

With *Worldly Ethics*, Ella Myers has set out an ambitious research agenda (for herself or others), including further theoretical articulations of “care for the world” in a range of settings as well as empirical, perhaps ethnographic, investigations of discrete episodes in the history of contestation over worldly things and the way they have played out in different times and places. Democratic theorists, not to mention democratic citizens or anyone interested in the prospects for a democratic future, have a great deal to learn from this book.

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Michel S. Beaulieu, *Labour at the Lakehead: Ethnicity, Socialism, and Politics, 1900-1935* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011). 316 pp. \$32.95 Softcover.

Labour at the Lakehead provides an institutional history of the socialist and working class movements in the twin cities of Fort William and Port Arthur (or current day Thunder Bay, an area known as the "Lakehead") during the first 35 years of the twentieth century. Along with an examination of the rise and decline of several labour unions and political parties, Beaulieu aim is to show

how “ethnicity both strengthened and weakened socialist organizations at the Lakehead.”(8)

Situated on the resource-rich north shore of Lake Superior in Northwestern Ontario at the head of the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway system, the economy of the Lakehead has traditionally been shaped by the fortunes of the extractive industries – primarily logging and mining – and its position as a critical transshipment point for grain and freight. A multi-ethnic, immigrant workforce supplied much of the required cheap labour power to operate these industries. As Beaulieu points out, “between 32 and 35 percent of the population of Fort William and Port Arthur were non-English speaking immigrants” during the period examined in the book.(6) Finnish and Ukrainian workers in particular formed the backbone of various left-wing organizations and created vibrant working-class counter-institutions throughout the region.

Aside from the multi-ethnic composition of its working class, another unique element that influenced left and labour formations in the Lakehead was the region's geography, or more specifically, its linkages to ideas and movements stemming from both the “east” and the “west.” This is convincingly argued to “complicate one of the major narratives of Canadian history – that of western exceptionalism – by raising the example of a region that was simultaneously

western and eastern.”(5) Little wonder, then, that the Lakehead was chosen as the location for the founding congress of the Social Democratic Party of Canada in 1911, envisaged as a pan-national party, by dissatisfied members of the Socialist Party of Canada. The One Big Union, frequently considered to be a western phenomenon, was also for a very brief period the dominant labour organization in the twin cities.

The 1909 Fort William Freight Handlers strike, examined in the first chapter, provides perhaps the most poignant illustration of the author's contention that “ethnic divisions complicated and even undermined class identities.”(8) It was during this episode that Louis Peltier, a union leader and Independent Labour Party mayor of Fort William, read the Riot Act to striking longshoremen attempting to block the provocative introduction of strikebreakers. When the dust had settled, eight striking workers lay dead in what would be compared to the Chicago Haymarket Affair of 1886. The 1909 strike exposed deep divisions between a moderate, often nativist “labourism” tied to the craft unions and a more radical socialist position disproportionately supported by unskilled, unorganized immigrants.

Intra-ethnic, intra-organizational, and ideological conflicts – more so than ethnic division as such – are the distinguishing features of the second and third parts of the book, which cover the period between 1919 and 1935. This is evident through the rivalry between two competing labour unions and two different visions for social change amongst the predominantly Finnish lumber workers – the Lumber Workers Industrial Union No. 120 of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the lumber workers unions affiliated to the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). The IWW maintained an unusually sturdy presence in the Lakehead, with the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur housing the Canadian Administration of the union beginning in 1932. The IWW presence frustrated Communist attempts to dominate the lumber workers unions, but the CPC also had internal issues to deal with, ranging from shifts in policy like the Third Period and “Bolshevization” to the party's desperate attempts to appeal to non-immigrant workers .

In terms of the dynamic of ethnicity and class that is explored in the book, some interpretations are certainly debatable. For instance, Beaulieu's assertion that since the ideology of multiculturalism was unavailable during this period, left and labour movements “lacked the conceptual and political tools to address, let alone resolve, the problems raised by ethnic prejudice and exclusivism.”(8)

Overall, *Labour at the Lakehead* is a well-researched study and a welcome contribution to the small but growing literature on working class movements in the region of the western Great Lakes. As a broad survey of the development of left and labour movements in Port Arthur and Fort William, the work builds on