

COMING OFF THE MOUNTAIN:

Forging an Outward-Looking

New Left at Simon Fraser University

IAN MILLIGAN*

THE STRIKE OF SIMON FRASER University's (SFU's) Department of Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology (PSA) began in September 1969. Precipitated by concern about departmental autonomy in personnel decisions, the strike action owed at least as much to the unorthodox conception of the university's role in society held by many PSA faculty and students. They declared that the PSA department was "grounded on the philosophy of participation and control from below and designed to serve the needs of the PEOPLE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA."¹ As Mordecai Briemberg, the department chair, recalls: "It was dangerous, the outward form of it. That somehow the university comes off the mountain, and actually goes to see what it can do in relation to ordinary people's working lives and their needs."² When eight striking professors were dismissed and an injunction ended the strike, New Leftists moved off campus.

This move into the community was a natural progression from on-campus activities over the preceding two years. Indeed, in this article I argue that we can see a significant current of off-campus engagement throughout SFU's radical history. Every major on-campus conflagration, from the 1967 dismissal of five teaching assistants (TAs) that nearly set off a student strike, to the arrest of 114 students in the wake of the November 1968 occupation of the Administration Building, to the PSA strike, revolved around one central issue: the responsibility of the New Leftist student to the broader world. While the SFU New Left largely failed to achieve its on-campus objectives, it made a significant impact

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¹ "Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology," *Peak*, 16 July 1969, 3.

² Mordecai Briemberg, interview with author, 3 May 2010.

and left a considerable legacy in Metropolitan Vancouver. New Leftists spawned the Service, Office Workers and Retail Workers' Union out of the Vancouver Women's Caucus as well as other institutions, such as the Community Education Research Centre. The interest of Vancouver's New Left in finding ways to collaborate with working people and unions mirrored attempts to forge similar alliances across the country. Despite being geographically isolated atop Burnaby Mountain, SFU's New Leftists developed an outward-looking community focus that sought to bring their university "off the mountain" and into the service of the surrounding community.

The radical history of SFU during the late 1960s is well known.³ Rather than examine the critical on-campus manoeuvrings of student newspapers and councils, I trace the trajectory of the SFU New Left's off-campus activities – the building of community support and coalitions with opposition parties and trade unions – to develop a more nuanced understanding of the period. I stress continuity, arguing that, while SFU president Kenneth Strand might have quashed one form of sixties activism on campus, many participants continued their activities off Burnaby Mountain in a different form.⁴

³ Invaluable studies include Hugh Johnston, *Radical Campus: Making Simon Fraser University* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005); Dionysios Rossi, "Mountaintop Mayhem: Simon Fraser University, 1965-1971" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2003); Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 242-47; and Roberta Sharon Lexier, "The Canadian Student Movement in the Sixties: Three Case Studies" (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2009). These complement broader treatments of the Canadian sixties, including Cyril Levitt's *Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Myrna Kostash, *Long Way from Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1980); Owram, *Born at the Right Time*; Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); and Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

⁴ Palmer declares: "At SFU Strand brought the 1960s to an abrupt halt." See Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 289. While this may be a rhetorical overstatement, there is a kernel of truth: the off-campus activities were different than the on-campus activities, operating in a very different political, economic, and social context of labour militancy and state repression (especially after the October Crisis). This touches on a major debate in sixties literature – periodization. There are two major schools of thought: one takes the decadal sixties as given; the other uses the "long sixties" as a central organizational concept. There is significant debate about how "long" the long sixties were: suggestions include periods that range from the early 1960s until the 1973 fuel crisis; others reach from the 1950s to the 1980s. For the purposes of this article, I begin my study with the 1965 founding of SFU and end in the 1970s, with the groups that grew out from the campus. I believe that historians select their time frames for reasons of historical context, to be sure, isolating continuities and change; yet they also select them to establish a narrative sweep, to tell their stories. To some extent, it is unfortunate that the period under study has come to be known as the "sixties," inviting confusion between historical epoch and decadal boundaries. Something unique happened during that period, but we must take care

What was the New Left? Scholarship has moved away from narrow, organizationally focused definitions (which often conflated the New Left with Students for a Democratic Society [a US-based group]) towards more expansive conceptions.⁵ John McMillian defines the New Left as a “mostly white student movement” fighting for participatory democracy, civil rights, university issues, and an end to the Vietnam War. It existed alongside a much broader, interconnected but distinct, “movement” favouring gay rights, feminism, and the counterculture.⁶ Certainly, the New Left must be understood as an ever-evolving, flexible movement.⁷ Narrow definitions can obscure local and even national variants, such as the SFU New Left’s relationship with the broader community, including the working class, and its separation from the broader student movement.

SFU was an instant campus in working-class Burnaby, opened in September 1965 to accommodate the baby-boom generation. The media created a considerable buzz around SFU by building an “exciting” public image thanks to its round-the-year “trimester” system, its focus on teaching, and its modern architecture.⁸ SFU sought “non-traditional” students from the outset and endeavoured to encourage their participation in higher education through various means, particularly the twelve-month calendar. It had a slightly larger percentage of students from working-class households than was seen in the national average.⁹

not to reify a firm sense of what the sixties were, when they began, and when – or if – they even finished. This is in keeping with Palmer’s overall agnostic approach. For more, see Van Gosse, “A Movement of Movements: The Definition and Periodization of the New Left,” in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. John-Cristophe Agnew and Roy Rozenzweig (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 277–302; Andrew Hunt, “When Did the Sixties Happen? Searching for New Directions,” *Journal of Social History* 33 (1999): 147–61; Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*; Dimitry Anastakis’s introduction to Dimitry Anastakis, ed., *The Sixties: Passion, Politics, and Style* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 3–4 and 14n3.

⁵ See Andrew Hunt, “How New Was the New Left?” in *The New Left Revisited*, ed. John McMillian and Paul Buhle (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 141.

⁶ See John McMillian, “You Didn’t Have to Be There: Revisiting the New Left Consensus,” in *New Left Revisited*, ed. John McMillian and Paul Buhle, 5–6; and Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*. For a broader discussion of this, see Andrew Hunt, “How New Was the New Left?” in McMillian and Buhle, *New Left Revisited*, 139–55.

⁷ This is raised in an article by former SFU activist John Cleveland, who argues that we should not misconstrue the New Left as “new liberals.” While New Leftists were different from the Old Leftist, they still promoted a new socialism. See John Cleveland, “New Left, Not New Liberal: 1960s Movements in English Canada and Quebec,” *Canadian Review of Sociology* 41 (2004): 67–84.

⁸ Johnston, *Radical Campus*, 120.

⁹ At SFU, almost 40 percent of the first student cohort of the 1965 class came from households in which parental occupations were listed as “skilled trades” or “unskilled.” The national average was 35 percent, a figure that would have also included similar institutions in Ontario, such as Brock or York University. The SFU statistics are found in “Simon Fraser Student Statistical Analysis, Fall Semester 1965,” data processing survey, Simon Fraser University Archives (hereafter SFUA), Hugh Johnston Fonds, box 4, file 37. National figures are from Robert

More important, SFU differed markedly from the more established University of British Columbia and its more affluent student body.¹⁰ Briemberg recalls the rhetoric around “bringing ordinary working people ... into the university and giving them the same opportunities as the more expensive, elite, UBC ... The [class] differential between the two universities was quite a bit stronger than it is today.”¹¹ Yet SFU was not a class-free utopia. Sharon Yandle, a member of the first student cohort from working-class origins, recalls feeling her class difference when with other students.¹²

Early on-campus debates concerned the role of students in society. In May 1966, in an act of strikebreaking during a Vancouver municipal workers’ strike, twenty students crossed City Hall picket lines to cut the lawn. When the Student Society chair declared his concern that this would “lead the working class to harbor resentment against university people,” the on-campus newspaper, the *Peak*, argued: “Council is going well beyond its jurisdiction by criticizing student political and moral action off-campus.”¹³ This episode is important not only for highlighting the diversity of political views at SFU but also for demonstrating that, from an early stage, student activists were concerned about relations with the broader community. Later that year a campaign against an on-campus Shell gas station saw students gather 350 signatures from the

Rabinovitch, “An Analysis of the Canadian Post Secondary Student Population, Part 1: A Report on Canadian Undergraduate Students,” February 1966, McMaster University Archives (hereafter MUA), Ontario Union of Students Fonds (hereafter OUS), box 39.

¹⁰ In 1970, two UBC professors surveyed the student population and noted that 36 percent of UBC students came from households that made less than \$7,500 per year, whereas the province-wide figure was 68 percent. Conversely, 42 percent of UBC students came from families that made more than \$10,000 per year, compared to the 15 percent province-wide figure. This is discussed in John Andersen, “Survey of UBC Students Finds Middle-Class Bias,” *Ubyssy*, 17 March 1970, 3. Similar figures were not available for SFU.

¹¹ Briemberg interview. I make extensive use of oral interviews. Alessandro Portelli’s *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997) provides cautionary notes with regard to studying the sixties, arguing that rapid changes and the particular state of youthful flux made it difficult to stabilize memory. There is a further debate between those who support “sharing authority” between historian and subject, on the one hand, and historians such as Leon Fink, who raise questions about “the problem of community” and heritage, on the other. See Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). See also the special issue of the *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’études canadiennes* 43, 1 (2009), esp. Steven High, “Sharing Authority: An Introduction,” 12–34. Compare High with Leon Fink, “When Community Comes Home to Roost: The Southern Milltown as Lost Cause,” *Journal of Social History* 40 (2006): 119–45. I am aware that there is the potential for the interviewee to consciously or unconsciously self-select, privilege, or repress certain memories. It is the historians’ job to sift through, compare testimonies with archives and each other, and advance a particular narrative.

¹² Sharon Yandle, interview with author, 1 May 2010.

¹³ “Picket Lines,” *Peak*, 25 May 1966, 2.

broadier community and try to convince area residents to support them.¹⁴ Despite SFU's relative isolation, student activists looked outwards.

Radical activity assumed a more overtly political tone at SFU in 1967 thanks, in part, to an influx of new graduate students. A key player was Martin Loney, a PSA TA who came from Britain to study with the radical Marxist sociologist Tom Bottomore, who was also SFU's dean of arts. Loney had been a member of the British Labour Party, had worked with the National Union of Students, and had been involved in anti-apartheid work.¹⁵ Another of Bottomore's students, Jim Harding, also brought a wealth of activist experience to SFU: he had grown up in Saskatchewan, had run for the NDP there (before leaving it in 1964 over its refusal to condemn the Vietnam War), and lost his job as an instructor at the Regina campus.¹⁶

A New Left was taking shape at SFU. But English-Canadian New Leftists of the time had no cohesive understanding of how they would achieve fundamental social change. Members of the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA), Canada's pre-eminent New Left formation in the mid-1960s, had followed C. Wright Mills, Herbert Marcuse, and others in believing that the working class was no longer the key agent of social change. Many felt that the agents of social change would be found among Canada's dispossessed: students, Aboriginals, the urban poor, and racial minorities. However, this threatened to rip New Leftists apart. Several attempts at community organizing, such as the Kingston Community Project and the Student Neestow Partnership Project in the summer of 1965, were disappointing: the need for agreement, and the failure to arrive at a single schema, led to sectionalism and factionalism.¹⁷ By 1967 a SUPA manifesto called upon a nebulously defined "new working class," which was increasingly alienated from power, to lead social change.¹⁸ This was the culmination of months of debate in the national *SUPA Newsletter* – debate that revolved around questions of class and the proper agents of social change.¹⁹ Harding recalls that

¹⁴ Press Releases regarding Shell Station, SFUA, Simon Fraser University Student Society Fonds (hereafter SFUSS), box 74-31, file F-74-10-0-0-21. This was also discussed in "Shell Campaign Gaining Support," *Peak*, 12 October 1966, 1. See also Johnston, *Radical Campus*, 257-61.

¹⁵ Martin Loney, interview with author, 23 July 2009.

¹⁶ Jim Harding, interview with author, 13 October 2009.

¹⁷ See Kostash, *Long Way from Home*; and Levitt, *Children of Privilege*. For the American context, see Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labour in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

¹⁸ "Towards a 'Manifesto' for SUPA: A Rough Table of Contents," n.d., (presumably ca. June 1967), MUA, Student Union for Peace Action Fonds, box 7.

¹⁹ The articles are too numerous to cite, but important ones include: Jim Harding, "Bases of Conflict Within SUPA," *SUPA Newsletter* 3, 1 (1966): 4; J.M. Freeman, "Who Are the Middle

these ideas were also discussed at the pub, an important venue for SFU New Leftists.²⁰

In March 1967 events at Templeton Secondary School presented activist PSA students with an opportunity “to link up to the working class, a working-class school.” According to John Cleveland, then a PSA graduate student, what followed “was a very conscious political choice based on pre-existing socialist politics that were pro-working class.”²¹ Five graduate TAs learned that a student at Templeton had been expelled for parodying and criticizing a teacher. They wrote an open letter to the Templeton student body, imploring them to stand up for the student through any “legal action,” including a strike.²² A visit to Templeton by the signatories to distribute pamphlets and speak to the high schoolers ended with two of them being arrested.²³ The five TAs were also all immediately fired by SFU’s Board of Governors as they had “discredit[ed]” the university and “recommended contempt for the law.”²⁴ After the resignation of Dean Bottomore and the threat of a strike by the Student Society, the TAs were reinstated.

The increasingly energized campus was fertile ground for New Leftist organizing. Drawing inspiration from a similar organization at McGill, Students for a Democratic University (SDU) was founded at SFU. A poster summed up the group’s initial aims:

To create a continuing organization concerned with:

1. the structure of the university
2. the role of the university in society
3. collective representation of student interests
4. coordination of student action aiming at greater involvement in the control of the university²⁵

Class?” *SUPA Newsletter* 3, 4 (1967): 10; and Stan Gray, “Response to Don McKelvey,” *SUPA Newsletter* 3, 7 (1967): 9. Information was also obtained from numerous interviews.

²⁰ It is difficult to measure the transmission of ideas as so little was kept. Harding recalls the pub as a critical place for theoretical discussion at SFU. Certainly, most of the students were connected by virtue of an intellectual framework that was influenced by several key ideas and authors, notably the aforementioned C. Wright Mills and Herbert Marcuse.

²¹ John Cleveland, interview with author, 1 May 2010.

²² “Open Letter to the Students at Templeton Secondary School,” n.d., SFUA, SFUSS, box 74-32, file F-74-10-0-0-29.

²³ Loney interview; and “Cops Cop Loney Again,” *Peak*, 15 March 1967, 1. See also Johnston, *Radical Campus*, 262-65; and Lexier, “Canadian Student Movement,” 97-99.

²⁴ Telegram to affected TAs from Patrick McTaggart-Cowan, reprinted in a special issue of *Student Advocate*, 26 March 1967, SFUA, SFUSS, box 74-32, file F-74-10-0-0-29. The selected text was also found in a press release issued by the university, as seen in “Five TAs Fired,” *Peak*, 17 March 1967, 1.

²⁵ SDU Organizational Meeting Poster, 29 January 1968, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Royal Canadian Mounted Police/Canadian Security Intelligence Service Fonds

Much of this was due to the influence of the PSA department, which was calling for community involvement and reaching out to “working people, poor people, native people, women ... [to determine] how [it] could relate and meet the needs of those people as opposed to corporate needs.”²⁶ SDU would flirt with student political power in 1968. Loney, John Conway (a student leader at Regina before coming to SFU for his doctorate), and Harding formed a short-lived – and controversial – SDU student government between March and September 1968.²⁷

In November 1968 the Student Council at Vancouver City College (VCC) protested the inequities and challenges facing college students when they attempted to transfer to university: the admissions process was opaque and there was no transparency in the transfer credit-granting process.²⁸ Drena McCormack, a VCC council vice-president, approached SDU in light of its radical reputation. By her account: “We didn’t even think they’d meet with us. And the funny thing was that the way they looked at us was ‘oh good, a new issue we can latch onto and run with.’ And we were just thrilled.”²⁹

Why was this an attractive issue for SDU? The PSA-inspired community orientation of SDU had joined with a broader English-Canadian move towards thinking about the working class as an agent of social change. The Canadian Union of Students (CUS) had explicitly turned towards the working class. The 1967 election of Peter Warrian as CUS president had been chaotic, with considerable debate about whether CUS had an off-campus mandate or whether it should limit itself to a service-provision role. After his election, Warrian argued: “A link between students and the working class is an obvious necessity. However, this link must have a functional basis, it cannot simply be based on an abstract sentiment of fraternal solidarity.”³⁰

These ideas trickled down to individual campuses. CUS, as well as the Canadian University Press, served as an intellectual conveyor belt.³¹ The CUS Congress in the summer of 1968 was especially seminal for attendees. There were worries that people were so radicalized that they

(hereafter RCMP/CSIS Fonds), vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 44.

²⁶ Briemberg interview.

²⁷ Rossi, “Mountaintop Mayhem,” 136. See also Report on Simon Fraser University Student Council, 3 June 1968, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 39, file 94-A-00130, pt. 2.

²⁸ Drena McCormack, interview with author, 28 April 2010.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Peter Warrian, “Notes on Students, Politics and Political Economy,” spring 1968, LAC, Peter Warrian Fonds, box 3.

³¹ A good overview of CUS can be found in Douglas Nesbitt, “The ‘Radical Trip’ of the Canadian Union of Students, 1963-69” (MA thesis, Trent University, 2010).

would have unrealistic expectations. When he wrote to the national council of CUS, Jim Russell, a former SUPA activist (part of the team that wrote the aforementioned manifesto) turned BC-based CUS fieldworker, had the sense that “people who ha[d] their minds fucked at Seminars, Congresses, expect[ed] to give birth to a minor revolution by October.”³² Members of SDU had a particularly significant presence at the 1968 Congress: Loney was elected president for 1969, supported by CUS’s radical wing (including Conway). Following Congress, through the fall of 1968, students across Canada began reaching out to the working class.³³ In Ontario, this took the form of picket line involvement as the CUS intervened in the 1968–69 *Peterborough Examiner* strike, with Warrian, in the *Globe and Mail*, calling for a more total worker–student alliance;³⁴ in Halifax, New Leftists joined picket lines;³⁵ and in Regina, based on the belief that the university belonged to the public, there was an effort to reach out to workers during an on-campus fees controversy.³⁶ In this ideological milieu, it is not surprising that SDU students were very receptive to the VCC students and their admissions issue. Guy Pocklington (who came to SFU as an undergrad after hearing that Bottomore “attracted interesting people”) recalls that they “were interested in linking the student movement with the larger society, the working class, so this particular struggle – which [involved] demands of working-class students ... was perfect [for us].”³⁷ Other former SDU members echoed this. As Cleveland recalls: “[these were] working-class

³² Letter from Jim Russell to National Council regarding strategy, October 1968, LAC, Peter Warrian Fonds, box 1, file 22. The significance of the Congress was raised in Andrew Wernick, interview with author, 9 October 2009. Wernick would become a Toronto New Leftist leader.

³³ The year 1968 is also seen as pivotal in Cleveland’s New Left framework, based on an extensive survey of participants, who see the new socialist tendency within the New Left as “increasingly predominant.” See Cleveland, “1960s Movements in English Canada,” 83. See also the short overview in Dimitri Roussopoulos, “Canada: 1968 and the New Left,” in 1968: *Memories and Legacies of a Global Revolt*, ed. Phillip Gassert and Martin Klimke (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 2009), 39–45.

³⁴ Wilfred List, “15 Arrested in Examiner Strike as Students Reinforce Picket Line,” *Globe and Mail*, 7 December 1968; Wilfred List, “Students to Bolster Examiner Picket Line,” *Globe and Mail*, 6 December 1968; “Students Hope for 500 at Peterboro Strike,” *Chevron*, 10 January 1968, 4. Information also obtained from numerous interviews, including Peter Warrian, interview with author, 20 May 2009.

³⁵ “Goodspeed’s Bad Business in Council,” *Dalhousie Gazette*, 21 November 1968. Information was also received from Ken Clare, interview with author, 11 August 2009; and Steve Hart, interview with author, 11 August 2009.

³⁶ Discussed in Pistula, *New World Dawning*; Lexier, “Canadian Student Movement”; and “Historical, Political Background Since 1965,” n.d. (presumably ca. 1972), LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 97, file AH-1999/00104, pt. 4. Information was also received from John Conway, interview with author, 14 October 2009; Don Mitchell, interview with author, 17 October 2009; and Don Kossick, interview with author, 14 October 2009.

³⁷ Guy Pocklington, interview with author, 28 April 2010.

kids trying to get into the middle-class university, so again this was our attempt to take a class perspective.”³⁸

SDU members and vcc students drafted a manifesto, with four key demands:

1. [F]reedom of transfer and automatic acceptance of credits within the BC public educational system
2. An elected parity Student/Faculty Admissions Board [which would make admissions responsive to students and faculty rather than to the administration]
3. [T]he opening of all Administration Files
4. More money for education as a whole and equitable financing within post-secondary education. This involves the immediate end to the current school construction freeze.³⁹

Three hundred SFU and vcc students attended a special meeting of the SFU Senate called to discuss the manifesto’s demands. McCormack, from vcc, went into the meeting thinking that the university administrators would recognize the folly of their policy, but SDU members were less sanguine.⁴⁰ After the demands were rejected, they effected a pre-planned occupation of the SFU Administration Building and refused to leave until their demands were met. SFU president Kenneth Strand called the police. On the occupation’s third night, negotiations broke down and the RCMP was ordered to move in. The occupiers were given the option of leaving, and some, fearing immigration issues, did so.⁴¹ At three in the morning, the police moved in and arrested the 114 people remaining.

In support, CUS printed a special issue of its newspaper, *Issue*, aimed at working people. This was an opportunity for it to build upon its recent ideological shift towards the working class. One hundred thousand copies were printed and distributed to “factories and unions throughout BC.”⁴² Conway recalls that the paper was also distributed to other

³⁸ Cleveland interview.

³⁹ “Education in Crisis,” manifesto by the Simon Fraser SDU, November 1968, SFUA, SFUSS, box 74-32, file F-74-10-0-0-29.

⁴⁰ “Administration Occupied,” *Peak*, 21 November 1968, 1. There is some debate over the number of students present. Some RCMP telegrams pegged the number at two hundred, although Security Service reports also came up with three hundred. See also Telegram from Security Intelligence Branch, Vancouver to RCMP Commissioner, 21 November 1968, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 44.

⁴¹ McCormack interview. See also Letter from Second-in-Command, Burnaby Detachment to Officer-in-Command, Burnaby Detachment, detailing police action, 2 December 1968, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 44.

⁴² Gordon Hardy, “Cus Paper to Inform Unions,” *Peak*, 2 December 1968, 1.

schools across Metro Vancouver as well as door-to-door in Burnaby. Its purpose was to explain “[the SDU] case to the working class.”⁴³ The issue was entitled “Special Edition for the People of British Columbia,” with the headline reading: “Simon Fraser Concerns You.” The lead story argued:

The BC government has shown in its policies that it does not represent the working people of this province. Attorney General Peterson was Minister of Labor and Minister of Education, as such he attacked both workers and students. With Bill 33 he sought to prevent unions fighting for the interests of their members. Now he is pressing criminal charges against 114 young people. (Under BC labour laws they have imprisoned labour leaders like Homer Stevens. It seems they intend to do the same to students.)⁴⁴

The broadsheet pointed out that lawyers, businesspeople, and financiers were on the SFU Board of Governors and that workers, students, and educators were not. The CUS Student Means Survey was used to show the disproportionate number of working-class students at SFU.⁴⁵ The broadsheet emphasized that the SFU 114 were arrested for the rights of future students: “Your children today, our children tomorrow.” Cleveland recalls that there was some traction around these demands: “The unions could see ‘hey, my kids have more access to university if they win these issues.’ It resonated really well.”⁴⁶ A second broadsheet, *Trouble at Simon Fraser*, was also distributed to union and community members. It was apparently a product of the PSA department. It ran articles such as “Trouble Is ... You Pay for the University – They Run It.” It reprinted what the PSA stood for, and it encouraged unions and community members who needed help to contact Briemberg.⁴⁷

⁴³ Conway interview. See also Report on Simon Fraser University, 1 September 1970, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 50. Some evidence of its distribution can be garnered by its widespread archival presence. A copy was found in the holdings of the British Columbia Federation of Labour and the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union. Copies were also found in the RCMP Fonds.

⁴⁴ Special Issue of *Issue*, University of British Columbia Special Collections (hereafter UBCSC), British Columbia Federation of Labour Fonds (hereafter BCFL), box 56, file 9.

⁴⁵ CUS carried out an extensive Student Means Survey, commissioned in 1964 and wrapped up in February 1966, which sought to get an indication of students’ financial resources and opportunities. The report can be found in Robert Rabinovitch, “An Analysis of the Canadian Post Secondary Student Population, Part I: A Report on Canadian Undergraduate Students,” February 1966 (published booklet), MUA, OUS, box 39.

⁴⁶ Cleveland interview.

⁴⁷ “Trouble at Simon Fraser,” UBCSC, Student Protest Collection, box 4, file 4. See also Report on Simon Fraser University, 1 September 1970, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 50.

The Committee to Aid the SFU 114 was soon established. It included a vice-president from the International Woodworkers' Association and the president of the Nelson, Trail and District Labour Council.⁴⁸ British Columbia Federation of Labour secretary-treasurer Ray Haynes called for the charges to be dropped and agitated for a committee to look into student grievances surrounding admissions. He argued that it was essential that the committee include union members, teachers, students, and other representatives.⁴⁹ Haynes also wrote to the minister of education and the attorney general in support of students.⁵⁰ Harding remembers the leader of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU), Homer Stevens, coming to campus. "I believe it was mostly the fishermen," Harding recalls of labour supporters: "we took the position of access of their children to higher education and of course, that's part of their Old Left reason for working!"⁵¹

When the 114 were sentenced in March 1969, the *Peak* ran an editorial comparing student protest to earlier struggles, including the New Westminster fishers' strike that was broken up by the militia in 1900 and picket line attacks in 1930 and 1935.⁵² A document entitled "Why They Occupied the Building" declared that the charges against the 114 paralleled the ongoing harassment of labour unions and that being charged with "obstruction of private property" was similar to receiving an injunction.⁵³ Harding recalls how he and fellow New Leftists began to see connections "between what [they were] doing and trade unions fighting for their rights. In fact, the same laws that were used against the early trade unionists in BC [were] used against [the New Leftists] at Simon Fraser."⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Letter from Isolde Belfont, Secretary of the Committee to Aid the SFU 114, to Supporters, 22 May 1969, UBCSC, BCFL, box 17, file 34.

⁴⁹ Press Release on Simon Fraser, 16 December 1968, UBCSC, BCFL, box 13, file 37.

⁵⁰ Letter from R.C. Haynes to Minister of Education Donald Brothers, 30 December 1968, UBCSC, BCFL, box 13, file 37.

⁵¹ Harding interview. That such leadership came from unions like the UFAWU speaks to the character of the British Columbian labour movement, especially its role in sustaining an oppositional working-class political culture. Communist-led and radical breakaway nationalist movements nourished this culture. For the definitive treatment of this process, see Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

⁵² "Looking Backward," *Peak*, 20 March 1969, 4. As Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker note in their survey of the British Columbia Court of Appeal's judicial views of picketing, by the Second World War, the court "had distinguished itself by having one of the most restrictive views of picketing in Canada." See Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, "Everybody Knows What a Picket Line Means": Picketing Before the British Columbia Court of Appeal," *BC Studies* 162 (2009): 59.

⁵³ "Why They Occupied the Building," n.d., SFUA, SFUSS, box 74-32, file F-74-10-0-0-29.

⁵⁴ Harding interview.

The last New Leftist activity of relevance at SFU was the PSA strike, which occurred after the administration overruled departmental tenure and promotions decisions. On 15 July 1969, the PSA department was placed in trusteeship by the university administration: one adduced reason for this is that the move towards faculty and student parity on committees violated regulations.⁵⁵ The department countered by pointing out what it felt was the real reason behind the trusteeship: the PSA department was “grounded on the philosophy of participation and control from below and designed to serve the needs of the PEOPLE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.”⁵⁶ A full-page *Peak* spread discussed the common struggle of workers and students:

More and more, official and wildcat strikes make demands for control over speed-ups, control over what happens on the shop floor, in the office, control over automation, control over the polluted atmosphere ... Students too are no longer willing to be bought off with a degree-packet. They want to control how they work, when they work, the conditions in which they work.⁵⁷

According to the statement: “You meet the same excuses, the same tricks and sometimes even the same people in your struggles in the factory, in the office, in the apartment, in the school. And these struggles are not just yours. They are our struggles too.” The department invited community members who needed research, teaching workshops, or other help to contact it. To this day Briemberg thinks this is why the PSA was attacked: “Some faculty and students are working with people in unions, or unemployed in demonstrations, and those things ... And it was dangerous, the outward focus of it. That somehow the university comes off the mountain, and actually goes to see what it can do in relation to ordinary people’s working lives and their needs.”⁵⁸ Serving the public was a central issue throughout. The PSA Student Union agreed, declaring that it supported the department’s push to be “more involved in the community” and that greater decision-making power was necessary to “ensure that the university [was] responsive to *all* peoples needs, irrespective of wealth or power.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ “Trusteeship on PSA,” *Peak*, 16 July 1969, 1. There were several other reasons, as discussed in Johnston, *Radical Campus*, 303-13.

⁵⁶ “Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology,” *Peak*, 16 July 1969, 3.

⁵⁷ “The Common Struggle,” *Peak*, 16 July 1969, 4.

⁵⁸ Briemberg interview.

⁵⁹ Press release by John Conway, Co-Chairman of the PSA Student Union, n.d. (presumably ca. September 1969), SFUA, SFUSS, box 74-31, file F-74-10-0-0-23 (emphasis in original).

In September 1969, the PSA students and faculty voted to strike for the return of local decision-making control.⁶⁰ Pickets targeted professors who continued teaching. Attempts were made to reframe the events within a broader community perspective. Briemberg addressed the Vancouver and District Labour Council, arguing: “[the] same people who control the university also control the major businesses in this province, and use[] the same tactics as are used against the labour movement.”⁶¹ The council pledged its support. However, there was no mass mobilization of labour, no groundswell of rank-and-file support. The RCMP concluded that, with exceptions, “the reaction of the labour movement to the SFU problems was one of restraint and non-involvement.”⁶² Part of this may have stemmed from the media coverage. As Briemberg recalls: “[The papers] smear[ed] us as wild-eyed, crazy people who were chaotic, creating a mess ... And our time of working with people in the unions had not been sufficiently long enough that they were in a position ... to really rally their memberships in any way to speak out.”⁶³

While counter-courses were briefly established by striking students to “opt out of the business-university complex and ‘do research for the people,’”⁶⁴ the PSA strike was short. The provincial Supreme Court, at the request of the SFU administration, issued an injunction on 23 October to restrict unlawful picketing, coercion, and intimidation. Now facing arrest if it continued, on 4 November the Joint Strike Assembly (composed of students and professors) voted to end the strike.⁶⁵ While the students held on for ten days between the injunction and calling off the strike, it was apparent that they were largely alone, that the state was being marshalled against them, and that there was little reason to persist. In this context, students were not prepared to face imprisonment.⁶⁶

The strike’s true significance for the long-term development of SFU’s New Left lay in providing the final push for many to move off campus and wholly involve themselves with off-campus activities. As Briemberg explained to the *Peak* in early 1970:

⁶⁰ “PSA Approves Strike Motion,” *Peak*, 24 September 1969, 1; “PSA Begins Picketing Classes,” *Peak*, 1 October 1969, 1; and “History Students Vote to Strike,” *Peak*, 1 October 1969, 1.

⁶¹ Minutes of meeting, 2 December 1969, UBCSC, Vancouver and District Labour Council Fonds, box 21.

⁶² Report on Simon Fraser University, 1 September 1970, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 50.

⁶³ Briemberg interview.

⁶⁴ “PSA Begins Picketing Classes.”

⁶⁵ Lexier, “Canadian Student Movement,” 173.

⁶⁶ Cleveland interview; and “PSA Calls off Strike,” *Peak*, 5 November 1969, 1.

[The PSA strike] made many of us more conscious of the necessity for alliances with oppressed groups off campus. It is easy to know this rhetorically, it is another thing to know this from the experience of a strike where the absence of a developed alliance is critical to success and failure of one's own specific struggles ... Secondly, and in a complementary way, having engaged in a strike, having fought for and not just spoken about community integration, makes it easier to work with oppressed groups off-campus.⁶⁷

This would be put to the test as many left SFU entirely in the wake of the strike. For some, their supervisors had been terminated or the rationale behind attending the PSA department had evaporated; for others, burnout had resulted from years of disruption.⁶⁸ Both the student movement and on-campus New Left had been broken, a point raised in all of my interviews and also noted by the RCMP and the *Peak*. SFU would become, as the *Peak* put it, a "hotbed of quietism."⁶⁹ The action was elsewhere.

The continuity of the off-campus orientation can be seen in three projects: the Community Education and Research Centre (CERC), the establishment of the *Western Voice*, and the emergence of the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC). The CERC represented a direct continuation of PSA policies. The fired faculty, led by Briemberg, established the centre in downtown Vancouver. Building on earlier promises, the centre was intended to host workshops on historical and contemporary issues, conduct research for unions, write broadsheets, and assemble a public library of useful documents.⁷⁰ New Leftists also came to assist. An organizational meeting in December 1969 aimed to establish "a working relationship" between labour and PSA members. About one hundred unionists attended, including members of the Canadian Ironworkers Union; the Telecommunications Workers; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; Marine Workers and Boilermakers; Carpenters Union; and the Vancouver and District Labour Council. The RCMP was surprised by the turnout, although it noted that most appeared to be "students or long haired hippie type

⁶⁷ "Briemberg on the Community Education Centre, Its Politics, and the Strike," *Peak*, 21 January 1970, 10.

⁶⁸ A point raised in many of my interviews.

⁶⁹ "Simon Fraser University 1971: Hotbed of Quietism," *Peak*, 3 March 1971, 12-13. The RCMP made a similar point in Vancouver Security Service Key Sectors Composite Report, 1973-74, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 39, file 94-A-00130, pt. 2.

⁷⁰ "Educational Centre to be Established by Profs," *Peak*, 7 January 1970, 2.

youths.” Yet it did note that the Pulp and Paper Workers of Canada made use of the CERC’s resources and facilities.⁷¹

The second meeting at the CERC in early 1970 was more promising. Briemberg put the number of attendees at between 175 and 200, with about 75 unionists. According to him, this was “encouraging, given the usual alienation which exists between the two groups, the workers and the university.” He drew a strong continuity between the earlier goals of the PSA department and the CERC:

These major institutions within our society, the factory and the university, must be transformed and made to serve the needs of the working people of this province and this country. To accomplish that, people must be situated within them and struggle for those aims. But we must build links between the various struggles, between the campus struggle and the community. This is what PSA was always attempting to do.⁷²

Despite the involvement of unions such as the Pulp and Paper Workers, Briemberg recalls that these links were akin to “little seeds that never grew into plants” as the CERC was too transitory to develop long-standing ties and projects. While the fired professors had initially stood together and agreed to work on the project, most soon left the CERC to pursue academic employment elsewhere. This may have been linked to the end of their severance pay, which lasted for three months after their formal dismissal in early 1970.⁷³ By the summer of 1970, “[the] CERC’s activities ceased almost completely.”⁷⁴

Briemberg and several former students, including Pocklington and Cleveland, then found their way to other pro-working-class groups. With some contributors from the local newspaper, the *Georgia Straight*, which was going through an internal crisis, they helped establish a newspaper called the *Yellow Journal*.⁷⁵ This “yippie Marxist” production, as Pocklington recalls, was a melding of the local hippie counterculture with the New Left line. The *Yellow Journal* eventually morphed into the *Georgia Grape* (and then simply the *Grape*), reflecting discontent with the mainstream *Straight*. The *Grape* combined a focus on municipal politics

⁷¹ Report on Trade Unions—British Columbia, 17 December 1969, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 50; and Report on Simon Fraser University, 6 October 1970, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045 pt. 51.

⁷² “Briemberg on the Community Education Centre.”

⁷³ “Educational Centre to be Established by Profs,” *Peak*, 7 January 1970, 2.

⁷⁴ Briemberg interview; and Report on Simon Fraser University, 6 October 1970, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 51.

⁷⁵ Cleveland interview.

and the cultural counterculture with an emphasis on working-class and union struggles.⁷⁶

Eventually, the *Grape* was transformed to reflect the increasing dominance of working-class and labour issues. As the paper noted in June 1973: "The name doesn't fit anymore. We're not an underground paper. We have changed our content. We have changed our style. So now we have decided it was time to change our name."⁷⁷ In September 1973, the paper was renamed *Western Voice: A Newspaper of Working Class Struggle*. For the next three years, the *Voice* threw itself into regional working-class issues: the conditions of service workers in British Columbia and Alberta, municipal politics, and, more important, strikes, lockouts, international shenanigans, and struggles throughout the region. As Cleveland recalls, the *Voice* represented continuity: "[It was] kind of a continuation of CERC-type politics rather than SDU-type politics. Where we were trying to link up to progressive community groups and unions. So it's more the kind of version of left-wing politics that Mordecai [Briemberg] was principally associated with ... [We] practised a kind of united front politics."⁷⁸ Briemberg recalls the class orientation of the *Western Voice* and how the editors tried to report on and "support workers' struggles, organized and unorganized." The paper attracted those who "had a more class orientation to struggle."⁷⁹ In 1976, however, the *Western Voice* leadership split, and many of the members moved into the national Marxist-Leninist group known as In Struggle/En Lutte.⁸⁰

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of SFU's off-campus orientation was the Vancouver Women's Caucus (vwc) and the eventual formation of SORWUC. The vwc had its origins in a PSA course that asked students to rewrite *The Communist Manifesto*. Marcy Toms and Dodie (Doreen) Weppler wrote a manifesto calling for the establishment of a feminine

⁷⁶ Indeed, it is shocking how much working-class and labour coverage was in the *Grape* from its very inception. Much of it was critical of large international unions as well as exploitative employers. Just to provide a few examples: Bob Smith, "Fallers Dig In," *Grape*, 31 May-5 June 1972, 3, discussed the IWA; Dara Culhane, "Fishermen Kept Out of CLC (Again)," *Grape*, 31 May-5 June 1972, 10; "CCU's Statement of Policy," *Grape*, 31 January-13 February 1973, 14-15; Bill Harper and John Cleveland, "Union Pres. to Join Boss against Men," *Grape*, 23 May-5 June 1973, 5.

⁷⁷ "The *Grape* becomes *Western Organizer*," *Western Organizer*, 6-19 June 1973, 3.

⁷⁸ Cleveland interview.

⁷⁹ Briemberg interview.

⁸⁰ The paper ceased publication for about five months in late 1975, before re-emerging with apparently two final issues. A debate played out across the pages, as preserved in the aptly titled "Documents of the Ideological Struggle within the Western Voice Collective," *Western Voice*, February 1976, 1.

action league and then – “we’ve written a paper, maybe we should have a meeting?” – brought people together.⁸¹ The league, closed to men, held its first meeting in early July 1968: it eventually renamed itself the Women’s Caucus and began meeting regularly off campus.⁸² As Toms recalls, the group was responding to gender inequities within the SFU student movement, where “you kind of felt that you were just an appendage, rather than somebody who would have the opportunity to develop as a leader.”⁸³ A conscious decision was soon made to become a politically oriented group. Some women who attended the meetings were focused on psychological issues, being involved in consciousness raising and preferring to “disclose and discuss” – Toms derisively recalls that they wanted “to sit around and say how bad things are” – and they eventually “went on their way.” The remaining women were focused on being “more explicitly political right away ... organizing and acting around a variety of specific concerns,” including, but not limited to, reproductive rights.

By July 1969, the SFU Women’s Caucus recast itself as the vwc, reflecting a new off-campus focus. While SFU students were the majority, the vwc also attracted other students and women from the broader community, including, but not limited to, housewives and clerical workers. Indeed, the RCMP noted that the group’s majority was made up of young students, although “about 10 members” were over thirty years of age.⁸⁴ Seeking membership, the vwc approached women at other post-secondary institutions throughout Vancouver as well as in the workplace. As McCormack recalls: “[the membership consisted of] people who had some sophistication about politics and class, so I would say that there were probably more working-class women in the women’s caucus than there were in SDU.”⁸⁵ They began meeting downtown and developing a class-based orientation. Frances Jane Wasserlein says that this is not surprising in light of the personal biographies of the individuals involved and that the vwc’s attention to class as a category of analysis made the group unique.⁸⁶ Throughout 1970, the vwc

⁸¹ Marcy Toms, interview with author, 30 April 2010. This is also discussed in Frances Jane Wasserlein, “An Arrow Aimed at the Heart: The Vancouver Women’s Caucus and the Abortion Campaign, 1969–1971” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1990), 33–34. A summary is also provided in Christabelle Sethna, “Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women’s Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP,” *Canadian Historical Review* 90: 3 (2009), 466–69.

⁸² Wasserlein, “Arrow Aimed at the Heart,” 57–59.

⁸³ Toms interview.

⁸⁴ Report on Vancouver Women’s Caucus, 18 June 1970, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 51. See also Sethna, “Clandestine Operations,” 468.

⁸⁵ McCormack interview.

⁸⁶ Wasserlein, “Arrow Aimed at the Heart,” 37–38, 55.

continued to write articles for the *Peak* in which they drew attention to the discriminatory labour market position of women, their unpaid labour, and their limited opportunities for class mobility. For example, in writing about women, Toms stated: “We are certainly not rising into the bourgeoisie or the ruling class – we will not even be employed in upper or middle management positions. In general we go either into the home or into low status service occupations.”⁸⁷

The vwc’s most well-known activity was the Abortion Caravan, which preoccupied the group throughout early 1970. Through late April and early May, the Caravan travelled from Vancouver to Ottawa in an attempt to repeal anti-abortion laws and raise awareness about the toll illegal abortions were taking on women. While the work on the Caravan served as a unifying force, political differences emerged. For example, the slogan “Smash Capitalism!” appeared on the side of one of the vans, and the women debated whether this “revolutionary demand” was appropriate. The women in favour of removing it eventually prevailed.⁸⁸ Some groups had emerged within the vwc, notably, in January 1970, the Working Women’s Workshop. This group picketed the Vancouver General Hospital and rental car companies at the Vancouver airport in support of striking workers and also boycotted a drugstore that was being struck by women workers trying to garner a first contract.⁸⁹ Yet overt schisms were subsumed by Caravan work.

Upon the return of the Caravaners to Vancouver, political debates boiled over, revealing the tension between a broader, working-class orientation and a more abortion-focused approach to women’s rights.⁹⁰ McCormack recalls three factions: one that wanted to focus on abortion as a galvanizing issue; one that was concerned with economic equality, pay, and access; and “a faction that said, you know, we need to organize women around their class and their gender. And women in working-class jobs, women who are being housewives, all of that stuff.”⁹¹ Toms recalls that, while the Young Socialists faction of the vwc was focusing on abortion as a coalition-building approach, “[the other group wanted] to focus on issues pertinent to working women who [weren’t] in trades unions, try to get them organized, and to improv[e] working conditions and pay for women who [were] already employed and/or in unions.”⁹²

⁸⁷ Marcy Toms, “Women’s Liberation,” *Peak*, 21 January 1970, 11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁸⁹ Julia Maureen Smith, “Organizing the Unorganized: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers’ Union of Canada (SORWUC), 1972-1986” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2009), 21-22.

⁹⁰ Wasserlein, “Arrow Aimed at the Heart,” 110-11.

⁹¹ McCormack interview.

⁹² Toms interview.

The RCMP noted the debate between the “practical” group and the others who were using the group as a “political gambit.” Some members “always managed to turn the discussion around to political strategy, i.e. the importance of reaching the working class women, especially those whose husbands are now locked out in labour disputes . . . and of making people aware of the ‘social system they are presently suffering under.’” Indeed, “there was even talk about starting up unions for women workers!”⁹³ This group, which had its nucleus in the aforementioned Working Women’s Workshop, broke off to pursue a working-class women’s orientation as the Working Women’s Association.

The Working Women’s Association focused on strike support, encouraging women who wanted to organize to join unions such as the Hotel Employees and the Office and Technical Employees. It also distributed educational material. Based upon its experiences, it argued that a new type of union was needed as unions often had undemocratic structures and were led by men who were willing to sell out female workers. In 1972, the Working Women’s Association formed SORWUC: “Since 80% of working women in BC were not in unions, it was felt that an independent union run by women workers themselves was necessary.”⁹⁴ As Julia Smith argues in her thesis on SORWUC, it “concluded that if working women were to be organized, they would have to do it themselves.”⁹⁵

SORWUC adopted New Left principles: all decisions had to be approved by a majority of bargaining unit members, recall procedures were instituted for union officers, dues would stay in Canada, and every effort was made to develop a truly democratic union.⁹⁶ The majority of union positions were also unpaid and always elected. Beginning in 1973, SORWUC worked to organize workplaces, beginning with a legal office, then a female domestic abuse shelter. By 1975 it had organized fourteen sites, and by 1978 it represented forty-one workplaces.⁹⁷

⁹³ Report on Vancouver Women’s Caucus, 18 June 1970, LAC, RCMP/CSIS Fonds, vol. 72, file 96-A-00045, pt. 51.

⁹⁴ “Where We Come From,” article in *Union Women Speak: AUCE and sorwuc*, 1, 1 (August 1976), UBCSC, Service Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada Fonds (hereafter SORWUC), box 6, file 7. See also Bank Book Collective, *An Account to Settle: The Story of the United Bank Workers (sorwuc)* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1979), 10.

⁹⁵ Smith, “Organizing the Unorganized,” 26. See also “Where We Come From.” This is also briefly discussed in Bank Book Collective, *An Account*, 10.

⁹⁶ SORWUC flyer, n.d., UBCSC, SORWUC, box 6, file 2.

⁹⁷ Smith, “Organizing the Unorganized,” 30, 34-35.

Although SORWUC collapsed and disbanded in 1986, it left a significant legacy.⁹⁸ It may have been small in size, but SORWUC was part of a broader women's tendency within the trade union movement (including public-sector unions and the BC Federation of Labour) that pushed for the advancement of female issues. SORWUC attempted to organize the hard-to-organize service sector, took a radical approach to unionization, and, as Smith argues, was an important "example of class-based social justice movements of the 1970s and 1980s."⁹⁹ SORWUC reflects an important class-based extension of SFU's off-campus orientation.

The significance of the off-campus move by SFU New Leftists becomes clearer when viewed within the broader context of English Canada after 1968 as New Leftists in general sought ways to engage with the working class. Ontario New Leftists, as noted, moved out to picket lines, engaging in critical yet ultimately transitory experiments with community outreach. There were some efforts to forge formal worker-student alliances, most notably a 1969 conference involving New Leftists, students, and Ontario's labour leaders (the Ontario Federation of Labour and the United Auto Workers participated) and (perhaps the culmination of this tendency) the 1973 Artistic Woodwork strike in Toronto. But anti-radical fears ultimately scrubbed anything more than talk.¹⁰⁰ Events in Nova Scotia were more fruitful, perhaps due to the events at SFU. The Communist UFAWU, led by Homer Stevens, organized fishers along the Strait of Canso. Needing help on the ground, and with the mainstream Nova Scotian labour movement reluctant to assist due to anti-Communist sentiment, Stevens turned to local New Leftists. As

⁹⁸ Smith argues that SORWUC was worn out by a long, nasty strike at Vancouver's Muckamuck restaurant and that, upon recognizing that they could no longer fulfill their political goals, it decided to disband in late 1986. See Smith, "Organizing the Unorganized," 78; and Janet Mary Nicol, "Unions Aren't Native: The Muckamuck Restaurant Labour Dispute, Vancouver, BC (1978-1983)," *Labour/Le Travail* 40 (1997): 235-51.

⁹⁹ Smith, "Organizing the Unorganized," 78-81. Sharon Yandle cautioned me against placing too much emphasis on SORWUC as opposed to public-sector unions and the provincial Federation of Labour (Yandle interview). Important work was done by these other groups, although SORWUC remains unique, as noted here.

¹⁰⁰ Picket line activities also continued, notably at the 1971 Texpack strike, the 1972 Dare Cookies strike, as well as the aforementioned 1973 Artistic Woodwork Strike. For more on the Ontario experience, see "Union-Student Conference at UAW Centre, Port Elgin," Canadian Labour, November 1969, 39; MUA, OUS, box 28, file on OFL; and Joan Sangster, "Remembering Texpack: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Militancy in Canadian Unions in the 1970s," *Studies in Political Economy* 78 (2006): 41-66. I argue elsewhere that Artistic – a first contract strike by a largely immigrant workforce – demonstrated the confluence of a variety of forces: the widespread turn towards Marxism and the working class, the importance of nationalism, and the continuing social responsibility of students. See Ian Milligan, "The Force of All Our Numbers': New Leftists, Labour, and the 1973 Artistic Woodwork Strike," *Labour/Le Travail*, 66 (2010): 37-71.

we have seen, he had been involved with the SFU New Left and may have recognized their potential and increasing community orientation. This led to collaboration in Nova Scotia, which culminated in the East Coast Socialist Movement.¹⁰¹

The closest parallel to SFU's consistent community focus is found in Saskatchewan. There, New Leftists at the Regina Campus forged close links with labour councils and organizations. These were strengthened in a successful political coalition campaign (involving labour, the provincial NDP, and students) against a Saskatchewan government bill that threatened to strip the right to strike from construction workers. After their organizational skills were noticed, campus New Leftists were invited into established structures such as the National Farmers Union.¹⁰² But these efforts did not lead to the establishment of independent community organizations. Perhaps most critically, these Saskatchewan students had grown up with the memory of the 1962 doctors' strike and thus had a supportive, if critical, approach towards mainstream social democracy.¹⁰³ They became more incorporated into the mainstream in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The history of Simon Fraser's New Left is unified by a single theme: off-campus community engagement, especially with working people. Reflecting a consistent class focus, we can see this commitment in the struggles around free speech at a working-class East Vancouver high school, in the fight over class-based admissions and transfer policies, and in the mission of the PSA to bring academics off the mountain and to the people. The transfer battle ended in tangible gains: a month after the Administration Building occupation, the Academic Board of Higher Education of British Columbia met and realized that if it did not resolve the "perceived problems" itself, the government might. Formalized transfer guides were published after that meeting, subsequently leading

¹⁰¹ For more, see Silver Donald Cameron, *The Education of Everett Richardson: The Nova Scotia Fishermen's Strike, 1970-71* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977); Rolf Knight and Homer Stevens, *Homer Stevens: A Life in Fishing* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1992). Information was also obtained from Nova Scotia Federation of Labour – Fishermen's Strike Files, Dalhousie University Archives (hereafter DUA), MS-9-II. See also Fishermen-Pamphlets, DUA, MS-10-6-A-3, Al Storey Fonds.

¹⁰² For overviews, see Peter Borch, "The Rise and Decline of the Saskatchewan Waffle, 1966-1973" (MA thesis, University of Regina, 2005); John F. Conway, "From 'Agrarian Socialism' to 'Natural' Governing Party: The CCF/NDP in Saskatchewan, 1932-2007," in *The Prairie Agrarian Movement Revisited: Centenary Symposium on the Foundation of the Territorial Grain Growers Association*, ed. Murray Knuttila and Bob Stirling (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2007); *Down on the Farm*, vhs videorecording, produced by Clint Bomphray, Toronto(?), Unconscious Collective, 1972. Information also obtained from numerous oral interviews.

¹⁰³ This came up in several interviews, notably Harding interview; Mitchell interview; Kossick interview; and Conway interview.

to the 1974 Post-Secondary Articulation Coordinating Committee and eventually the 1989 British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT). Indeed, a BCCAT report on its official history mentions the Administration Building occupation in its timeline.¹⁰⁴ While the PSA department's quest to become a community-focused department in the service of the people failed when it was destroyed by the university administration, this did not end its outward-looking trajectory.

Even with the end of the *Western Voice* and the collapse of the BCCAT, individuals continued to hold deep-rooted beliefs and many remained engaged in community work. This continuity stretches to the present day. Most continued to strive for a fairer and more equitable world in their career choices, personal political decisions, and overall trajectories. Several, including Guy Pocklington, Sharon Yandle, and Marcy Toms, moved into the labour movement. Gordon Hardy and Rob McAninch became involved in the People's Law School, which provides Vancouverites with accessible legal education. Mordecai Briemberg continues as an activist force in Vancouver, engaged in Palestinian solidarity, free speech campaigning, and commentary on a radio show on Vancouver Cooperative Radio. Jim Harding, now a retired professor at the University of Regina, continues to be a leading anti-nuclear and peace campaigner. John Conway, now a sociology professor at the University of Regina, is an activist force in Regina through his popular and academic writing as well as through being a school board trustee (including a term as chair) and running for municipal office. Most recently, at the University of Regina, Conway was involved in a high-profile controversy over scholarships for the children of fallen soldiers. After the *Western Voice*, John Cleveland eventually moved into academia and is now a professor at Thompson Rivers University; he is currently working on a public history website that will enable a new generation of activists to connect with their predecessors. Martin Loney paid a personal price for his activist involvement: he was fired from a government job due to security concerns stemming from his background and subsequently returned to England to earn a PhD from the London School of Economics in 1981. Now back in Canada as a writer, he continues to hold a high profile as a critic of identity politics and affirmative action hiring

¹⁰⁴ Devon Gaber, Associate Director of BCCAT, "A Brief History of the Transfer System in British Columbia," Report written for the BCCAT, September 2005. Available online at <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED505008.pdf> (accessed 11 August 2011).

policies, situating his opposition within a framework of equality and emphasizing social class.¹⁰⁵

In the broader sweep of British Columbian and Canadian history, it is important to ask how long this working-class orientation lasted and whether it had any staying power. The New Left did not regenerate itself. Some of its leadership came from longer-term graduate students, like Harding or Cleveland, but most undergraduates spent only four short years in university. There was often little inter-generational transfer of memory, and, for many, university was a period of experimentation (politically, sexually, culturally) without many perceived consequences. While New Leftists continued their valuable activities as individuals or in smaller groups, working with community members and eventually moving into established institutions such as labour unions (which many had maligned only a few years previously as pork-choppers or power elites), a moment had passed.

Yet the events reviewed here produced meaningful outcomes for both New Leftists and working people in British Columbia. This must not be downplayed. At SFU, New Leftists developed an outward-looking community focus to their politics: they sought to bring students “off the mountain” and into the service of the surrounding community. Subsequent developments, such as SORWUC, greatly contributed to the daily lives of ordinary working people in the province, and the CERC and the *Western Voice* represented attempts to do the same. This helps us reach a different understanding of the New Left, especially in the less studied post-1968 period. Far from retreating to the campus, the New Left, a truly dynamic movement, went out into the community in its attempt to foster meaningful change.

¹⁰⁵ A viewpoint extensively discussed in Martin Loney, *The Pursuit of Division: Race, Gender, and Preferential Hiring in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).