labour legislation, to anticipate for labour legislation other matters that might be of vital importance to them, and to generally convey factual information on economic and labour problems. *Labour News* carried a

financial section dealing with corporation financial statements, government taxation, wage rates, standards of living, and instructions on the understandings of statistics (OA, Minutes, 1923). Like *The Link*, *Labour News* served as a promotional vehicle for the WEA and its educational cause while providing important information for workers on a variety of labour related subjects (see Appendix D for examples of article titles).

During its life span, 1927 to the middle 1950s, *Labour News* was issued regularly every two weeks. It was intended as a research information service for individuals within the association as well as specifically providing a service for the WEA's affiliated organizations. The purpose of this mimeographed publication was to provide labour with interpretations of current restrictive labour legislation; to predict for labour, legislation of other matters that might be of vital importance to them, and to generally convey factual information on economic and labour problems (WEA Minutes, November 1942, OA).

The minutes of the WEA reflect that this service was met with a most encouraging response, and even suggest that the serial had proven valuable to numerous organizations. They do indicate however, that response in subscriptions had not been as encouraging. Several organizations, with the permission of the WEA, reprinted articles contained in *Labour News*, or specific information from *Labour News*. The distribution of the periodical became one of the major tasks of the association, and WEA felt that there was no other service like this one in the country. The organization felt that *Labour News* provided possibilities of extension and of becoming much more of a necessity to labour, and particularly to labour officials and those engaged in labour negotiations (WEA Minutes, November 1942, OA).

There was one controversial episode in the history of *Labour News*. The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) came up with charges regarding inaccuracies in the WEA periodical which were found to be justified. The October 4th 1947 issue was almost an exact reproduction of an article published in the Labour Progressive Party paper, *The Tribune*, three days previously. Harold Beveridge, who came on staff as editor in 1947, was dismissed along with staff member Edward Joseph (WEA Minutes, 1950, OA).

Later in 1948 Charles Millard of the OFL made further charges of incompetence and irregular conduct against the association. The main charge of the Labour Progressive Party was that the members of the WEA were communist collaborators and that this political leaning was expressed in their periodical. These charges were centered on the conduct of Drummond Wren and Harold Beveridge. During this time the WEA was under investigation by the Department of Education, a committee of investigation representing the United Automobile, Agricultural Implements, and Aircraft workers of America in Canada, and by the association's own committee, composed of George Sangster, William Dunn, Syd Robinson, and James Rogers. All but the last named committee cleared the WEA of all charges (WEA Minutes, 1950, OA).

Regardless of this smudge on the periodical's history, *Labour News* and several other of the WEA's written educational material, offered many informative and educational articles intended to educate workers on how to resist poor working conditions and legal issues that involved striking workers. Some of the headlines included:

In March 1941

Housing Shortages in many towns and cities

Trade unions should investigate the housing situation in their areas and press authorities for proper remedy for the shortage.



In April, 1941

Wage increases without price increases

In May 1941

Commissions find unions necessary

In 1941

Prices, Profits, and Monopoly in Bread

Wages and Surplus value in Canadian manufacturing 1917-1945

Payment for time spent in the handling of grievances

Cost of housing beyond reach of average income group

(Labour News, 1942, OA, Series F)

Both *The Link* and *Labour News* offered workers both in the organization and the general public across Toronto and Canada with informative educational materials intended to inform, educate and assist workers to become a more educated citizenry.

### **Labour Forum**

The introduction of a highly successful radio program, *Labour Forum*, presented on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) exemplified specific attempts by the WEA to reach workers in the Toronto community as well as surrounding areas. In 1936 the WEA began conducting radio programs, and in 1937 they applied for a CBC grant for a series. The application for the program was granted but renewed each year only after some hard bargaining. In the fall of 1942 the CBC decided there was need for a *Labour Forum* and agreed to finance it if the association would provide programs, personnel, and research for a network show. Early in the series the WEA felt that an attempt was being made to oust them. Eventually the WEA felt that the material was distorted to the point that they claimed that they were afraid to have their name associated with it and withdrew to negotiate a new operational basis (WEA Annual Report, 1942, OA).

Although no official recordings have survived, related documents indicate that the

nine programs produced featured WEA academics predominantly from the University of Toronto and that they paralleled the University of Toronto's classes (Klee, 1995). The recordings addressed such things as inflation, labour history and labour legislation, and were presented with the intention of being of use and interest to the working class (Klee, 1995). It was felt that the radio programs promoted the unity of labour across Canada and would be able to reach every industrial center across the Dominion (WEA, Annual Report, 1942, OA).

On Dec 1 1934, at the directors meeting of the WEA of Ontario, William Dunlop described the beginnings of *Labour Forum* and the accompanying bulletin service as follows:

This bulletin service is going to fill a gap in the whole organization. Soon we will be able to go to the Radio Commission and say we have these people organized in groups and we want so much time on the radio and although each time we meet we may have to prune the little classes, still our membership will greatly increase in the other centers. If we can have a radio service and a bulletin service, we will have an immense organization without too much cost. The beginnings of the bulletin and radio service will develop local initiative which will in turn develop new interest in the association (WEA Annual Report, 1934, OA).

It is believed that the scope of radio programs would allow the WEA to reach workers all across Canada and this could only further the cause of uniting workers. In the end, *Labour Forum* was broadcasted on over 40 stations across Canada. The minutes report that the executives believed that this program would "undoubtedly make available to labour in Canada a means of expressing its demands, relating its problems to an audience it could not otherwise reach" (WEA Minutes, November 1942, OA).

Through the medium of National *Labour Forum* it was possible for the WEA to

further promote unity of labour in Canada. In one radio show the WEA succeeded in bringing two labour leaders together on the same platform. On November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1934, acting President Percy Bengough of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and President A. R. Mosher of the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) jointly participated with the General Secretary of the WEA in a national broadcast. They took this occasion to announce that the future would see them undivided in labour's demands for adequate legislation (WEA Annual Report, 1934, OA).

Accompanying *Labour Forum* was "Labour facts for Labour Forum" a four-page publication, appearing every two weeks and containing material for the broadcasts. The November 1942 minutes report that a large number of correspondences were received pertaining to *Labour Forum* which included numerous requests for more detailed information for educational material and specific facts pertaining to organizational problems. They did however note that the broadcasts angered many anti-labour activists. Drummond Wren still had significant influence on *Labour Forum*, and WEA used this program as an organizational archive with Wren chairing many of the discussions.

Klee (1995) suggested that the program succeeded because it opened a space for labour and spoke to its concerns and experiences. Radio at this time became more than a curiosity, and Klee cites Vipond (1992) to suggest that radio even surpassed movies and reading for popularity in the 1930s. It is interesting to note that this occurred simultaneously to the increase in popularity with the WEA, and there was a marked growth in the membership of the association in this decade.

One of the indicators that this radio show was successful at reaching workers

across Canada was the enthusiastic reception from workers who sent a flood of letters in response to the program. The program received, as Klee (1995) describes it, “letters ranging from elaborate and typewritten political manifestos, to pleas for help scrawled on scraps of paper. Letters came from union as well as non-union workers, both male and female, in a range of blue and white-collar occupations”(p, 115). This description offers support to the belief that the radio program had wide reaching effects in Canada.

*Labour Forum* was not without its problems, and it did not take very long for the WEA to become politically at odds with the CBC and Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), and as a result these two bodies took control of the radio programs. However, the increase of radio popularity, the response of the public to the program, and the types of information offered by the radio program, would indeed suggest that *Labour Forum* had considerable effect on Canadian society.

### **Outdoor Ramblings**

The WEA’s Summer Schools were held annually at a number of schools and locations across the province. In 1942, the Old Mill at Port Hope, Ontario, became home to the WEA’s *Outdoor Ramblings* program. It was felt that this summer school was extremely valuable to the WEA and the labour movement because it provided a place to spend a “holiday with a purpose”(Workers’ Educational Association, 1954). The summer schools were held annually and were often led by the University of Toronto faculty. Radforth and Sangster (1982) indicate that some noted scholars were known to attend the summer schools as visiting lecturers. Academics such as Sir Fredrick Banting and Professors Jacob Finkelman, H. A. Innis, and H. R. Kemp all participated in lecture

or tutorial groups offered in the *Outdoor Rambling* program.

The summer programs provided the opportunity to combine learning and social activities. Recreational activities such as badminton, drama, and choir were also part of the experience. Some of the plays they put on were noted to be related to the organizational beliefs and had topics that were pro-labour (Radforth & Sangster, 1982). The summer schools provided a valuable service to the WEA in that many labour groups assembled there and the setting provided the ability for “a systematic study of their problems, as well as a period of life together” (Workers’ Educational Association, 1954). This type of program gave students a chance to leave the constraints of their regular lives and go to a place where thinking was encouraged and unencumbered.

The WEA described the summer school programs as having done valuable work. Many workers from trade unions and members of influential union groups assembled in the summers at the school. It gave these people a chance to discuss issues and problems in a situation that was not affected by the regular power structures of their daily lives. This was a place for thinking and working in a communal situation where workers could all be together.

It is important to explain that there was not a very extensive amount of material in the archives or other scholarly journals that examine the *Outdoor Ramblings* program. This program is often referred to in passing as an important educational innovation but is not generally explored to any real extent. Thus, there is a lack of thorough data in the archives and because of that this thesis’ examination of this program is limited and some of the implications of this program will be hypothesized.

The data available on *The Link* and *Labour News*, *Labour Forum* and *Outdoor Rambles* programs suggest that the WEA's educational programs had some notable effect on the workers. The programs, as indicated by the previous statistics, were able to reach a significant number of WEA members. The resemblance of these programs to the theoretical description of a critical pedagogy indicate the possibility of a transformative process occurring because of the WEA. As a result the programs will now be explored in terms of critical pedagogy as a model of a pedagogy that creates social change.

### **How the WEA's Educational Programs resemble Critical Pedagogy**

The WEA originated in a time of labour militancy and radicalism that was unprecedented. Teaching how to think, instead of what to think was considered to be revolutionary. It is a pedagogy based on these sentiments that Freire suggests as a model for how to transform education. Critical pedagogy regards education as something that students do, not something that is done to them (Shor, 1993). All of the WEA's educational programs outlined previously helped to encourage students to empower themselves and to question status quo practices to transform and emancipate their lives. This encouragement for emancipation is clearly indicated when Dunlop noted that the aim of the WEA was to, "enable students to think from themselves, to reason clearly, and to arrive at their conclusions without the necessity of taking their opinions ready made from any source" (Minutes, September 1931, OA). For many of the students in WEA programs, workers education was fought for as a right of the oppressed classes and as a stimulant to working-class radicalization (Radforth & Sangster, 1982). The Toronto WEA's students began to see knowledge as the basis for the empowerment of working

people.

The whole act of participating in the formation of educational programs such as the WEA's is transformative in nature, and the types of activities in which the students were engaged exemplify this. Students were involved in the writing of *The Link* and *Labour News*, therefore, at the same time as they were learning they were helping to transform their society by bringing labour issues to the forefront of Canadian Workers' minds. Students helped to choose the content and the topics and thus were involved in their own education and in fact transferring education to the public domain. The students' involvement in their own education is one example of the clear link between the educational programs and critical pedagogy.

The types of articles offered by *The Link* are another example of a critically transformative pedagogy. Some of the articles were written to the workers directly using the first person in the attempt to make the workers think and relate to what was being written. In the article, *You...the Worker!* by Dr. Sadhu Singh Dhami, from the 1938 issue of *The Link*, the author asks several critical questions. He asks his reader "Do you ever take stock of your own strength?". Issues about power and knowledge, as expressed in the previous article, were often at the forefront of the articles offered by the WEA. The authors encouraged workers to rethink their roles in society, encouraging workers to fight for their rights. These sentiments compare adequately to Freire's (1970) writing in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* where he encouraged workers to challenge the oppression they were experiencing.

The WEA's attempts at mass education, such as *Labour Forum*, offered workers a

chance to learn in their own contexts and to examine problems directly related to their own lives. Shor (1993) emphasized that an important part of critical pedagogy is that learning material is integrated from and into students' lives and thoughts. Programs such as *Labour Forum* and the *Outdoor Ramblings* school provided opportunities for students to learn in contexts that might be suitable for their learning styles.

Even though *Labour Forum* inhabited a limited historical moment, as Klee (1995) suggests, the program still embodied a significant instance of working-class resistance to capitalism and to privately owned media. Klee suggests that this resistance was evident in the broadcasts that articulated criticisms of capitalism. The fact that the WEA even tried to create a nationally broadcasted radio show reflects an ideology consistent with critical pedagogy. The attempts to bring critical learning to a large number people in order to empower people and to provide the information that could help them fight for themselves, all resemble a critical pedagogy.

As one WEA member described it, "Education is not for the maintenance of the "status quo". While there are injustices in society, there is a dynamic purpose in workers education...to enable working men and women to refashion society according to their ideals"(The Link, NLC, October-November 1936). Sentiments such as this support the belief that education programs such as those offered by the WEA can, and in fact do, create change in a society.

### **The WEA and Social Change**

For a relatively small organization the WEA was able to offer a truly diverse number of educational opportunities. Size has little to do with how many people were



reached, educated, encouraged and empowered because of the WEA. History has not really strayed far beyond traditional methods of examining what causes changes in a society. The previous examination of the WEA's programs takes us into new territory in Canadian history. Much of the work in this field, as Welton (1993) offers, has been focused on those who were in power rather than those who are considered workers. This is one of the implications of this study, in that the focus, as with the ideology of critical pedagogy, is on emancipation or transformative education for those who generally do not have any power.

As with many radical educational propositions the WEA faced much opposition from the elite powers in Toronto at the time. There are well-documented struggles with the University of Toronto, with OFL and CCL. The conflict view of society suggests that change in fact occurred from the conflicts between groups in society. In this way the WEA was truly a force to be reckoned with. Despite all the opposition levied against the organization they still pushed on and forward with their purpose of educating workers. Interestingly, one of their strongest decades was the 1930s, a decade well known for its depression and poor economic conditions, and still the WEA thrived.

Radforth and Sangster (1982) suggest that one of the reasons the WEA encountered so much bureaucratic resistance from unions and the University of Toronto Extension program was because the members of the organization were becoming a critically educated membership. Union leadership, they note, rejected an authoritarian pedagogy and attempted to repress and silence the WEA. These reactions from many of the Canadian elitist groups also indicate that they were afraid of what the WEA might be

able to do in their encouragement of workers. Perhaps the demise of the WEA suggests that even critically oriented organizations can only last for so long before elitist powerhouses cause the break down of the organization. Perhaps this is a simplistic analysis as there were many other factors that lead to the demise of the WEA including an impending world war. However, even if for a brief moment, a critically educated citizenry can still have a huge influence.

Regardless of their ultimate demise the WEA expressed many of the values that would support a desire to instill a transformative pedagogy. From the basic mission statement of the organization that intended to provide a liberal education for workers, the WEA created a tradition where workers' education would fight for the rights of the oppressed classes. The educational programs are indicative of this fight of the workers themselves to eliminate injustices. They fought for knowledge that would empower working people.

This chapter outlined the statistics of the organization which stand as an indication that change occurred. The educational programs when examined in light of a critical model of social change, demonstrate the specific efforts of the WEA educators to create change in Toronto and Canadian working class society. The following chapter suggests that a new discourse is required to examine social change.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusions: Using Critical Pedagogy to Generate Change**

This final chapter has several purposes. First it outlines the findings and conclusions of this thesis, recapping many of the results of this investigation. Next I offer my theory of why it is possible to examine social change through an archival investigation of an organization and justify the comparison to a theoretical model. Subsequently, I speculate as to the impact the WEA had on workers' education in Canada and suggest that critical pedagogy can be used as a strategy and generate social change.

#### **Findings**

This investigation attempted to examine one adult education organization, the WEA, and relate its activities to social change in Toronto's working class culture and in general Canada. In the process of this investigation it became clear that a tangible way to indicate social change was needed. The first finding was that there was a gap in Canadian educational history in regards to the examination of the effect of adult education organizations on Canadian people. In examining some of the literature (i.e. Selman, 1995; Gracé, 1998; Welton, 1993, 1989) there did not appear to be many systematic attempts to historically examine the relationship between a Canadian adult education organization and social change.

This study has identified the need to fill in some of the historical gaps in the literature in terms of what occurred in Canada's past in workers' educational organizations. An organization that was important to Canadian educational history (WEA) was analyzed in terms of its educational contributions. This exploration of the

WEA highlighted the organization's history and attempted to explore further its educational offerings, an area that was underdeveloped in other investigations of this organization (i.e. O'Donnell, 1990; Radforth & Sangster, 1982, 1987).

The WEA was a vibrant organization with a rich history especially in the 1930s decade when it had its greatest success. All of the archival records and literature pertaining to the WEA highlight the rich complexity of an organization that saw its purpose as educating workers who would not normally have access to any kind of formal higher education. The availability of the archives and the well documented annual reports and minutes suggest that there are still many areas of the WEA that could and should be explored.

Another important issue was to examine the relationship of adult education to social change. It became clear in this investigation that there was much focus on the purpose of adult education in creating change, however, it was difficult to find any description of how those changes could be explained or examined (Ehrlich, 1993; Kerka, 1996). In support of this finding, Hass (1992) suggests that individuals who are affected by some external force, such as education, bring about social change. This study indicates that, in conjunction with a transformative pedagogy, adult education can in fact generate change in a society. Merriam and Brockett (1997) also support this point in their examination of Mezirow's transformative theories and suggest that when individuals change their perspectives they also transform or change the society within which they are living. If individuals are the driving source of society, it can be concluded that by educating adults in particular ways we can create social change.

Merriam and Brockett (1997) describe the characteristics of adult education for social change. For them it is collaborative learning that is locally initiated and controlled. In order for change to occur, learning must be collaborative. As they suggest, "The starting point for social change is the notion that people can create knowledge that is more relevant, useful, and empowering than knowledge brought by outsiders"(p. 252). This description is indicative of the characteristics of the WEA that were outlined in chapter two. The WEA was an organization that was under the control of its members who joined together to create communal learning.

The sociological models of social change offered a good place to begin to explain the effect the WEA had on its membership. The organismic, the equilibrium, and the conflict models explain how changes might have taken place. However, these models did not substantiate validity in an exploration of change. The conflict models of Marx (1964) and Collins (1975, 1981) appear to be the likeliest explanation of how changes might have occurred. Conflicts were apparent in all parts of the organization, both internally and externally. The WEA's difficult relationship with the University of Toronto and many of the important labour organizations were clear examples of what could be considered a conflictual relationship. However, this speculation at how changes might be taking place was not satisfactory and as a result the research began to delve deeper into how to explain that a change was occurring as a result of the WEA.

The subsequent finding of this study is that there were two ways that the WEA could be examined in terms of explaining social change. The first was to look at the statistics of the organization, and the second was to look at the educational programs of

the organization. The course enrollment statistics showed that the membership had significant increases in involvement in WEA courses and organizational membership in the 1920s, and 30s. The increase in membership in Toronto and across Canada signified the increasing importance of the WEA as an educational organization. As the membership increased, so did the awareness of the organization, until as Radforth and Sangster (1987) describe it, the WEA was considered a large influence in Canadian labour education. The statistics highlighted two points, the first was the increasing interest of Canadians in the programs offered by WEA, exemplified by the increasing number of people enrolled in courses, and the second was the large percentage of members from trade unions.

The statistical account of the large number of union members was important because of the increase in union membership in Canada in the late 1930s. The WEA's Annual Report of April 1941, notes that the report on labour organizations issued by the Department of Labour in 1941, puts trade union membership at a total of 538, 967 people. Considering the large number of trade unionists taking courses through the WEA, one of the conclusions is that, as the WEA executive describe, the majority of trade union members were, "in a position to lay the facts on the table about wages and prices through collective bargaining" (WEA Minutes, 1941, OA).

Not only did the executive of the WEA believe that their students were more educated and better able to deal with labour situations, but the increase in trade union membership indicates that the workers themselves saw the benefits of this specialized type of education. Large portions of WEA trade union members were taking courses and

were simultaneously involved in the political aspects of their unions. The implication is that this would lead to a group of highly educated workers with formal knowledge of many labour problems coming to the table to bargain. The conclusion when considering this point is that change must have occurred in the workings of Canadian labour bargaining.

With no clear way to suggest social change beyond predicting why a change might have occurred and looking for statistics to explain numerical changes, an alternative examination was needed. A second way to examine the WEA for social change emerged. The assumption was that if something was changing there had to be some identifiable cause. The assumption, when considering the standpoint that adults are creators of change, was that the educational programs might offer a way to validate the claims of social change. This idea culminated in the examination of the educational programs in order to investigate what concerted efforts the association was making to transform and liberate workers. This search led to the choice of three of the association's most important educational programs, and an examination was undertaken to emphasize what might have caused changes in the workers due to the programs offered.

The programs, *The Link* and *Labour News*, *Labour Forum*, and *Outdoor Ramblings*, all signified the attempts of the WEA to go beyond what Freire (1979), called an emancipatory education. Each of these programs offered a unique idea or method of instruction that was intended to meet the needs of a wide range of learners. Many of the programs actively involved the students in their education. This exemplified a liberating ethic that was held by those who envisioned how best to teach workers and what they

might gain from it. Through the examination of these programs it became clear that a model was needed to explain what was so exceptional or ideal about these programs. Critical pedagogy was used as a model to explain how and why changes were occurring within the WEA and in the labour force.

Critical pedagogists and theorists recognize that knowledge is political in nature. As noted, Freire (1968, 1973, 1985), Giroux (1992), Giroux and McLaren 1989, McLaren (1989), and Shor (1992) focus on the liberatory aims and possibilities of education. In a curriculum that uses critical pedagogy the discourse between teacher and student is negotiated and allows for mutual control between teacher and students. Every indication from the examination of the educational programs outlined in chapter 5 indicates that the WEA operated in a framework of critical pedagogy focusing on empowerment, voice, and dialogue. The courses offered were roundtable oriented with instructors who were university educated but who did not assign grades.

The findings, taking the previous theoretical and ideological standpoint into consideration, were that these programs could have created social change because they were essentially a form of critical pedagogy. There were clear indications of resistance to status quo educational practices by the workers as exemplified by the content of the programs, as well as a break down of traditional university structures, where teachers teach and students learn. Instead, there was a communal approach to how to learn. *It is my contention that these programs reflect a critical pedagogy, and more importantly critical pedagogy can be used as a model to establish that change occurred.*



The content of the programs were related to teaching workers how to become emancipated, and as Arvidson and Rubenson (1992) note, "the possession of knowledge has become increasingly significant for individuals and groups who wish to influence societal development" (p. 2). Theoretically, social change can clearly be connected to any discussion of critical pedagogy. The theory behind this pedagogy suggests that when it is applied in an educational situation that changes necessarily occur.

One of the last conclusions of this study is that by comparing the ideology of the critical pedagogy, and the ideology, curricula and actual offerings of the WEA, it is possible to suggest that the WEA was an impetus for social change in Canada. This finding is concluded as a result of the comparison of the WEA's educational orientation to critical pedagogy. The theory examined supports the idea that when adults are educated in a transformative or liberatory way they can create change (Freire, 1968, 1973, 1985; Giroux, 1983; Giroux and McLaren, 1989; McLaren, 1989; and Shor, 1993).

### **Creating a discourse for social change**

In the process of exploring the WEA it became clear that there was a need to develop a new discourse on social change. The organizational development literature highlights all the types of changes that occur within an organization but does not broach the types of changes that might be caused by an organization. Ehrlich (1993) urges that, "transformative principles of education help understand the relationship between individual and organizational learning and provide a rationale for a more integrative model of organizational behavior and management"(p. 74).

If we consider that education is a very strong force and has the ability to affect people's lives, we must also consider that those lives that are affected by education can also create change in their society. If an individual can affect society, the speculation is that groups of people, who are changed by education, have an even greater chance of enacting an even larger amount of change in a society.

I suggest that critical pedagogy offers a way to examine our educational practices in terms of the sociological implications of what we teach and how it affects people. If we can take this perspective and use it to examine actual educational programs, we can open a new discourse on how to examine the effects of current educational practices and critique them.

This study provides an example of how to open this new discourse by examining the educational programs of the WEA with the liberatory transformative critical theories of critical pedagogy.

### **The Impact of the WEA on Workers' Education in Canada**

It is fair to say that nothing exists in a vacuum. As Seddon (1986) recognizes, the understanding of education depends upon the study of education within its surroundings. There are historical and sociological implications when any kind of post-mortem examination is undertaken, especially considering it often involves interpreting our history. The important point is that looking at our educational past can help us to understand the present and prepare for the future. That is, the WEA was an organization that, without careful inclusion by some Canadian scholars, could have been lost in our history. The WEA is an important part of our educational past.

The educational ideologies expressed by the WEA stand as a good example of the kinds of education we are able to offer our society. The philosophy of the organization was one of inclusion and empowerment. The educational programs of the WEA offered working class students the chance to take control over their own learning. The results were educational opportunities surpassing anything else that was available to working class people at that time.

The example of the WEA has helped to suggest how other organizations might meet diverse educational needs through innovative programming. This suggestion is valid partly because of the continuation of similar educational programs. Programs similar to *Labour Forum* that still exists on CBC. We have much to learn from the history of adult education and I believe that it is possible to suggest that the example of organizations like the WEA may be used to improve current workers' education programs.

The WEA was purported to be a catalyst for change by those that formed and guided the organization, however, whether the WEA contributed to any kind of large scale social change is still under dispute (Welton, 1987). The organization originated in a time of labor militancy and radicalism that was unprecedented, and there are clearly documented disputes between the University of Toronto and the WEA, as well as between the key players of the organization. One of the questions that arose is whether an organization that is in turmoil internally can still be catalyst for change? Even without examining the internal conflicts, the question still remains as to whether the WEA really had any significant effect on worker education for the working class in Toronto.

There were examples of the WEA's wide reaching effects such as innovative summer camp programs for workers, and popular radio programs. Adult education not only responds to changes happening in society but is also an impetus for change. The WEA's serials *The Link* and *Labour News* highlight the effect this organization had on Toronto workers. The introduction of the successful radio program, *Labour Forum*, exemplifies specific attempts by the WEA to reach workers in the Toronto community, as well as surrounding areas. The WEA's periodicals printed articles that were intended to teach workers how to fight for their rights and become active in their communities. *Outdoor Ramblings* provided the opportunity for a kind of think tank, and a way to examine educational practices critically.

It is not possible to establish if the workers in the WEA were in fact aware of the transformative nature of the organization in which they were involved. It is becoming increasingly impossible to track down former members of the organization as many of them are well into their senior years.

Again it is important to stress that this study relied on historical writings to determine that something was changing as a result of the formation of the WEA. Importantly this thesis notes that any of the material, both archival and scholarly, approaches this topic from a certain perspective, and acknowledges the possibility that the records of the WEA are biased in their favour. However, I have tried to include several different points of view in order to include all the different perspectives of this organization's educational offerings. Even if some bias is present in the material, the sheer amount of data and statistical evidence still supports the conclusions of this thesis.

Despite its demise the WEA left its mark in the labour movement. The WEA stood as a model for future trade-union education programs for its groundbreaking efforts in labour education and research. I am not, however, saying that the WEA was a utopic organization. Its internal struggles were highly publicized and clearly volatile. Instead I am focusing solely on the educational opportunities afforded to workers by this organization. This was perhaps the WEA's crowning achievement. Heaney (1992) further suggests that, "the most significant power is exercised by control of knowledge" (p. 16). The issue, when considering this point becomes whose power is it? The WEA was very clear that the power needed to be in the hands of the workers. The WEA stood as an excellent example of liberatory and transformative educational practices.

To summarize, using critical pedagogy to examine the WEA's educational approach became an adventure, and helped suggest how other organizations might meet diverse educational needs through innovative programmes using critical pedagogy. It was hard to operationalize whether, in fact, the WEA had any long lasting effects, but from the conclusions of this study it is possible to speculate that it is certainly possible. This is because of the continuation of similar educational programs such as a program similar to *Labour Forum* that still exists on CBC. Furthermore, scholars are beginning to rediscover the organization and include the WEA in history books under the exploration of significant adult education organizations.

In summarizing and concluding on the educational contributions the WEA has made to Canadian adult education history this study has: (1) added to the present knowledge of Canadian adult education history; (2) highlighted the effect that one

organization can have in terms of creating social change and social history; and (3) determined that we have much to learn from the history of adult education and suggested how that information may be used to improve current workers' education programs. Thomas (1991) states that, "learning becomes the fundamental factor in understanding not only education but all individual and social change"(p. 30).

## **Appendix A**

### **Archives List Ontario Archives (OA)**

WEA Records - F 1217

Series A Minutes and Annual Reports (MU 3990,3991,7926)

Series B Correspondence (MU 3993-4085)

Series D Financial Records (MU 4086-4092)

Series E Educational Program Records (MU 4093-4101)

Series F Circulars and Periodicals (MU 4102-4103)

Series G Photo's (MU 4104)

Series H Reference Materials (MU 4105-4112)

### **National Library of Canada (NLC)**

WEA- The Link (MU4103)

### **National Archives of Canada (NAC)**

M2028-49 Vol. 200-243

M2214

M3244

M5475

M5476

### **Metro Toronto Labour Council Collection**

MG-28-I-44

Vol. 507.1-507.6

## **Appendix B**

### **Objectives from the Letter to the Government of Ontario about Incorporating the Workers' Educational Association.**

- a) to promote cultural education among working men or women of all classes; to enable them to obtain the benefits of a university education and to assist them to acquire the knowledge which is essential to intelligent, full and effective citizenship;
- b) to promote the organization and co-operation of local branches or district associations of the Corporations in various parts of the Province of Ontario; to call attention to and to spread knowledge of the facilities for education among those engaged in industrial employment's and to serve to co-ordinate by the publication of journals and other literature and by the holding of conferences on the work of various workers' organizations interested in education; to serve as a clearing-house for information, to sponsor and initiate researches and studies; and to supervise and conduct experiments and demonstrations in co-operation with local and provincial agencies;
- c) to secure and accept donations of money or other assistance for the furthering of the above ends;
- d) to invest any funds of the association that may not be immediately or at the time of investment required for the purposes of the association in securities authorized by the laws of the Province of Ontario for the investment of funds as trustees;
- e) to do all other things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects.



## **Appendix C**

### **Notes From WEA Minutes from the Second Annual Convention September 19, 1931, By W.J. Dunlop**

“The Workers Educational Association does not undertake to furnish education which will enable its students to earn more money. The WEA offers a cultural education. Those who wish to learn a trade more thoroughly or to prepare themselves for earning higher salaries should take advantage of the facilities offered by the vocational school of Toronto. The WEA is very keen to promote intellectual activity of the right sort. We wish to train students to read and to think. The WEA tries to impart knowledge but this is a means to an end and the real aim is to enable our students to think for themselves, to reason clearly, and to arrive at their conclusions without the necessity of taking their opinions ready made from any source.

You hear reference in the secretary’s report to conditions in certain places where the membership of the WEA was not restricted to the circle in which it should originally have been kept. Other people who are not workers in the strict sense of the term, will come to your classes; they will say that they are workers in the general sense as of course they are, and they will fill your classes if you will allow them to do so. But these people do no care for the same sort of instruction as working men and women desire. They wish to absorb knowledge. They want lectures and they want to fill their note books with notes on lectures. This is not what the real WEA students is after. He or she wishes to hear what the lecturer has to say and wishes to have an opportunity to express his or her opinions and to discuss the subject of the lecture. Therefore, the WEA cannot be kept

“pure” unless it is absolutely restricted to working men and women who are trades unionists or are engaged in occupations similar to those of trade unions<sup>1</sup>”.

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<sup>1</sup> (Snips from this address...note it was received enthusiastically)

## **Appendix D**

### **The WEA Bulletin on Labour and Social Legislation (Status on Trade Unions) Article Titles**

Bulletin Series 1, Number 1, 1933  
Labour and Social Legislation (Status of Trade Unions).  
Prof. F.C. Auld, Prof J. Finkelman – University of Toronto

Bulletin Series 1, Number 2, 1933  
Trade Unions and the Law: an historical sketch; the legal responsibilities of trade Unions.  
Prof. F.C. Auld, Prof J. Finkelman – University of Toronto

Bulletin Series 1, Number 3, 1933  
Trade Unions and the Law; A Comparative Analysis of English Canadian Legislation  
Prof. F.C. Auld, Prof J. Finkelman – University of Toronto

Bulletin Series 1, Number 4, 1934  
Labour and Social Legislation  
Prof. F.C. Auld, Prof J. Finkelman – University of Toronto

Bulletin Series 1, Number 4, 1934 (Supplement to Bulletin 4)  
Picketing  
Prof. F.C. Auld, Prof J. Finkelman – University of Toronto

Bulletin Series 2, Number 1, 1935  
The International Labour Organization  
N.A.M. Mackenzie

Bulletin Series 2, Number 2, 1935  
The British North American Act and Labour Legislation  
N.A.M. Mackenzie

Bulletin Series 2, Supplemental to Bulletin 1, 1935.  
Industrial Standards Act 1935, 25 George V, C.28.  
J. Finkelman

Bulletin Series 2, Supplemental to Bulletin 2, 1935.  
Limitation of hours of Work Act 1935, 26 George V, (Dominion).  
J. Finkelman, E.A. Reid.

Bulletin Series 2, Supplemental to Bulletin 3, 1935.  
Collective Labour Agreements Extension Act, Quebec.  
Bora Laskin

Bulletin Series 2, Supplemental to Bulletin 4, 1935  
Minimum Age Act, 25-26 George V., C. 44, (Dominion).  
David Vanek

Bulletin Vol. 2., N. 1, July 1936  
The Industrial Standards Act of Ontario and its Administration  
J. Finkelman, Bora Laskin.

Bulletin Vol. 2., N. 2, May 1937  
The Privy Council and Recent Social Legislation  
N.A.M. Mackenzie

Bulletin Vol. 2., N. 3, Aug. 1937  
The Minimum Wage Act of Ontario, 1937.  
J. Finkelman.

Bulletin Vol. 2., N. 4, Nov. 1937  
The Industrial Standards Act of Alberta  
M. Weishoff

Bulletin Vol. 2., N. 5, Dec. 1937  
The Wagner Act and Collective Bargaining  
Bora Laskin

Bulletin Vol. 3., N. 1, April. 1938  
Bill No. 4: Report of Debate Relating to an Amendment to the Criminal Code to Prevent  
Discrimination Against Members of Trade Unions.

Bulletin Vol. 3., N. 1A, Aug. 1938  
Continuation of the Report of the Debate on Bill No. 4.

Bulletin Vol. 3., N. 2, Dec. 1938  
Expulsion of Members from Trade Unions  
J.C. Johnson

Bulletin Vol. 4., N. 1, April. 1939  
Freedom of Association and the Law  
J. Finkelman

Bulletin Vol. 4., N. 2, April. 1939  
Bill No. 7, 1939: An Act to Amend the Lord's Day Act; Report of the Debate in the  
House of Commons and in the Senate

Bulletin Vol. 4., N. 3, May. 1939

Bill No. 5, 1939, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code; Report of the Debate in the House of Commons Relating to an Amendment to the Criminal Code to Prevent Discrimination against Members of Trade Unions (Woodsworth Bill).

Bulletin Vol. 4., N. 4, June. 1939

Bill. No. 90, 1939, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code; Report of the Debate in the House of Commons Relating to an Amendment to the Criminal Code to Prevent Discrimination Against Members of Trade Unions. (The LaPoint Bill).

Bulletin Vol. 4., N. 5, July. 1939

Bill No. 26: An Act to Amend the Criminal Code, Report of the Debate in the House of Commons Relating to an Amendment to the Criminal Code Clarifying the Law Governing Peaceful Picketing. (The MacNeil Bill).

Bulletin Vol. 45, N. 1, April. 1940

The Injunction; An Outline of its History and of the Modern Practice Relating to it.  
J. T. Johnson

Bulletin Vol. 45, N. 2, June 1941

Bill No. 96; An Act to Amend the Industrial Disputes Investigations Act; Report of the Debate in the House of Commons and in the Senate Relating to an Amendment to the Industrial Disputes and Investigations Act.

Bulletin Vol. 45, N. 3, April 1943

The Wartime's Salaries Order  
I. Wahn

Bulletin Vol. 45, N. 4, April 1943

The Beveridge Report  
S. Eckler

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