# The Din of Work: Broadcasting the labour movement at Price-Kénogami, 1977-1981

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UNE RADIO
À MIEUX
CONNAÎTRE

CHOC

**Introduction**

The introduction of resource industries at the turn of the twentieth century transformed the

Saguenay region in Quebec whose economy had hitherto revolved around agriculture.  Even the

names of the new resource towns signalled company ownership.  When the Price Company built its

first pulp and paper mill in the region in 1912, it also gave the town of Kénogami its name. William

Price, the company's owner, had bought the name 'Kénogami' from the neighbouring town (now

Larouche) for two hundred dollars.[1] The pulp and paper industry became one of the leading industries

in the region, and Kénogami one of the industry's most important plants.[2]
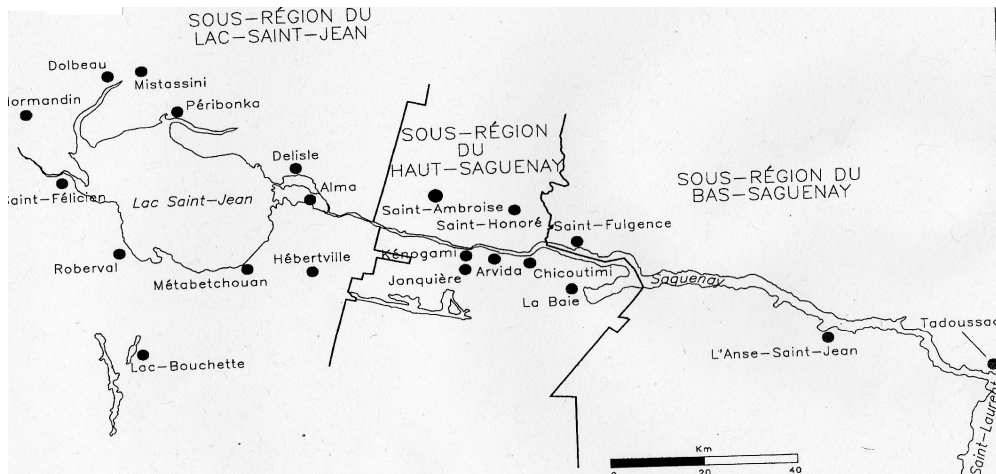


*Source*: José Igartua, Arvida: Naissance d'une ville industrielle (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 15.

The main resources necessary for pulp and paper production could be found on the mill's

doorstep: the Boreal forest covered the region, cut logs floated down the Rivière aux sables, the

waterfalls at Chutes-à-Bésy provided electricity. The town grew around the mill.  Workers lived

in modest homes to the south of the mill, while managers lived in the *quartier des anglais*.

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[1] Dany Coté, *Histoire de Kénogami: Camériste de l'industrie, 1912-1975* (Chicoutimi: Société historique du Saguenay, 2007), 29.  See also Louise Dechene, "William Price," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Quebec: Laval University Press, 1977), 707.

[2] By the 1970s, Kénogami printed newsprint and special papers, including magazine papers, producing about 300,000 tons per year.  See Coté, 134.

Monsieur Desrosiers, who worked at Price for five decades between 1918 and 1968, knew his was a job for life: "Un homme qui pouvait pas travailler à Price…on calculait que c'est un homme fini. Il crevait de faim pour le restant de sa vie. Il y avait que ça dans le temps…en dehors de l'usine j'étais seulement un journalier, mais à l'usine c'était un métier."[3]

Monsieur Desrosiers's vivid account of half a century of work and life at Kénogami first aired on CHOC FM, a community radio station in Jonquière that began broadcasting in 1977. The station was located on rue Fabrique in Jonquière in an old parish building about three kilometres from Price-Kénogami. The studios were in a two and a half-storey brick building that had been the city's first library and now served as a community centre.[4]  First envisioned by a committee of adult educators and social animators in 1973, and symbolically located in the midst of the community, CHOC FM was on air for an average of one hundred hours a week, from 6 a.m. until 1 p.m. and then again from dinner-time until 11 p.m.  The station's programming was as eclectic as were the volunteers who produced its spoken-word content or decided on the music programming.[5]  Subjects ranged from housing to the environment, from youth to the elderly, from news to folklore.  Programming was mostly spoken-word, including reports read live by staff and volunteers, interviews, on-air roundtable discussions, recordings of public meetings, lectures, and pre-recorded "man-on-the-street" sound bites.  The focus was on popular education style programming with a distinct political bent.  In its early years, the station aired broadcasts on labour politics in France and the Soviet Union, feminism and women's lives, local history and critiques of consumerism.

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3 Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ), P199 CHOC MF, 104, "Travail à l'usine Price dans les années 30."

4 Pierre Demers, "Choc Radio Non-orthodoxe," http://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=7&article=1002&context=derives&type=additional (accessed on 17 July 2012), 50.

5 Staff informally categorized volunteers in two ways: *Bénévole à contenu* (BAC) and *Bénévole à musique* (BAM). BACs were "des gens avec quelque chose à dire" while BAMs were rather condescendingly described as "des gens avec les tounes à faire tourner."  See BAnQ P199, CHOC MF, 900, CHOC parle de CHOC, 10e Anniversaire de CHOC-FM (2).

In 1979, communication scholar Jean McNulty suggested in a report on behalf of the Federal Department of Communication that local programming was best understood in relation to the local community.[6]  In a town whose economy, politics and even cityscape were dominated by the towering presence of Price-Kénogami, it is not surprising that the airwaves of the community radio station carried many stories about life and work at the plant and labour-related issues more generally.  From the station's founding moment, a group of media professionals, adult educators and activists had consulted with unions and community organizations in order to evaluate whether a community radio station in Jonquière was feasible or desirable. One of their earliest supporters had been the union at Price-Kénogami.  In 1974, union representatives and factory workers from Price, Alcan, Boulianne Électrique and other smaller local companies joined the ranks of eighty-five volunteers who built studios, worked on by-laws and policies, raised funds and produced sample programs.  After CHOC FM received a broadcasting licence in 1976 and went on air a year later, the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (CSN) union at Price-Kénogami began to produce a weekly show at the station.[7]  The program's main host, Paul Tremblay, who had worked at Price for over twenty-five years and had been a union executive for almost as long, was audibly excited when talking on-air but often equally often out of breath; he had finished his shift at the plant, tried to squeeze in some union business, and then run to studio.  Tremblay was joined by a rotation of other union executives and union activists. Rank and file workers were sometimes heard in the background, adding snippets of conversation.[8]

This essay will examine the efforts of union activists at Price-Kénogami to strengthen the union – and, more broadly speaking, working-class solidarity and the culture of the shop floor – by going "on air."  The focus will be on the surviving recordings of twenty CSN union

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6 Jean McNulty, *Other Voices in Broadcasting: The Evolution of New Forms of Local Programming in Canada* (Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University, Telecommunications Research Report, 1979), 237.

7 Hosts and guests typically discussed local, national and global issues as viewed through a regional prism.

8 BAnQ P199, Normand Lavoie, Instrument de recherche # 60, Répertoire numérique du fonds Station Choc-MF, Chicoutimi, November 1982.

broadcasts that aired on CHOC FM between 1977 and 1981 and formed part of a collection

unparalleled in Canadian community radio or even mainstream broadcasting archives.  The

*Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec* archive centre in Chicoutimi holds audio

recordings of over 900 CHOC FM shows.  Work represents a prominent theme in this

remarkable collection, with 152 radio recordings devoted to issues of work and labour struggles.

To union activists, the CSN radio shows that aired on CHOC between 1977 and 1981 and

typically ran between thirty minutes and one hour represented a weekly invitation to local

audiences to participate in union life and join a community built around Price-Kénogami, a

community bound together by shop-floor experience and working-class interests.[9]  The weekly

CSN broadcasts on CHOC FM raise a number of important questions about the role of

community radio in 1970s Quebec, the cultural messages broadcast, and the role of grassroots

media in forging a "counter-public."

It has become commonplace among media scholars to frame community radio stations as a

counter-public.[10] In his seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,*

Jürgen Habermas defined the public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something

approaching a public opinion can be formed."[11] The concept was based on eighteenth-century

European bourgeois society.  Public information and debate was supposed to monitor and

criticize the state, provoking social change. When social historians turned to the concept of the

public sphere in the 1970s, they quickly reformulated it by invoking the idea of multiple

"publics" or counter-publics. Nancy Fraser, Mary P. Ryan and Geoff Eley argued that the public

sphere was not actually open to all members of society and that different groups had to create

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9 Robert Boucher, who had worked at the mill for over twenty years, found the new voice in the community
inspiring.  As he recalls, "l'idéalisme était toujours présent" while the technology harboured much promise: "il y a
quelque chose à faire avec ce médium." See P199 CHOC MF, 900, CHOC parle de CHOC, 10e Anniversaire de
CHOC-FM (2).

10 See, for instance, Shane Elson, "A Habermasian Perspective on the Alternative Radio Program," *Social
Alternatives* 26, 1 (2007): 32-38.

11 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1991).; Jürgen
Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," *New German Critique* 3 (Autumn 1974): 49.

alternative publics in order to introduce new concerns to the public sphere and engage in public life.[12] These counter-publics acted initially as a space of reflection and identity formation. In later stages, counter-publics oscillated between internal debate and the dissemination of ideas with outsiders through communications networks and public debate. Finally, counter-publics were represented to assert their grievances and interests through traditional social movement tactics such as boycotts, strikes and civil disobedience.[13] As these scholars posit, it is possible for a counter-public to never be fully absorbed by the public sphere. In these cases, the counter-public develops its own parallel institutions, communication networks, and practices.  These spaces are often unstable and prone to fracture or dissolve.[14]

Community radio researchers have relied on the concept of the public sphere to examine how marginalized groups have harnessed the power of the media: to produce their own stories, to provide information about active citizenship, and to increase participation in democracy.[15] Instead of shedding their particular identity markers as they enter the public realm, as Habermas held in his idealized conceptualization of "the public," much of the recent scholarship suggests that the makers and users of community radio stations self-consciously inserted their class-based voices and stories into the public discourse.[16] Scholars such as Marni Cordell, Sam de Silva,

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12 See Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," 289-339; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," 109-142.; Mary P. Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," 259-288; all in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

13 Fraser, 123-124 and Squires, 91.

14 Michael Dawson, "A Black Counterpublic? Economic Earthquakes, Racial Agenda(s), and Black Politics," Public Culture 7, no. 1 (1994): 197.

15 Most scholars of community radio are content to assert that such counterpublics represent social spaces of dissent and investigate the possibility for action.  They are less interested in exploring the fragility of such counter-publics or the interaction between counter-publics and "the mainstream."  Olga Guedes Bailey, Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpentier, *Understanding Alternative Media* (New York: Open University Press, 2008).; Catherine R. Squires, "Black Talk Radio: Defining Community Needs and Identity," *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 73, no. 5 (2000): 73-95. See also: Harold Mah, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians," The *Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 1 (2000): 155.

16 Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965). Susan Forde, Kerrie Foxwell, and Michael Meadows, "Community Radio and Local Culture: An Australian Case Study," *Communications* 28 (2003): 231-52.; Archana Sharma, "Desi Moments: Radio pedagogy-A study of community radio and the cultural production of an imagines South Asian identity" (Thesis: York University, 1998).; Clemencia Rodriguez, *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens' Media* (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2001).

Sayanora Leal, Niamh Gaynor and Anne O'Brien have represented community radio as a counter-public critical of capitalism and state power but dependent on government funding. More generally, scholars have described community radio staff and volunteers hoping to enable previously marginalized groups to tell their own stories – stories felt to be new, critical, and unorthodox, and thus markedly different from those airing on commercial or public radio stations.[17] In a similar vein, CHOC-FM at Kénogami attempted to make heard the voices of workers and draw attention to the fact that the "public interest," which mainstream media claimed to uphold in the labour confrontations of the 1970s in Quebec, was a "public" aligned with capitalist aspirations and consumerism

It was not the sound of the weekly CSN broadcasts that gave CHOC FM its radical edge. The station's programming was hampered by out-dated technology, a lack of broadcasting experience and widely fluctuating staff levels.[18]  Indeed, much of the CHOC sounded the same. Programming consisted mostly of talk, interspersed with local news and political music.  The talk was unpolished and messages convoluted and hard to discern.  Often, it seemed as if radio hosts and guests had forgotten about their audience altogether, engaging in meandering chitchat instead.

As an amateur station, CHOC's programming was a far cry from the broadcast Radio-Canada's Robert Desbiens had produced in 1975 at the height of a strike wave of the Canadian Papermakers Union (CPU) in 1975.  In November 1975, Desbiens had visited Kénogami to interview some of the 350 local CPU members on picket line who had been on strike since 24 September 1975: "ceux qui sont les plus touchés par un tel débrayage et leur demander ce qu'ils

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17 Marni Cordell and Sam de Silva, "New Mediations," *Media International Australia*, 103, no. 1 (2002): 88-93.; Sayonara Leal, "Community Radio Broadcasting in Brazil: Action Rationales and Public Space," *Radio Journal* 7, no. 2 (2009): 155-170.; Niamh Gaynor and Anne O'Brien, "Because it all begins with talk: Community Radio as a Vital Element in Community Development," *Community Development Journal* 47, no. 3 (2012): 436-447.
18 When the station's funding was severely cut in 1981, only two employees remained on staff.  See Demers, 50; Rhéaume, Gagnon, Duchsesne, 115.

en pensent."[19]  The hour-long radio show represented a model of how to report on social issues. Desbiens posed questions, while unnamed workers and union executives answered at great length and with only minimal intervention by Desbiens.  Workers talked about the cost of wood and paper and the state of the industry. Their firm grasp of the larger societal context caused Desbiens to note: "Ce qui est important de faire ressortir, c'est principalement leur degré de conscientisation, face à la grève."[20]  The show explored larger themes related to working at Price that helped explain the motivations of the strikers: technological changes, the mechanization of production, and the impact of temporary closures.

The weekly CSN broadcasts on CHOC FM never succeeded in producing a similar in-depth, polished documentary that combined hard-hitting analysis with a broad range of working-class voices.  What made the labour programming on CHOC stand out was its determined attention to the *process* of creating a working-class consciousness.  Whereas mainstream media in 1970s Quebec focused on moments of labour strife and conflict, the union broadcasts airing at CHOC FM opted for a different tone.  The programs examined union work *beyond* labour conflicts – moments too mundane, complex and rooted in workers' subjectivity to be of interest to mainstream media. In informal conversations and formal reports, radio hosts and guests re-imagined worker-management relations, emphasizing workers' knowledge of production and workers' common social and economic interests. In a common sense manner, hosts and guests talked about the power dynamics between bosses and workers and the necessity for social change.  They wanted to transform the audience into a newly unified counter-public, one attuned to socialist and internationalist values.  Simply put, they believed in the transformative potential of radio "pour d'être capable à bâtir des rapports de forces, équivalents à ceux des

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19 BAnQ, P666, S999, "Lundi 1er decembre 1975 (Entrevue par monsieur Robert Desbiens- Poste CBJ)."
20 BAnQ, P666, S999, "Lundi 1er decembre 1975 (Entrevue par monsieur Robert Desbiens- Poste CBJ)."

multinationales."[21] Union radio hosts regularly broadcast information about union structures and

advised rank-and-file union members how to participate in, and shape, union decisions. They

invited union members to the general assemblies and spent much of their time discussing the

"Series C," a lengthy process by which the union formulated its demands and prepared contract

negotiations. The weekly CSN shows were equally interested in the quiet periods in-between

strikes when radio hosts were trying to draw listeners into the community of "mes camarades"

and "les gars."[22]

As such, the process-oriented CSN news items and radio shows on CHOC FM differed

markedly from what communication scholar Liora Salter has called mainstream media's reliance

on "instant news." "Instant news," Salter writes, focus on outcomes and events rather than

processes and favour the perspectives of those in power, who "make" history over that of

"ordinary" citizens hoping to mobilize the community.[23] Much of the scepticism that union

activists at Price-Kénogami harboured towards mainstream media seemed to stem from the

latter's reliance on "instant news." When Radio-Canada reported on the 1980-1981 strike at

Kénogami, for example, the regular news bulletins were quite short and based on decisions taken

by the company, courts or the union.[24] The bulletins offered little analysis of how or why certain

decisions were arrived at. By contrast, union volunteers at CHOC FM hoped to create a space

"on air" that would help demystify the internal workings of the union, democratize decision-

making processes within the union, and draw rank-and-file members into active union work.

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21 These statements echoed the ideological goals of the CSN stated in the 1966 moral report *Une société bâtie pour l'homme*. CSN president Marcel Pepin first read the document heralding the CSN's turn to the left. In the speech he critiqued that "monopoly capital" did not act in the public interest, undermined democracy and dehumanized workers. Pepin called for the opening up of a "second front" in labour activism: "it was up to the labour movement to take its struggles into working-class communities, to forge parallel institutions, and to build democracy from below." Mills, 163. ; BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 126, "Price-Kénogami, le syndicat."

22 Library and Archives of Canada (LAC), Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts, RG-27, Volume 3635, 72-368, "Rapport sur le début d'un differend industriel." Although workers were always constructed as male on-air, the CSN did, in fact, count ten women among its members at Price-Kénogami.

23 Liora Salter, "Two directions on a One-Way Street: Old and New Approaches in Media Analysis in Two Decades," *Studies in Communication* 1 (1980): 105.

24 BAnQ, P666, Bulletin de Nouvelle de Radio-Canada.

The CSN radio shows had a workshop-like quality, with conversations meandering through the facets of working-class consciousness and host and guests commenting on a wide array of issues, including union work, the pulp and paper industry, and provincial politics. The very informality of these conversations attests to the attempt of creating a space that would serve as an oasis, a place of reprieve to reflect and re-group. At a time when many outside forces threatened the livelihood of Kénogami's pulp and paper workers, the CSN broadcasts on CHOC FM sought to provide alternative narratives of the role of labour in Quebec.

Yet if union executives hoped to insert working-class interests into the public sphere and carve out a space for class-based conversations about labour and social justice, their aspirations were never fully realized. Instead of broadening the circle of active union members and creating a class-based counter-public, the weekly CSN broadcasts became the exclusive reserve of union activists. Radio shows legitimized the actions of union executives and increased the latter's sense of the union's momentum. In mirroring Habermas' conception of the public sphere, the CSN broadcasts privileged the voices of a selected few union executives. When the bitter strike of 1980-81 divided workers at Abitibi-Price (formerly Price-Kénogami), union radio hosts refused to even comment on the position of the dissidents. The CSN union broadcasts neither allowed for spirited internal debate nor did they help create effective channels through which to intervene in the public sphere. Rather, labour programming on CHOC remained an extension of the union, which seemed content with using the weekly broadcasts as an inward-looking space for self-reflection.

**Writing the History of Labour Radio**

In listening to the voices of labour, the present study shares common ground with recent works on the history of labour radio in North America that have examined both the promise and

the limitations of labour radio.[25] As these studies hold, labour radio advocates consistently

positioned labour radio as an alternative to mainstream media.  Instead of generating profits,

labour radio was supposed to develop a working-class consciousness.  In their study *The Voice*

*of Southern Labor: Radio, Music and Textile Strikes, 1929-1934*, Vincent J. Roscigno and

William F. Danahar weave together evidence from oral history interviews, popular protest songs,

and the history of social movements to posit a causal link between radio broadcast and class

struggle.  As the authors suggest, radio broadcast "transformed working-class consciousness and

partially instigated challenges to existing structures of inequality."[26] In the heady years of textile

strikes in the American South, for instance, workers created dancing picket lines to the tunes of

radio music emanating from portable radios, while ex-textile workers-turned-musicians

composed protest songs for striking textile workers.  In a second shared analytical strand,

historians of labour radio have emphasized how labour radio was to give voice to workers by

airing their desire, needs and grievances. In 1940s Canada, the "Labour Forum" – a weekly radio

series initiated by the Worker's Education Association (WEA) and broadcast by the CBC–

quickly attracted a devoted national audience of 100,000 that listened to the program's critical

analysis of the economy, government policies and private business practices.  Workers eagerly

responded to the invitation to join the debate. The program was flooded with letters, which

included workers' own stories, political-personal manifestoes, and requests for advice.  Much of

the correspondence was addressed on-air.[27]  Finally, recent studies on the history of labour radio

have probed the "ideological and cultural war" between labour and capital.  As Elizabeth Fones-

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25 See in particular Nathan Godfried, *WCFL: Chicago's Voice of Labour, 1926-1978* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Waves of Opposition: Labour and the Struggle for Democratic Radio* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Vincent Roscigno and William Danaher*, The Voice of Southern Labor: Radio, Music and Textile Strikes, 1929-1934 (*Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); and Marcus Klee, " 'Hands-off Labour Forum': The Making and Unmaking of National Working-Class Radio Broadcasting in Canada, 1935-1944," *Labour/Le travail* 35 (Spring 1995): 107-132.  See also Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
26 Roscigno and Dahaher, *The Voice of Southern Labor*, 135-136.
27 Klee, 115.

Wolf holds, labour's vision of a society that would encompass equal right, social justice, and economic equality clashed with capital's pre-occupation with consumerism, individual freedom, and free enterprise.[28] In the United States, corporate network radio and the American government systematically shut labour out of the public sphere, while the labour movement itself was weakened by anti-labour legislation.[29] In Canada, as well, the radicalism and popularity of the high-profile *Labour Forum* eventually led to its cancellation. In 1944, C.D. Howe, the head of the Department of Munitions and Supply, cancelled the show for its alleged support of anti-capitalist and communist propaganda.[30]

Taken together, these studies juxtapose the lofty ambitions of labour radio stations and programs with the considerable external pressures these counter-publics faced. Much like the present work, these studies find that listening to the radio reinforced a common culture, helped shape a shared understanding of work practices and labour conflict and nurtured the belief in the possibility of social change. Similar to my own work, these studies also pay close attention to social history of labour and cultural practices of resistance. Finally, in a rather sobering set of conclusions, these work attest to the ways in which "new sites of resistance are often transformed into new sites of defeat."[31] Labour radio was a space of lofty ambitions and great promises. The gulf between ideals and practices contributed to the air of defeat that surrounded these experiments. It is here that my study parts company with the nascent historiography on labour radio. Although a fully-fledged counter-public never emerged from the CSN broadcasts on CHOC FM, workers' radicalism remained undiminished in the early 1980s. In addition, even

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28 Fones-Wolf, 2.
29 Ibid, 242. See also Godfried, XV and XIV.
30 Klee, 126.
31 Ibid, 131.

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after a decade of labour unrest in the province, the Quebec government remained supportive of

the discursive space carved out by community radio stations in the province.[32]

The history of CHOC FM was intimately bound up with the history of labour radicalism

in 1970s Quebec and the generous provincial funding for community media during this decade.

In 1975, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Act (CRTC) had recognized

community radio as a distinct and official part of the broadcasting industry.  The CRTC defined

community as "the entire complex constituency covered by a broadcast transmitter. It is more

than a statistic for rating purposes. A community provides an almost limitless resource for

program material that can be developed into various participatory formats."[33] In order to

implement these ideals, the CRTC provided stipulations for community radio licenses: a limit on

the nature and quantity of on-air advertisements, requirements to allow community groups access

to the station, and the need to acknowledge community issues in programming.[34]

The number of community radio stations increased rapidly in the 1970s. There were

forty-three community radio stations in Canada in 1977. Between 1977 and 1979, the CRTC

granted licenses to thirty-four additional stations.  Most of these licenses were granted Native

radio stations in the North. The CBC had been experimenting with community radio in Northern

communities since 1972, providing equipment and hiring social animators to help found stations

and develop programming focused on social and cultural activism. Inspired by the success of

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32 The studies discussed above all focus on the history of labour radio between the 1920s and the 1960s.  During this period the labour movement was achieving momentum, while radio was fast becoming the most important mass medium in North America.  By the mid-1940s, three quarters of Canadian homes had a radio.  By contrast, my work focuses on a different historical moment, namely the rise of community radio in 1970s Canada.  Mary Vipond, *The Mass Media in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2011, 4th edition), 47.

33 CRTC, *FM Radio in Canada: A Policy to Ensure a Varied and Comprehensive Radio Service* (Ottawa: CRTC, 1975), 28.  The CRTC had received numerous complaints about the limited scope, brash delivery, and low quality of commercial radio. In response the CRTC commissioned a report that highlighted the need for local content that would serve the community.

34 Brian Fauteux, "Canadian Campus Radio and the Shaping of Sounds and Scenes" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2012), 110.  As Jean McNulty argues, the foundations of community radio stemmed "from ideas about social change and the democratization of society which were prevalent in the 1960s, as well as a change in public opinion against big centralized government." See McNulty, *Other Voices in Broadcasting,* 237.

Native radio stations, the CBC started the Office of Community Radio. Between 1972 and 1978, this government-run office provided technical assistance and tried to forge links between the heterogeneous and often isolated community radio stations across Canada.[35] Another important sub-category of community radio stations were student or campus-community stations that were affiliated with universities that had taken on an increased cultural role in society.[36] The stations offered educational programming, skills training for students, and focused their coverage on alternative cultural and musical communities in vicinity of the campus.[37]

The history of community radio in Quebec nests within this larger history. The Quebec government had regularly debated the merits of Canada's centralized public broadcasting system; government, intellectuals and media professionals considered control over the media as essential for the development of a distinct Quebecois culture.[38] In an attempt to gain greater autonomy over cultural affairs, the *Ministère des Communications de Québec* was founded to oversee Quebec's communication networks. Since education rested within the purview of the province, the Quebec government also created Radio-Québec, a network of educational stations, and developed community media projects with an educational focus.[39]

The government's large-scale funding of the sector relied on technology to fix society's problems. As the Parti-Québécois held, communications was a way to confront current challenges to society: an out-dated education system, poverty, rural isolation, and changes in job profiles. New technologies were thought to improve communication and help individuals shed complacent perspectives and traditional values.[40] The *programme d'aide au médias*

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35 Charles Fairchild, *Community Radio and Public Culture: Being an Examination of Media Access and Equity in the Nations of North America* (New Jersey: The Hampton Press, 2001), 137.
36 Fauteux, 99.
37 Ibid., 296.
38 Marc Raboy, *Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada's Broadcasting Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's U.P., 1990).
39 Jean François Barbier-Bouvet, P. Beaud, P Flichy, *Communication et pouvoir: Mass media et media communautaires au Québec* (Paris: Editions anthropos, 1979), 81.
40 Barbier-Bouvet et al., 81. See also Jean Du Berger, Jacques Mathieu and Martine Roberge, *La Radio à Québec 1920-1960*. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1997.

*communautaires* (PAMEC) funded community radio stations across Quebec. By 1976

community radio stations received thirty-one per cent of government funding allotted for

community media. The funding rose again in 1981 to fifty per cent of the budget or almost two

million dollars.[41] Funding was dependent on community membership and democratic decision-

making.[42] It was this type of funding that made CHOC possible in the first place and supported

the station in the first five years of its existence. The state funded between sixty and eighty-five

per cent of CHOC's operating costs. Initial funding was meant to support community

consultation and the setting up of the infrastructure; later grants were tied to specific

programming initiatives.

The ideals and goals of CHOC FM – or, for this matter, the weekly CSN broadcasts –

were tapered by practical challenges. Despite the emphasis of community-oriented programming,

it was unclear what the definition of community was, how a radio station could serve the

community, and if a radio station was supposed to develop new communities. Radio stations'

leadership sometimes disagreed about how to run a station and whether to emphasize

participation, information or democratic process. The lack of technological expertise and

sufficient funding meant stations had to continually revise their ambitions.[43]

Despite their reliance on government funding, community media projects were able to

pursue alternative and radical visions. Vidéographe and the National Film Board's (NFB)

*Challenge for Change*, both recipients of state funding, told stories of local communities and

social change, albeit with strong nationalist overtones. The mix of community projects and

national funding led to a new production dynamic and consequently a new aesthetic in

documentary film and videos. The projects attracted artists, intellectuals, and students who

41 Jean Ogilvie, "Community Radio in Quebec: Perspectives in Conflict" (McGill University MA Thesis, 1983), 101.

42 Michel Sénécal, "Médias communautaires: État de marginalité ou marginalité d'État ?" *Revue internationale d'action communautaire* 6, no. 46 (1981): 37.

43 Salter, 98.; Ogilvie, 37.

articulated alternative social visions. Programs focused on poverty and culture. Social animators managed media projects, helped community members access state services and provided resources and training in democratic participation. Often these social animators worked with progressive bureaucrats to foster representations of alternative social visions through the media. Social animators used the PAMEC program as well as job creation grants to hire local citizens to help run projects. [44]

While community radio in Quebec had emerged from a reaction to both federal policies and provincial social problems, the sector soon found itself at the forefront of the development of community radio in Canada. Radio-Centre Ville, a Montreal-based multi-lingual station, was founded in 1975 and became the first community radio station on the FM dial.[45] Two years later the rapid growth and interest in community radio inspired the creation of the *Association des Radiodiffuseurs Communautiares du Quebec*. Originally, eighteen stations joined with the aim of creating a space for collaboration, lobbying, and the co-ordination of technical and administrative support.[46] By 1983 there were twenty-one stations broadcasting in Quebec; they covered the province from the Gaspé to Haute-Gatineau. About seven more stations were on the verge of receiving their license and had already leveraged considerable community support.[47] These stations played a combination of local music, which was not commonly available on commercial radio, and spoken word programming about community issues. The growth of community radio in Quebec was thus a result of both political and cultural forces as well as the initiative and tenacity of individuals and community organizations.[48]

It is the short-lived nature of labour radio stations or labour radio programming that makes the study of the labour radio such as the union broadcasts on CHOC FM such an intriguing

44 Marion Froger, *Le cinéma à l'épreuve de la communauté : Le cinéma francophone de l'Ofiice national du film, 1960-1985* (Montreal : Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2009) and Doré, 135-136.
45 Fauteux, 101.
46 Ogilvie, 103.
47 Ogilvie, 181.
48 Fauteux, 104.

challenge. Historians usually write the history of radio without being able to listen to actual sound recordings. In Canada, most media historians rely on textual sources such as memoranda, letters, and government documents. Even the second wave of communication scholars writing in the 1980s and 1990s, who critiqued the nationalist bent of earlier works, drew upon the same textual materials as their predecessors. The focus on official documents has led to research concerned with policy, institutional history and national history.[49]  In this context, the history of labour programming on CHOC FM represents a unique case.  There exists only scant information on the founding of CHOC and the role of union activists in the station's day-to-day workings.  Most of the information on CHOC FM has been gleaned from the program *CHOC parle de CHOC* that aired regularly on the station.[50] Yet unlike many other studies that have lamented the dearth of surviving audio recordings, I was able to draw upon a remarkable set of union broadcasts that speak to the culture of labour radicalism in the Saguenay, labour's dissatisfaction with the coverage of mainstream media, the increasing self-confidence of voices of labour, and the ultimate dissolution of a nascent counter-public in the early 1980s.

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49 The CBC and Radio-Canada offer the most complete archives due to their affiliation with the government. They have preserved audio-recordings of events deemed "important" in the sense that they report or commemorate either public events or public figures, for example a Royal Visit to Canada or World War II broadcasting. See Mary Vipond,"Please Stand By for that Report: The Historiography of Early Canadian Radio," *Fréquence/Frequency* 7-8 (1997), 19.  The most important study of private radio broadcasters remains Mary Vipond's seminal work *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992). Another notable exception is Michael Nolan, a former journalist turned academic historian, who studied private broadcasters in Ontario and wrote a biography of Walter J. Blackburn, founder of the London Free Press and radio CFPL. Nolan and Vipond both shared an interest in the early years of radio and were keen to expand their work on radio broadcasting beyond the CBC.  Michael Nolan, "Canada's Broadcasting Pioneers, 1918-1932," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 10: 3 (1984): 1-26.; "An Infant Industry: Canadian Private Radio, 1919-1936", *Canadian Historical Review* 70:4 (1989): 49-58.; *Walter J. Blackburn: A Man for All Media* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1989). There is no academic history of community or campus radio. Most of the work has been left to researchers based in either media studies or sociology. Community radio participants, in turn, have started to write their own histories to commemorate anniversaries.  See for instance Chloé Sondervorst  and Robert Blondin, *30 ans de radio citoyenne* (Montreal: Richard Vézina, 2011). Bruce Girard, ed., *A Passion For Radio: Radio waves and Community* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992).

50 While the regional newspaper *Le Quotidien* regularly quoted from *Papajak*, the union's newsletter, it never once mentioned CHOC. Similarly Abitibi-Price kept extensive press clippings and notes from the 1980 strike, but never once made mention of CHOC. No paper trail speaks to the relationship between the station and the union.  Indeed, there is very little information about the radio station.

The remainder of this study is comprised of two sections. The first section explores the meanings of community in the pulp and paper town of Kénogami and charts the rise of labour radicalism in the Saguenay region between the Second World War and the 1970s. This section pays close attention to the educational initiatives and communication strategies with which the CSN (and other Quebec unions) experimented in the 1970s. The second section listens closely to the surviving recordings of CSN broadcasts that aired on CHOC FM between 1977 and 1981. Here, the focus is on the intersection between working-class activism and strike actions at Price-Kénogami and the "running commentary" union broadcasts provided on the struggles of the day.

## Labour and the Saguenay

While scholars writing in the 1970s and 1980s described the Saguenay region as an economic hinterland, traditional in its culture and deeply unsettled by the founding of company towns, the historical sociologist Gérard Bouchard holds that the Saguenay region represented a model of industry development at the periphery. As Bouchard suggests, the Saguenay was characterized by the integration of, and interaction between, local forces (such as social institutions) and external forces (such as capital) that became mutually dependent on each other.[51] In a similar vein, recent histories of Asbestos and Arvida have explored how multi-national industries and local communities evolved together and created new identities and social structures that were rooted in work. Work provided a lynchpin for a common set of beliefs and practices in company towns.[52] Extra-regional forces thus helped to solidify local identity, culture and community and tie peripheral regions to transnational developments.

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[51] Roy Bowles, *Little Communities and Big Industries: Studies in the Social Impact of Canadian Resource Extraction* (Toronto : Buttersworths, 1982).; Rex Lucas, *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown : Life in Canadian Communities of Single Industry* (Toronto : Toronto University Press, 1971); Gérard Bouchard, "Co-intégration et reproduction de la société rurale. Pour un modèle sauguenayen de la marginalité, " *Recherches sociographiques* 29 (1988), 289.

[52] José Igartua, *Arvida au Saguenay: Naissance d'une ville industrielle* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's U.P., 1996).; Jessica van Horssen, "Asbestos, Quebec: The town, the Mineral and the Local-Global Balance Between the Two" (PhD. diss. University of Western Ontario, 2010).

Farmers from neighbouring Charlevoix region had first settled in the Saguenay in the 1830s. It was a region rich in natural resources. Forests flanked both sides of the Saguenay Fjord, while the lowland around the immense Lac-St-Jean provided fertile land for farming. Agriculture in the Saguenay was rudimentary and focused mostly on subsistence. Residents of the Saguenay region were ethnically homogenous; ninety-six per cent were of French origin and Catholic.[53] The typical Saguenay family was large, comprising ten family members. The local population combined farm-work and forestry-work depending on the seasons in order to get by. According to Gérard Tremblay, the ability to draw upon a variety of income sources gave individuals and families a sense of independence and helped shield them from economic recessions.[54] Forestry and pulp and paper companies were instrumental in the industrialization of the region.

Kénogami was the most important pulp and paper town in Canada. The town was meticulously planned before even one shovel of earth had been turned. In 1912, the company began building forty single-family homes for workers, alongside rooming houses for single workers and more luxurious residences for management. The town council held its first meeting on 18 September 1912. Price transferred ownership of the roads to the council and lent the town money to start operations.  In return, Price was exempted from paying taxes for twenty-five years. Slowly the town's foundations were built; Price gave a small plot of land to the Catholic Church in 1913 so workers would not have to visit neighbouring Jonquière on Sundays, while Kénogami Land operated a large farm that sold milk, vegetables and butter to workers at the company. For years, the company continued to be heavily involved in local politics.[55] In 1923 when the city council organized a successful referendum to approve a new aqueduct for potable

53 Igartua, *Arvida*, 24.
54 Ibid.*, 26.
55 Coté, 42.

water, Price's opposition ended the project. Price exerted considerable control over the city

administrators. Management even attended city meetings regularly.[56]

Kénogami was one company town among many in the Saguenay region. Chicoutimi the

largest city in the region was the site of Price's first large mill. From the end of the nineteenth

century until the 1920s the Saguenay region urbanized and industrialized slowly. Most of the

changes were concentrated in the Haut-Saguenay sub region. In the 1920s pulp and paper towns

like Alma, Riverbend and Bagotville quickly caught up in terms of output and value of

production to the earlier towns of Chicoutimi and Jonquiere. From 1911 to 1931 the towns in the

Saguenay increased their population by one hundred per cent, attracting mainly rural dwellers.[57]

After the Second World War, the city began to seek more autonomy from Price, although

the company continued to be the main physical and economic presence in the city.  The value of

Price's property was more than all private buildings combined and the company owned most of

the land that other companies wanted to develop. The baby boom after the war caused acute

housing shortages. Between 1941 and 1961 the population rose from 5,237 people to 11,816

inhabitants. Kénogami Land, a subsidiary of Price, only slowly opened up new land for

development and new families had trouble finding a place to live. The city administration

progressively loosened the ties between town and company. The city took control of most

municipal services such as water, electricity and roads. In 1957 the local government applied to

become a city, receive a city charter and have more decision-making power, while citizen groups

organized a public library and other leisure opportunities that were not tied to the company.[58]

In 1974 Abitibi Paper Company bought majority shares in Price Brothers, a merger that

made Abitibi-Price the largest producer of newspaper in the country. When Abitibi Paper and

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56 Jean-Pierre Charland, *Les Pâtes et papiers au Québec 1880-1980: Technologies, travail et travailleurs* (Québec: Institut Québécois de recherche sur la culture: 1990), 228.
57 Igartua, *Arvida*, 22-23.
58 Coté, 89, 91, 100-101.

Price merged they followed a trend of Canadian companies transforming into lean high-tech operations to compete in a global market.[59] The merger occurred suddenly and came as a surprise to workers and financial analysts alike.[60] Workers at Kénogami called it a "hold-up financier" and worried about their jobs and how and where decisions about the plant would be made in the future.[61]

Labour activism reached new heights at Price-Kénogami in the 1970s, but the fight for humane working conditions had started much earlier.  A long-standing history of union radicalism waited behind each labour conflict bolstering the strength of the executive and the general assembly. The relative prosperity during the Second World War had emboldened workers at Price-Kénogami – mostly semi-skilled workers, general labourers and maintenance workers – to leave the fold of the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, a union regarded to be unseemly close to Price management.  In 1943, workers sought to join a Catholic Union instead, the *Confédération des travailleurs catholiques du Canada* (CTCC). When the company refused to even recognize the legitimacy of the CTCC, workers went on strike. The strike lasted two weeks and spread across the three Price plants in the Saguenay region. The mayors of Alma, Jonquière and Kénogami met with the CTCC and sent telegrams to the federal and provincial governments, requesting they intervene.[62] In response the provincial government appointed a commission of inquiry whose report led the government to change the labour code.  Workers now could choose whatever union they wanted to join.[63] The strike resulted in two unions at Kénogami, a situation that persisted throughout the period studied; the CTCC became the more radical union, representing the most, and the least skilled, workers.  The commission's report

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59 Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1996), 120.
60 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 329, "Commission parlementaire sur l'industrie des pâtes et papiers."
61 Ibid.
62 "La grève de Riverbend, Jonquière et Kénogami," *Action Catholique*, 8 April 1943.
63 Girard and Perron, 484.

marked a shift in the oft-contentious relationship between labour and mainstream media. During the strike, the media had relied exclusively on Price management or politicians for information about the conflict.[64] In reporting on the commission's findings, newspapers and radio stations, for the first time, quoted workers directly, thereby acknowledging the voice of labour.[65]

In 1960, the CTCC secularized and became the *Confédération des syndicates nationaux* (CSN). The CSN worked at the provincial and local levels simultaneously. While the central office set the broad direction of the union, local unions retained their independence. In a decade of labour radicalization, the CSN adopted a new approach to employer-worker relations, the so-called "syndicalisme de combat." The aim was to transform unions from defensive organizations into agents of change that would push hard for new working conditions and, ultimately, a break with the capitalism system.[66] In 1972, the CSN central formally adopted socialism as the ultimate goal of their struggles: "La propriété privée des moyens de production a conduit une structure économique dont la seule règle est le profit maximum poursuivi au détriment des besoins sociaux de la population.*"[67]* The CSN at Price-Kénogami was proud of the CSN's militant, radical stance and embraced its vision of a more participatory union: "Notre syndicalisme québécois n'est pas du type américain, n'est pas du type des autres provinces québécois non plus. On a de plus en

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64 For examples : "Strike Close Pulp Mills: Catholic Union Asks Bargaining Rights," *Montreal Star*, 7 April 1943.; "1,275 ouvriers sont en grève à Chicoutimi," *La Patrie*, 8 April 1943.; "Les ouvriers retourent au travail dans les trois moulins Price, " *Action Catholique*, 26 April 1943.

65 "Télégrame de M. McLean aux ouvriers,"*L'Action Catholique*, 12 June 1943.

66 During the 1960s and early 1970s labour unions in Quebec radicalized and became increasingly involved in social and political issues in Quebec. The unions formed unprecedented common fronts during the October Crisis and during the 1972 general strike. Sean Mills argues this radicalization and mobilization was due in part to the anti-imperial and anti-colonial discourses popular in activism and social movements at the time. The discourses of dissent were widely available through manifestos published by the different unions. "Again and again, it was the mixing of local grievances with a larger interpretation of their structural causes that led to rebellion." Sean Mills, *The Empire Within* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 204. See also Bryan Palmer, « Wildcat Workers in the 1960s, » in Bryan Palmer and Joan Sangster eds., *Labouring Canada* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 2008) : 373-94.

67 Quoted in Jaques Rouillard, *Le syndicalisme québécois: deux siècles d'histoire* (Montréal : Boréal, 2004)*, 159.

plus de courants idéologiques à l'intérieur de nos syndicats. Les gens veulent s'exprimer, ils viennent souvent dans les assemblés."[68]

In 1971 as temporary closures turned the Price mills in Jonquière, Kénogami and Alma silent, the union decided to raise public awareness about the state of the pulp and paper industry and workers' difficult situation. In photographs from the time the image of workers pressed against chain-linked fences looking in at the factory became shorthand for labour strife.



An OSUPA demonstration outside a closed Price-Kénogami. Source: Réal Gauthier, *On est pas pour s'laisser passer un sapin : les travailleurs de la forêt, du bois des scieries, du papier et du carton façonné* (Montreal : CSN, 1973), 104.

The union decided on a new way of organizing protest. Price workers joined with workers at Desbiens, and Consol pulp and paper mills in Lac-St-Jean and formed *Operation Survie Papier* (OSUPA), a common front against temporary closures. Much of their actions were demonstrations and parades—family-friendly events through the downtown core of the

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68 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 135, "Députés péquistes de la région au conseil central de la CSN sur la loi 45 (loi anti-scab)."

Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean communities. Their signs advertised their new identities as *chômeurs*, other signs read "*on veut travailler*." At the end of the summer workers organized a motorized convoy around Lac-St-Jean. When Price management announced that Alma would close temporarily, the workers occupied the factory—many OSUPA protestors were arrested and charged. OSUPA was orientated towards public opinion and direct action. The group concentrated on local, immediate issues in the region at the pulp and paper mills.

To be sure, neither the CSN nor workers hesitate to make compare and contrast their situation to workers in Ontario and British Columbia. The CSN central and local unions were also working on popular education modules about technological changes, and the links between banks, pulp and paper and transportation companies in Canada and abroad.[69] The CSN created popular education classes and printed slides with complex flow charts about how profits flowed out of the regions and into multi-national corporations in Toronto, New York and London. Understanding the economic system and industry, the union argued—made it obvious that workers had to fight for greater control in their own workplace.[70]

Labour activism in Quebec was effervescent during the 1960s and early 1970s. Union centrals produced political manifestos characterized by the heady aspiration that unions could provide "a truly democratic alternative to capitalism."[71] During the province-wide 1972 general strike, the unions immediately created a central public relations group to communicate with the public at large. Unions put great effort into their communications strategies but had little success. Just after the strike ended Louis Laberge from the radical alternative paper *Point de Mire* wrote that labour unions had relied on outdated communication practices: "les syndicats et les mouvements populaires, par manque de fonds ou par ignorance, utilisent très peu les moyens

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69 Gauthier, 119.
70 Gauthier, 2.
71 Mills, 197.

modernes de lutte fournis par les sciences humaines d'une part et par la technologie d'autre part. Pourtant ils servent quotidiennement leurs adversaires pour les écraser."[72]

Yet, in fact, the problem may have been related to how the Conseil packaged its information. Union press packages contained too much nuance, context and ambiguity. In so doing, unions created information for an idealized media that would provide space for rational debate in a Habermasian public sphere. Looking back, the President of the Conseil summed up the problems "Il aurait fallu que les journalists lisent, qu'eux-mêmes fassent des comparisons, qu'ils portent des jugements… Donc, nos documents, n'étant pas considéres comme de la 'nouvelle' sont passes directement à la filière ronde ou aux archives."[73]

The central unions also enlisted the help of rank and file workers, who phoned up radio shows, wrote letters to newspaper and magazine editors and distributed information door-to-door.[74] Rank and file workers went beyond trying to shape coverage in mainstream media to make the media themselves the focus of workers' resistance. In seven cities in industrial and remote regions of Quebec, workers occupied their local radio stations, played 'revolutionary music' and broadcast union news.  Workers once more took over local stations between May 10 and May 14, including stations in larger cities such as Chicoutimi. On May 12, the day of the general strike, six Montreal papers went unpublished while Radio-Canada did not go on the air. As communications scholar Marc Raboy writes, "the direct take-over of information during the 1972 general strike gave workers a feeling of what it was like to assume control of the means of production of public opinion, and to create independent means of informing the population. The unionists carried this out in the same spirit of unity, grassroots action and self-management that

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72 Louis Laberge, "Une lutte à finir contre les exploiteurs, " *Point de Mire* 3, no. 8 (4 December 1971), 4.  In a similar vein, Léo Cormier, the president of the *Conseil d'information sur les négociations dans les secteurs public et para-public* wrote in 1980 that the *Conseil's* attempt to provide content for new types of stories had been a failure.

73 Quoted in Gisèle Tremblay, *Le traitement des rapports collectifs de travail dans la grande presse d'information au Québec* (Québec : Publications du Québec, 1986), 35.

74 Marc Raboy, *Movement and Messages: media and radical politics in Quebec*, trans. David Homel (Toronto : Between the Lines, 1984), 87.

characterized the strike movement."[75] These media experiments were characterized by short, conflict-laden interactions. Even if the storming of mainstream media outlets gave workers a taste of the power of the media, it seemed unlikely that labour could overcome all these obstacles to become a larger player in the realm of communication.[76]

The union executives at Price Kénogami embraced the era's radicalism and harnessed an unprecedented radicalism and solidarity among rank and file workers that culminated in the 1973 strike. Between 1963 and 1970, there had been twelve labour conflicts in the Saguenay region that equaled 712,423 lost strike-days.[77] The collective agreement expired in April 1973 and negotiations over the course of the summer remained fruitless. On 10 August 1973, about 2,000 workers across Price's three plants in the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean region went on strike. A key demand was that general labourers work a new shift schedule: four days of work with two days off.  Paul Tremblay thought the demand would humanize working conditions: "Les gars qui travaillait sur des équipes… ils travaillaient 7 jours consécutifs. C'est de la double fatigue. Il y avait des gars à 55 ans qu'ils étaient finis."[78] The union also argued that improved working conditions would increase productivity. Other demands revolved around salary increases and the creation of a special fund for workers who had been laid off temporarily. Focusing on economic issues and workplace conditions, union demands were very much rooted in the world of the shop floor and the everyday work experience at the mill. But the tenor of the strike and the union's tenacity to remain on strike until their demands were met echoed the radicalism of the labour movement the year before.

In 1973, the union succeeded in negotiating a vastly improved contract in terms of salary and work schedules. Paul Tremblay remembered the 1973 strike with a hint of nostalgia in his

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75 Ibid., 88.
76 Mills, 197.
77 Charland, 359; Camil Girard and Normand Perron, *Histoire du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean* (Quebec: Institue quebecoise de recherche sur la culture, 1995), 486.
78 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 119, "Price Kénogami."

voice. It was a prime example of worker solidarity and perhaps the last time workers were able to add to their acquired rights. The company's prime concern had been to reduce labour costs and have more flexibility to improve production, but the union had succeeded in deflecting these concessions and humanizing the final contract.[79] According to Tremblay, the 1973 strike demonstrated that workers could change their working conditions for the better: "C'est pas qu'on accepte le travail d'équipe, mais seulement que, je pense, il y a la possibilité d'améliorations. Je vais vous donner un exemple, là. En 73 lorsqu'on a fait une grève qui était assez longue et assez dure, on a installé à l'intérieur de l'usine le travail de 4 jours d'ouvrage et 2 jours de repos."[80]

Although the strike had been successful, Gaston Hervé, who had served on the negotiation committee, felt tired and disillusioned. He quit his position as soon as workers stepped back onto Price-Kénogami's shop floor. Finding it difficult to pin point the reasons for his unease, Hervé joined the ranks of ordinary workers, hoping to diagnose the problem through a shift in perspective. Four years later, he ran for the union executive again. According to Hervé, the union's main challenge lay in its inability to communicate efficiently; there was too great a distance between the executive and rank and file workers:

> Il y avait les présidents très actifs, qui allaient toujours de l'avant et qui fonctionnaient de l'avant, mais tsé, c'était peut-être une faiblesse. En s'qui m'concerne on n'a pas des gars formés dans le syndicat, il nous en manque énormément et les compétences je les vois là. On a en masse de gars qui veulent travailler, c'est juste de leur fournir les outils, les moyens, respecter la structure syndicale et les revaloriser.[81]

Good intentions and strong leadership, Hervé felt, had changed the union into a service-based organization, too quick to fix perceived problems without closely listening to rank and file workers first. As a result, the culture of the union had been weakened and worker solidarity been undermined.

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79 Heron, 122- 123.
80 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 99, "Price Kénogami, impact des quarts de travail sur la vie familiale."
81 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 26 "Price Kénogami."

As labour historian Craig Heron has noted, the opportunities for rank and file workers to engage in labour activism outside grievances and collective bargaining were limited. While the union executives were bound to the concerns or their membership, there were few real opportunities for rank and file workers to engage in union life on a continual basis.[82] As unions offered more services to the membership, the gulf between rank and file members and union executive grew ever wider.  It pained Gaston Hervé that rank and file workers accused union executives of minority rule, mirroring the union's criticism of management.  In what resembled a blueprint for the early CSN radio shows on CHOC FM, he sought to strengthen internal communication, broaden the base of union membership, and foster working-class solidarity.[83]

When a group of media professionals, social activists and adult educators began contemplating the founding of a community radio station at Jonquière in 1973, they turned for support to the union activists.  Keenly aware of the challenges the *Common Front* had encountered during the 1972 general strike in Quebec, this group of social activists held the creation of alternative media to be a key avenue for social change.  As the Quebec government had recently begun to fund community radio stations as an experiment in cultural sovereignty, it seemed a hopeful and fruitful time to broadcast the voices of labour across the airwaves.

**Labour Talk: Radio and the Union**

In 1977, CSN union members took to the air on CHOC FM to question company policies, plead with workers to take action, develop alternative economic scenarios, analyze industry-wide patterns of oppression and complain over complacency.  At a time when the future of the mill seemed precarious and waves of industry-wide strikes rocked the province, the station sought to

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82 Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement,* 89.
83 By calling for the revival of the union newsletter *Papajak*, Gaston Hervé hoped to reduce the social distance between union executives and rank and file workers and create a space for alternative storytelling.  See BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 26 "Price Kénogami."

create community through communication. From its earliest days, the union shows were self-avowedly radical and not afraid to criticize either state or big business.[84] The union prided itself both in its democratic decision-making process and its self-sufficient nature: "On a tout ici à Kénogami. On n'a pas pas besoin de courir à Montréal, ou à Toronto ou à New York pour avoir a un moment donné les projets de convention. Tout se prépare à Kénogami. Et tous nos services viennent de Kénogami."[85] However, like labour radio elsewhere in North America, CHOC had to reconcile its radical aspirations with the stubborn logistical and financial challenges that beset community radio stations across the province.[86] The station hovered perpetually at the brink of financial ruin, making up for limited resources with "trésors d'imagination" and volunteers: "on misait sur le milieu comme soutien tant financier qu'humain pour assurer l'avenir de la radio."[87]

CHOC FM did not have the money to conduct audience surveys. A survey by the University of Chicoutimi suggests that the station's audience consisted mostly of factory workers, women or people on government assistance.[88] The station was most effective at networking with community groups: "les groupes populaires et syndicaux sont appuyés par CHOC et c'est important de continuer de donner la parole à ceux qui sont vraiment touchés par les problèmes."[89] It continually tried to reach and include a public comprised of non-elite classes. Occasionally, CHOC FM went to prisons, unemployment centres, immigrant *acceuil* classes, long-term healthcare facilities and holiday celebrations for remote broadcasts. In so doing, the

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84 Roger Rhéaume, Lucie Gagnon, Martin Duchesne, *Introduction à la gestion des radios communautaires* (Montréal : Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec, 1998), 115-118.
85 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 68, "Price Kénogami, les négociations syndicales et le processus de consultation."
86 Rhéaume, Gagnon, Duchesne, 117. CHOC FM felt ambivalent about its sources of funding: "La subvention en elle-même est une contradiction, puisqu'elle vient de l'État, alors que nos actions visent plus souvent qu'autrement à contester ce même État danse ses règlementations
87 Ibid, 118.
88 At Price-Kénogami women working at the factory were secretaries ; in 1973 only ten women were part of the CSN union at the plant. On-air factory work was defined as masculine. When CHOC hosts and Price union members spoke about women they usually meant housewives or women affiliated with women's community organizations.
89 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 830, "CHOC parle de CHOC."

station kept trying to connect with the community and encourage broad-based community participation.

   As the CSN broadcasts indicate, the union's radio shows were a direct response to the perceived lack of representations of working-class interests in mainstream media: "merci à CHOC FM pour mettre à notre disposition ces micros pour permettre de lever le voix…un peu… sur la vie du travailleur."[90]  The Saguenay was distinct economic region that was socially and geographically isolated from the rest of Quebec.  When local residents started CHOC-FM, there had been only one FM radio station broadcasting in the area.[91] Radio-Saguenay owned the commercial station CKRS. The station was initially local and independent but would affiliate with Montreal networks in 1981.[92] Radio-Canada broadcast on AM in Jonquiere and mostly used the frequency to re-transmit programming from Montreal and Quebec.

   The local newspapers, owned by Québecor or Hollinger, focused on extra-regional news and in many cases acted as mere vessels for advertising.[93] Throughout the 1960s and 1970s larger daily Quebec newspapers cancelled their regional insert sections because of financial losses. [94] Only one local paper, *Le Quotidien* (owned by Hollinger in Toronto) focused on regional news. In the CSN broadcasts, hosts and guest speakers accused *Le Quotidien* of being a conduit for anti-labour popular opinion.[95]  If workers had initially greeted the launch of the *Le Quotidien* as a welcome antidote to the Montreal-centric news coverage in mainstream media, the union at Price-Kénogami quickly became frustrated with the paper's take on labour issues. The newspaper consistently echoed the company's assessment that strikes spelled economic loss and, ultimately, economic decline.

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90 BAnQ, P199, 99, "Price Kénogami, impact des quarts de travail sur la vie familiale."

91 Fauteux, 103.

92 Girard and Perron, 569-571.

93 Girard and Perron, 569.

94 Girard and Perron, 569.

95 Because of the lack of radio archives I have relied on newspaper evidence to reconstruct mainstream media's cultural messages.

Union executives criticized the paper for sensationalizing labour conflict by too readily becoming a mouthpiece for the company. Labour activists at Price-Kénogami directed their most vehement criticism at *Le Quotidien's* editorialist, Bertrand Tremblay, who portrayed strikes as a threat to the community's well being.  Tremblay's editorial views revealed a neo-liberal belief that economics, consumers and free-markets should dictate the outcome of labour conflict; he also was suspicious of union executive's power and ambitions.[96] As Jacques Rouillard, the prolific Quebec labour historian, notes, mainstream media were apt to endorse the notion that industrial relations should be harmonious, casting conflict, by default, in a negative light.[97] While *Le Quotidien* solicited commentary almost exclusively from union leaders and company publicists, CHOC sought to air the voices and ideas of workers most affected by labour conflict. During a strike, CHOC would purposefully interview union executives and workers, but rarely approach company management.  When one reporter mused about the pro-worker stance of his story, a CHOC host retorted, "Bah l'objectivité! Ça existe pas!"[98]

Hoping to give a voice to workers and create a space for those viewpoints lacking from mainstream media coverage, radio hosts and guests characterize radio as a pathway for social change.  For many volunteers, radio represented a weapon for marginalized groups: "si ça donnait à violence c'est parce qu'il n'avait pas de parole."[99] Radio hosts criticized how the press adopted the perspective of management or consumers, but rarely made workers the central

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96 A study by journalism students at the University of Chicoutimi found that the editorials "cherchent visiblement à regler des comptes avec la CSN", quoted in "L'attention des media appraît justifiée," *Le Quotidien,* 29 October 1980. For examples of editorials see, Bertrand Tremblay "On fait trop de cinema dans les relations de travail," *Le Quotidien,* 29 July 1977.; Bertrand Tremblay, "Les syndiqués de Price doivent voter sur les offres, " *Le Quotidien,* 3 October 1980.; Bertrand Tremblay "Evitons l'échec-et-mat, chez Price," *Le Quotidien,* 10 October 1981.;
97 Jacques Rouillard, *L'éxperience syndicale au Québec: Ses rapports avec l'état, la nation et l'opinion publique* (Montreal: VLB Éditeur, 2009), 307-309.  *Le Quotidien* also had a vested interest in Abitibi-Price continuing production because they relied on the regular production of newspaper.
98 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 898, "10e anniversaire de CHOC-FM, président d'honneur."
99 The most powerful stories aired on CHOC were typically the ones where the reporters were deeply invested in current developments, acting as both subjects and observers.  Even when a volunteer was not hosting a show, his or her voice could sometimes be heard during question period at a municipal meeting broadcast on CHOC. Radio shows were set-up to follow the developments of democratic participation within the union. See BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF,19, "grève Abitbi-Price."; BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF,135, "Députés péquistes de la région au conseil central de la CSN sur la loi 45 (loi anti-scab)."

subjects of news stories. The CSN broadcasts, by contrast, took pride in the cumulative history of strikes and labour activism at the plant. Their narratives moved away from isolated stories about current events to examine the slow progress and incremental change achieved on committees, at union general assemblies and on the shop floor.

Program after program represented the union as a force of democracy and social change and sought to align the interests of labour and with that of the broader public. The station championed workers' safety and fought vestiges of paternalism.  It aimed at socializing young workers into the union and radicalizing the existing union membership. In an effort of becoming more responsive to the concerns of rank and file workers, the union established a painstakingly detailed decision-making process that host Paul Tremblay championed enthusiastically on air. Both on the shop floor and on air, it was the everyday that was seen as key to building working-class consciousness and union solidarity.  CHOC, then, did not simply air grievances on-air, but took up the challenge – complex, difficult, and messy as it was – of building a counter-public and writing its own history on air.

As union radio shows held, the shop floor Price-Kénogami had once been a place regulated by personal connections and ruled the will of management. Desrosiers, who had been invited to share his reminiscences in a lengthy interview, compared himself to an obedient dog that had followed the whims of his master:

> C'était bien sévère. Il fallait que tu fasses attention, puis si tu excitais bien c'est toi qui est le pire. Il faut pas t'exciter… Dans ce temps le boss avait la liberté contre toi. Si ça faisait pas son affaire il peut te virer du jour au lendemain et c'est fini ton affaire…j'ai passé en faisant le même petit chien…j'ai eu des bons contrôles et ça a assez bien passé, mais je repasserai pas.[100]

When Desrosiers and other workers joined the union in 1943, their salaries increased and, slowly, they began to exert more power in the workplace. The story of the CTCC tuned CSN was

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100 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 104, "Travail à l'usine Price dans les années 30."

a story of a local union that responded to issues on the shop floor and later grew into a radical organization.

When Desrosiers remembered his time at Price he emphasized that unions had made the company an easier place to work. From the beginning, the union had demanded that wages be increased so that workers would earn a salary comparable to that of other unionized workers in the industry. The union also gave workers the opportunity to participate in decision-making and gain some control over the work process.[101] Desrosiers talked about strikes and smaller conflicts in a matter of fact manner, revealing the cumulative effect of fifty years work and union membership at the plant. Union activism had become normalized, a part of the culture at Price-Kénogami. He laughed and got excited as he retold the story of workers ignoring managers' orders: "Il a fait une menace à un moment donné. Ils ont fait une grève sans lui dire et il a dit si vous faites quelque chose sans me dire je vais sacrer mon camp. Et c'est ce qui est arrivé, ils ont fait une grève sans lui dire et il a disparu on l'a jamais revu."[102] Desrosiers memories parallel a trend in labour during the 1970s. Workers often blamed foremen and shop stewards for using particularly coercive tactics and overstepping their power.[103] To respond to these types of issues workers organized go-slows or shorter spontaneous work stoppages that went unreported in the media, but loomed large in workers' life narratives, as it did, in fact, in Desrosiers' account of his working life.

If workers and radio hosts proudly recalled the history of local unions, they also took care to represent labour as the guardian of the public good. During a broadcast about contract negotiations, Alain Harvey who had worked at Price for sixteen years imagined what Saguenay had looked like prior to the arrival of the pulp and paper industry. In Harvey's evocative turn of phrase, a utopian landscape of pristine forest and clean rivers had turned into a dystopia: "Les

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101 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 104, "Travail à l'usine Price dans les années 30."
102 Ibid.
103 Heron, 92-93.

compagnies sont venues s'installer ici, c'était dans les jardins remplis des beaux arbres, ils ont eu

des rivières pour pouvoir transporter leur bois. Bon, ils ont arraché une partie du jardin…ils ont

pillé et ils ont tiré tout qu'il y avait à tirer."[104] Alain Harvey's imagining of the resource town

emphasized the rupture of industrialization and the inherently destructive force of capitalism,

which, as Harvey held, made the company morally responsible for investing in the

community.[105] When the union talked about the forest, it invoked the notion of a Quebec heritage

that needed to be protected from multi-national companies: "Dans nos forêts là, c'est le cœur du

Québec qui se bat. On sait tous que nos origines partent de là, c'est une ressource première c'est

pour ça, c'est une des richesses du Québec, ça appartient au peuple. On ne veut pas qu'une

compagnie fasse qu'est ce qu'elle veut et nous pique nos forêts sans avoir notre avis?"[106]  Harvey

pointed to workers as the local custodians of the region's natural resources. The CSN had

released similar studies that put the forest under the protection of the government and called for

the forest to be developed responsibly.[107] Local knowledge and pride were juxtaposed with the

callous behaviour of multi-national corporations, a rhetorical strategy meant to shame Price-

Kénagomi into investing in both the community and its workers.

The 1976 and 1978 contract negotiations were a test for the union executive, as rank and

file workers seemed ambivalent and unwilling to fight. In times of an economic recession,

workers were hesitant to confront management.[108] Since 1973 inflation had risen dramatically.[109]

The impact on workers was shattering. Jean-Marc Gagnon, a union executive at Alma said that

the worker's identity as family breadwinner was under threat as factory work no longer counted

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104 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF 115, "Price Kénogami, négociations syndicales."
105 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF 19, "grève Abitibi-Price."
106 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF 32, "la fin du conflit Price Kénogami."
107 Real Gauthier, *On est pas pour s'laisser passer un sapin : les travailleurs de la foret, du bois des scieries, du papier et du carton faconne* (Montreal : CSN, 1973), 119. ; BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 329, "Commission Parlementaire sur l'industrie pâtes et papiers."
108 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 81, "Price-Kénogami les moyens de pressions et carte de repos [sic]."
109 Desmond Morton, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 297.

as a good job: "À ce moment-là tu pourras pas avancer ton niveau de vie icitte. C'est des besoins, en fait qui ont créé que le travailleur a besoin d'acheter aussi."[110] Union demands turned to protecting workers' standard of living by negotiating for indexation of salaries.[111] When Price-Kénogami lost indexation in 1977, CSN Kénogami would spend the next two cycles of negotiating trying to win back this hard-fought for right.

When the union membership refused to go on strike in 1977, two union activists took to the airwaves to discuss the vote.  René and Remi's voices sound exasperated and defeated: "Ils rejettent bien sûr les tactiques de la Compagnie, les offres de la compagnie...rejettent encore la façon que la compagnie les manipule, mais ils ne ripostent pas...ils veulent pas prendre les grands moyens pour riposter. C'est-à-dire que les rapports de forces qu'on appelle ils laisseraient la grève."[112] The two men spend the rest of the show discussing workers' complacency. Their conversation was long-winded, circular, riddled with questions and, not surprisingly, highly critical of the company's offer. As Remi and Réné conclude, the failure to mobilize stemmed from a breakdown in communication.  It was time to go back onto the shop floor and improve the channels of communications between union executives and rank and file workers: "de faire le chien de garde de tous nos intérêts parce que là on glisse là. On se laisse aller."[113]

In 1977 the Quebec government had passed a law that allowed workers to refuse work considered to be unsafe. Yet in practice, workers were all too often penalized for refusing to work. When host Paul Tremblay looked around the shop floor he saw men who were run-down from years on the job. The workers involved with the radio often used the saying that the company "fait de l'argent sur votre dos."[114] Now it seemed that they had proof. One radio guest, Maurice Gagnon had lost four months a year for three years straight because of an injured back.

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110 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF 115, "Price Kénogami : négociations syndicales."
111 Charland, 169.
112 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 126, "Price Kénogami, le syndicat."
113 Ibid.
114 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF,104, "Travail à l'usine Price dans les années 30."

Back injuries and respiratory problems were common at Price-Kénogami, as were mental health challenges which workers called "dépression nerveuse." Workers used their bodies to sell their labour, to work at the factories. The accidents at the plant threatened worker's relationship to their work: "il va rentrer peureux à l'intérieur de l'usine, il va etre stressé, 'ah bien coudonc si ça m'arrivait quelque chose icitte là.'"[115] Paul Tremblay framed health and safety as integral to working-class consciousness and a poignant reminder that workers were human beings, with vulnerable bodies. "Je pense que c'est pas dans notre idée je pense qu'on est dans l'idée d'humaniser les conventions collectives et d'apporter un peu plus de confort aux travailleurs qui ont subi les contraintes puis c'est un genre d'exploitation du côté de sa santé et du côté de sa vie."[116] Yet in times of labour strife, at Price-Kénogami and elsewhere, such health and safety concerns often took a backseat to economic issues. Attempts at improving health and safety were often stalled because management found the recommendations either too costly or restrictive.[117] As historian Robert Storey has found, the stories injured workers told were of paramount importance. They aimed to speak (and convince sympathetic listeners) of a single truth: " how 'through no fault of their own' they were injured at work and how their injuries have impacted their bodies and souls far more profoundly than those who hold decision-making powers… understand and believe."[118]

In 1978 workers at Price-Kénogami launched a spontaneous action to fight against management's decision to put an expiry date on meal coupons. Each time a worker was asked to do four hours of overtime, he was eligible for a meal ticket at the cafeteria. Some workers used them right away while other preferred to keep the ticket or lend them to others. The company claimed the system was an administrative nightmare and accused some workers of forging

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115 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF,27, "Price Kénogami."
116 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 99, "Price Kénogami, impact des quarts de travail sur la vie familiale."
117 Heron, 150.
118 Robert Storey, "They Have All Been Faithful Workers": Injured Workers, Truth, and Worker' Compensation in Ontario, 1970-2008," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2009): 155.

tickets. A new company policy made tickets valid only for a 48-hour period after the overtime shift.  In response, workers from the maintenance and expedition departments refused to do overtime. The company, in turn, refused to deal with the union, holding individual meetings with affected workers instead and sending home letters containing thinly veiled threats. Paul Tremblay was incensed that management refused to recognize the union's authority in dealing with these issues: "Ils ont envoyé une lettre aux gars, mais ils se sont trompés ils ont négocié avec des syndiqués."[119] When the company repealed the controversial policy, Paul Tremblay could not hide his excitement that workers seemed to be radicalizing and willing to fight once more: "Un mouvement s'est spontanément décidé à l'intérieur de l'usine. S'il y a encore qui doutent à un moment donné du coté de la compagnie et d'autres encore que la solidarité à l'intérieur de l'usine ça existe encore et ça existe plus que jamais."[120]

CHOC FM also featured regular shows about "Series C," the union's most inclusive, lengthy decision-making process. Series C was the building block for union demands. Union members decided the large and finer points of their demands in a series of meetings that lasted between four to five months. The union provided questionnaires to identify departmental concerns and needs and then provided surveys that invited workers to rank demands in order of their importance. During each step of the exercise, workers could suggest additional points. The union required each department and sector to meet and discuss the main demands: "on veut une convention qui reflète bien les gens d'usine, leur esprit. Eh ben c'est qu'est qu'on veut avoir."[121] Then the negotiation committee and the executive prepared the proposed collective contract and brought it to the general assembly.

The mix of meetings at the levels of department, sector and general assembly provided repeated opportunities for union members to discuss and vote on decisions. Union leaders voiced

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119 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 81 "Price Kénogami les moyens de pressions et carte de repos."
120 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 119, "Price Kénogami."
121 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 68, "Price Kénogami, les négociations syndicales et le processus de consultation."

their hope that a worker might share his opinions at the departmental level even if he might be ill at ease with addressing a general assembly of three hundred or more co-workers: "enfin les gars discutent leurs problèmes puis aussi les gars se connaissent tous et à ce moment-là il y a personne qui est gêné de parler, on est toute en famille à ce moment-là."[122] The Series C report was one of the few times radio host Paul Tremblay likened the shop floor to a family. The lengthy decision-making process that could last up to four months formed an important, positive part of life and work at Price-Kénogami. Even though Tremblay was quick to criticize the company's motives and considered the relationship between bosses and workers alienating and exploitative, he was strongly attached to the union, the place and the people at Price-Kénogami. He took great pride in how workers organized for negotiations, which made media's criticism of overly powerful union executives that much more hurtful. Within the union, the process seemed transparent and respectful to each and every worker: "l'assemblée générale est toujours souveraine et les gars sont toujours souverains chez eux. C'est eux autres qui sont nos patrons pour celui-là à la table de négociation."[123]

If the media reported on the union's demands prior to a strike, it was usually because they had attended the final general assembly. By this point, workers had already been involved in the process for several months and many decided to skip the meeting. They did not need to hear the familiar explications again. So much work had gone into the preparation of the document that no significant changes were expected at this point. Tremblay was sensitive to how the final meeting was represented in the media: "Des fois il y a des gens même qui dissent 'Le grand public et des gens qui nous regardent en dehors se demandent 'Bon mon Dieu les assemblée générales il y a pas grand monde. Comment ça fait qu'il une assemble générale comme ça."[124] It was hard to find an accurate barometer of workers' feelings and aspirations. The radio show represented an

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122 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 115, "Price Kénogami: négociations syndicales."
123 BAnQ, P199, CHOC MF, 61, "Price Kénogami projet de convention."
124 Ibid.

attempt of union executives to reach out to the general membership and outline clearly how participation in the union translated into shaping decisions.

The 1980 strike started as an illegal lockout (according to the union) and a wildcat strike (according to mainstream media and the company). The conflict began on May 19th 1980, one day before the Quebec referendum; the company and the union had been negotiating the new contract since April 30th. The union wanted to recover salary indexation to inflation, guarantee greater employment security and to provide additional provisions for health and safety. Throughout May relations between workers and management had been tense. The management had promoted three controversial superintendents in the maintenance departments. As a result, workers in the mechanic and electricity departments refused to do overtime. The company suspended nine employees for breach of the collective agreement. In response the majority of CSN members walked off the job. The union believed Abitibi-Price had adopted aggressive tactics to combat the union outside the negotiation table:

> On se rappellera qu'en '76 -'77-'78 l'ensemble des employeurs a enlevé des droits acquis des conventions collectives… ça veut dire que le monde se satisfaisait de régler pour un peu le statu quo. Aujourd'hui la Compagnie Price ne se contente pas de ça, elle congédie les officiers au départ et ça devient un peu l'objet de réintégration et il y a des choses qui se délaissent en cours… Abitibi-Price suit des cours de perfectionnement pour mieux contrer les actions du syndicat.[125]

The union executives used its broadcasts on CHOC to remind rank and file workers of successful strikes in past years in the hope to bolster solidarity. On the evening the workers had walked off the job, the union held an emergency general assembly. The three hundred workers in attendance voted to go on strike immediately.[126]

The atypical beginning of the strike caused dissent amongst rank and file workers. Many workers regarded the strike as illegal because the union had not respected the appropriate delays.

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125 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 133, "Conflit Abitibi-Price."
126 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 92, "Chronique Price-Kénogmai."

They also argued criticized the union for hurting negotiations with the company. While more active CSN members formed a picket line outside, about thirty CSN members continued to work. On two occasions CSN striking members broke into the plant and escorted the dissidents out. While the mainstream media prominently reported on the story of dissidents, the union glossed over the issue.[127] CHOC programs only mentioned the dissidents in passing. According to the union, even debating dissidence was to validate it: "La dissidence, ça sert à quoi? Ça a servi à l'intérêt de la compagnie, pas des travailleurs."[128] When Tremblay was asked about the issue, the usually effusive union executive simply stated "les journaux ont déjà autant parlé."[129]

Tremblay was audibly fed-up with the media covering the negative aspects of the strike. Instead, he focused on the upcoming general assembly, inviting everybody, including workers' wives: "Ça discute…ça parle de l'assemblée puis si le vote de grève est gagné ils vont avoir le droit de rapprocher du terrain pour empêcher les gars de rentrer."[130] The incident demonstrated that CHOC's programs were at times just an extension of the union and that the executive imposed considerable limitations on how the radio was being used. The union preferred to articulate a vision of informed, critical base of rank and file workers, who were in complete solidarity. In so doing, the union publicly silenced voices of dissent.

Despite such rumblings, the majority of the union voted to go on strike. The strike was now legal. On July 1st, the unions at Alma and Jonquière joined Kénogami in a *front commun* resuming joint negotiations with the company.[131] As the strike continued into the fall of 1980 and negotiations between the company and union stalled, the company tried to divide the different

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127 BAnQ, P666, S999, "Analyse de textes journaux traitant des conflits employeur-employés chez Abitibi-Price entre 20 mai et 10 juillet."
128 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 32, "La fin du conflit Price-Kénogami."
129 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 91, "Chronique Price-Kénogami."
130 BAnQ, P199 CHOC MF, 93, "Syndicat Price-Kénogmai."
131 Andrée Brassard, "Le conflit pren une ampleur régionale," *Le Quotidien*, 23 Mai 1980.

A part of the picket line during 1980 labour conflict. *Source*: BAnQ P666, S12, SS11, D64, P2064.

grades of workers with different salary increases. Management also took a hard-line approach against the workers who had been fired. In the end, however, the general assembly accepted Abitibi-Price's offer from 29th November 1980, although it would take until February 1981 for union and company to finalize their agreement. The back-to-work protocol encompassed the reinstatement of the fired workers. The union was able to protect the fired workers and all legal cases were eventually dropped.

It had taken nine months to reach a resolution. The building of a strong union – able to weather the 1980-1981strike, including internal dissent, union pilfering, protracted negotiations and the threats of lawsuits and plant closures – had taken much longer. When CHOC reported on the workers going back to work, it provided a happy ending to a struggle that had cost the workers immensely: "En entrant à l'usine ce matin, on voyait facilement le sentiment de fierté des travailleurs et puis ils étaient heureux… pour eux c'est une victoire."[132]

**Conclusion**

132 Ibid.

A community radio studio is usually filled with aging equipment, event listings, political posters, microphones and headphones; it rarely has windows. Volunteers, like Paul Tremblay, took time out of their day to rush into the studio and to talk about what mattered to them and (they hoped) to an audience they almost never heard or saw. Constraints on time, money and expertise meant that programs on CHOC often fell short of the volunteers' aspirations and the presumed power of radio.

At Price-Kénogami, CHOC programs had considerable success in creating a new narrative of labour's role in public life. CHOC sounded unlike any other show in the region and maybe even the province. In a 1986 provincial government report about the coverage of industrial relations in newspapers, Gisèle Tremblay writes that work was "le domaine fantôme de l'infomation."[133] The programs on CHOC told new stories about workers and the labour movement. They explored a dizzying number of subjects, including: specific jobs at the plant, workers' knowledge of production and the industry, industrial relations, the experience of wives of Price workers, health and safety, retirement, inflation, the pressures of consumption, and regional development. The shows delved into the radical traditions of the union in order to remind workers of how rights and entitlements had been won rather than offered by the company. They focused on the struggle of workers at Price-Kénogami and emphasized the participation of all workers. On CHOC, workers talked about their jobs with pride. CHOC offered a space to develop a vocabulary of work, struggle, social security and universal entitlements that could later be used as the basis for debate by the counterpublic.

The hosts also demonstrated a deep understanding of the industry and concern for the future of the Saguenay region. The workers' and the union's commitment, long-standing traditions in the region and knowledge of the industry were pillars of their narrative about work. These stories highlighted the possibility for unions and workers to live self-directed working

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[133] Tremblay, 35.

lives within Price-Kénogami. These shows put a human face on the production of paper, giving

weight to what the union and workers did, as well as emphasizing the sheer need to keep going.

The program's focus on process, especially the Series C, provided a real alternative narrative to

the event-based reporting of the mainstream media and offered space and flexibility in how

labour was represented on the radio. It made the union and pulp and paper workers visible,

agents of change on the shop floor and eventually, hopefully, beyond.

Community radio was process orientated and interested in participative democracy, two

aspects that provided a foundation for a counterpublic.  The use of community radio represented

a cultural reaction to labour reform. CHOC hosts and staff attempted to use creativity, language

and culture in order to resist changes in the industry. The future of work at Price-Kénogami and

the strength of the union were unclear and uncertain. Through the radio program, the union and

CHOC blended older values of universal entitlements and the labour movement with a newer

focus on the individual and self-actualization. The narratives relied on the rank and file worker as

human capital, putting rigid limits on how rank and file workers were expected to behave. On-

air, hosts and guests put great emphasis and expectations on visible, tangible results.

In the windowless studio, with only a microphone and one's voice streaming through the

headphones, it is sometimes easy to forget there is an audience and lapse into an almost private

conversation. The talk on CHOC was unpolished and often very inward looking. This accounts

for the lack of linear explanations, ellipses, interruptions and half-finished conversations. On

some occasions labour activists used CHOC as a space to brainstorm how to reach the ordinary

workers, which corresponded to the first stage of the formation of counter-public. These shows

provided valuable insight into the intellectual life of the union, revealing their interpretations,

analyses and visions of how the Price-Kénogami union aspired to remake union life and work on

the shop floor. The programs seemed to provide legitimacy for labour activists and the union's

executive, increasing the union's momentum, but also affected which guests were invited to the studio and what stories were told on-air. When dissent occurred, the radio hosts chose to ignore it. They also dismissed debate by saying it would only benefit the company.

The gap between rank and file workers and the executive parallels Habermas' conception of a "public" sphere that privileged the bourgeoisie and was not all that responsive to marginal voices. Not many rank and file workers actually spoke on CHOC. Perhaps they were not invited to join the executives on-air, or perhaps they were not interested. Instead of inviting workers to join discussions about the union and conflict at the work place, labour activists slipped into the practice of using CHOC simply as an extension of the union. In times of conflict the station used the radio for publicity or as an echo chamber for political dicta. The union desperately wanted and needed the base of workers to get involved and work together, but it also had a clearly defined vision of the counter-public. This vision was ambitious and radical. The challenges to construct a counterpublic through community radio were significant, including: human and material constraints at CHOC, the gap between executives and ordinary workers, the invisibility of the listeners, and the established practices of mainstream media. Most importantly, the urgency to organize a successful strike, to challenge management limited the development of a counterpublic on the radio waves.

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