The Place Where "Men" Earn Their Bread Is To Be the Place Of Holiness[1]

BETSY ANDERSON
2008 United Church McGeachy Senior Scholar

In her book, *A Long Eclipse*, Catherine Gidney describes the Student Christian Movement of Canada (SCM) as "the Public Voice of Religion and Reform on the University Campus from the 1920s to the 1960s."[2] Roger Hutchinson concludes, in his 1975 doctoral thesis on the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (FCSO), that "by the mid-1940s most socially concerned Christians appear to have withdrawn from the struggle to change the basic social order or to have made their peace with the institutions that were directing the energies of the nation toward post-war reconstruction and cold-war prosperity."[3] I believe an examination of the work camp movement in the SCM, starting in 1945 and extending into the late sixties and seventies, is an important key to the former and an exception to the latter.

With more than sixty work camps affecting at least one thousand student participants[4] for over twenty-five years, this piece of Canadian church history merits a thorough study in its own right. However, this essay focuses on the origins and early years of the work camp movement in the SCM, as background and context for the creation of Howland House, an SCM-related cooperative in Toronto from 1953 to 1975, the subject of my McGeachy-funded research.

The history of the SCM work camps sheds light on the period between the 1940s and 1970s and allows one to trace the ongoing current of Christian commitment to social justice and transformation. From the radicalism of the church of the depression years (represented for many by

the emergence of the FCSO), through the expansive and yet politically cautious years of the cold war, to the inventive and experimental sixties and the emergence in the 1970s of the ecumenical coalitions as a significant avenue for engagement with social issues in the life of the Canadian churches, the SCM work camps inspired several generations of socially committed and engaged Christians.

The Beginnings

Similar to the creation of the SCM itself in 1921,[5] with regard to the First World War, the radicalism that marked the SCM work camps was connected to the fact that many demobilized soldiers and others impacted by the Second World War were enrolled in university following the war and active in the SCM. The possibility of a new world where economic and social justice could be built was a real expectation as the independence movement in India signalled the defeat of colonialism, and the success of the Red Army in defeating the Japanese was followed by the creation of the People's Republic of China. The Labour Party was elected in England and the worker priests were engaged in the industrial cities of post-war France. It was an exciting and potentially transformative period in these years before the Cold War hit full force in Canada with the onset of the Korean War in 1950.

There were other, more modest conjunctures which shaped this unique Canadian experiment in Christian student engagement with – and education about – the lives and working conditions of Canadian workers. The minutes of the 17 January 1945 SCM National Executive Committee record two actions, which would in the unfolding of the year, prove prescient. The first was the SCM's decision to join the Canadian Work Camp Committee (CWCC) in planning a pioneering student-in-industry work camp in Welland, Ontario in the summer of 1945. To this end they appointed Reverend Norman MacKenzie, one of the promoters of this action to the Executive "as a part-time, 'Student in Industry' Secretary, on the SCM staff, to work under the direction of a committee of eight people, four being appointed by the C.W.C.C. and four by the S.C.M.."[6] The second was the agreement to issue an invitation to Rev. Lex Miller to visit Canada and Canadian SCM's as a speaker, on his way home to New Zealand after seven years in Britain during the war.

Lex Miller, who would become the Director of the first student-in-industry work camp in Welland in that summer of 1945, was a New

Zealander and Presbyterian minister. His father had emigrated to New Zealand from Scotland with his family in 1922. Miller was ordained there in 1934 and was General Secretary of the New Zealand SCM for three years before he left for England. There, he lived and worked for the Presbyterian Church in the east end of London during the early "blitz" years of the war, and then went to the Iona Community in Scotland from 1943-1945. While at Iona his first book, *Biblical Politics, Studies in Christian Social Doctrine*, was published by SCM Press in 1943. It was based on lectures he delivered to conferences of ministers at Iona.

The student-in-industry work camps may have been a uniquely Canadian phenomenon, but the streams that led to their emergence in 1945 included international influences. Lex Miller's role as a New Zealand SCMer with Iona connections was one piece of this, but not unique. The roots of Christian work camps for students and young people appear to stem from the work of Pierre Ceresole (1879-1945), a Swiss radical pacifist, and his British Quaker friend Hubert Parris. Inspired by the first International Conference of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Bilthoven, Netherlands in 1919, they organized an international work camp in 1920 to reconstruct the war-damaged village of Esnes-en-Argonne on the former battlefield of Verdun.[7]

Pierre Ceresole's initiative resulted in the creation of Service Civil International, or International Voluntary Service, which continues today as a peace and solidarity organization committed to promoting peace and understanding through two- or three- week-long volunteer work camps all over the world.[8]

Through the American Friends Service Committee (1917), Quakers in the United States had a volunteer work camp tradition tracing back to the same origins. The British SCM and other Youth organizations also had a volunteer service work camp tradition which was enhanced in the early years of the World Council of Churches, when the Youth Department facilitated the participation of young people, including many SCMers, in ecumenical work camps all over the world.[9]

In Canada, Bev Oaten, Minister of Colborne St. United Church in Brantford from 1941 to 1952 and visionary for, and first Director of the Five Oaks Christian Worker's Education Centre in Paris, Ontario, was a key actor in the emergence of volunteer service work camps, out of which were introduced the student-in-industry work camps. In *Five Oaks Centre: Its Roots and Growth* he writes, "two university students, Art Dayfoot and Norman Mackenzie, returned from the United States, enthused with work

camping. In 1938 we organized the first Canadian work camp.[10]

The date of the establishment of the Canadian Work Camp Committee is a bit unclear, but by 1941 it emerges in the record[11] with Bev Oaten as Chair, and following the 1941 work camp in Muskoka, Eunice Pyfrom as Secretary. While Bev Oaten refers to a 1938 work camp in *Five Oaks: Its Roots and Growth*, *The United Church Observer* reports that the Canadian Work Camp Committee's first work camp was in 1941 when they partnered with the Muskoka Community Project,[12] for whom Eunice may have worked at the time. Bev Oaten was Director of the work camp with sixteen participants: students, ministers and workers who took holiday time and paid one dollar a day to be part of this work camp experience.[13]

Participants offered Vacation Bible School, painted and repaired church buildings and grounds, and built looms for the Muskoka Community Project. Billeted in different homes, campers met together for worship and breakfast and again at night for supper and study, followed by closing worship. Silent meditation was the form of the worship, building on the Quaker tradition from which one branch of the work camp movement grew, according to an account in *The Pathfinder*.[14]

The following year, volunteer work camps were planned in Muskoka (near Cobalt, Ontario), Simcoe County, North Frontenac and Saskatchewan. Apart from the one planned for Simcoe County, which was to be of two months duration, the camps were scheduled for two to three weeks of volunteer labour.[15]

A slight diversion here into a side-stream revealing another international connection to the emergence of the work camps in Canada and their relationship to other social movements of the time, specifically the cooperative movement. While Bev Oaten says Norman MacKenzie and Art Dayfoot returned from the United States in 1937, it may in fact have been 1935, and they describe the same event reported by Rita Baladad in *Just the Facts: A Brief Survey of Campus Co-op History*, referring to the Quadrennial Assembly of the Student Volunteer Movement which took place over the Christmas break in Indianapolis, Indiana, from 1935 to 1936. "Toyohiko Kagawa, Japanese Co-operator, spoke at a Student Christian conference in Indianapolis in 1935. Four University of Toronto theology students, Donald Mclean, Art Dayfoot, Archie Manson and Alex Sim were so moved by his speech that upon returning to Toronto they formed a discussion group to debate the possibility of operating a co-operative. Riding on the tails of a depression, the men decided that a

housing cooperative would be the most pragmatic venture to undertake."[16] With the in-kind support of Victoria University, who allowed them to use the second and third floors of 63 St. George Street for the cost of upkeep, Rochdale House,[17]the first University of Toronto student housing cooperative,[18] was established in October 1936.

While Norman MacKenzie's name is not linked to the co-operative housing venture at the University of Toronto, he too was at the Jubilee Student Volunteer Movement Assembly in 1935 in Indianapolis,[19] and it is reasonable to assume that his decision to work as an extension worker with the Coady Institute of St. Francis Xavier University[20] after graduating from Victoria in 1938 was similarly inspired by his exposure to Yokohito Kogawa in 1935.

Knowing that he was waiting to be deployed as a missionary to China, the terms of Norman Mackenzie's employment as the SCM's "student-in-industry" staff included ending the contract with one day's notice. This was wise, as in less than a month from the SCM Executive's January 1945 decision to partner in the Welland student-in- industry work camp he was on his way back to China, via India. However, his wife Dorothy and their infant son, Ian, spent the summer at the Welland work camp as camp nurse and "model child."[21]

In 1945, Eunice Pyfrom, another important name in the emergence of student-in-industry work camps was just completing her studies at the United Church Training School and preparing to be commissioned by the Woman's Missionary Society. But as Secretary of the Canadian Work Camp Committee, it appears that she had primary responsibility for the practical details of getting this pilot project off the ground.

Eunice's version of the preparations for this inaugural work camp are found in the work camp's log under the title, "How to Open a Student-in-Industry Camp – in 400 words."[22] The saga is amusingly presented but reflects an impressive ability to persist through daunting challenges (no precedent for such an initiative, no accommodation, no Director, no equipment) and, the need to negotiate with many different wartime departments and corporations to successfully locate housing and other basic equipment. A few excerpts offer a taste:

> First Word – January – talk with Dr. Harvey Forster over long-distance telephone about such a camp. Does it sound feasible? Yes. Could it be worked in Welland? Quite likely.
>
> Second Word – the next day – Have Douglas Steere talk to an SCM

Missionary Conference and mention the work camps. See that the question comes from the floor; Are there any work camps in Canada? Be sure to answer: Yes there will be a Student-in-Industry Camp in Welland, summer 1945. Then it has to happen.

Third Word – talk with Dr. Forster when he is in Toronto for Board of Home Mission meetings. Assure him that it is no "pietistic' movement. Get his promise to talk it over with his Welland Associates.

Fourth Word – and many succeeding words – visit Welland on numerous occasions . . . Drive around through wartime Housing District . . . In desperation approach the head of the Federal Wartime Housing Commission. Be sure you have Bev Oaten do this, because he stands high in favour with said head. The latter will then inform his Toronto office to do everything possible for the Work Camp Committee . . . a certain building known as the Chinese staff house is empty and available . . . You rest in peace for a time, except for a trip to Philadelphia in an attempt to badger the American Friends Service Committee into sending up a Director for this venture, only to be told that they have 14 camps in prospect for which they have no directors . . . In the meantime you will have SCM Secretaries all across Canada sifting out the hundreds of applications to fill their limited quotas . . . Lex Miller arrives in Canada. You will immediately inform him that he has been appointed by God to direct the first Canadian Student in Industry Work Camp. No matter what he says, you go ahead on that assumption.

Have the Director (that's Lex Miller) and Associate Director (that's Eunice Pyfrom) visit Welland to find out that no permit has come through to Wartime Housing for the use of the building. Proceed with more telephone calls to Montreal and Ottawa and then proceed to wangle a load of firewood from a local lumber yard, bedding and other supplies from wartime housing, in desperation buy dishes and cooking utensils from a Farm Service Camp. Have a case of chickenpox develop and move into the building in firm faith that all will be well, even though at that moment you are sans lights, sans water, sans cleanliness . . . sans everything but faith. Three days before camp is to open telephone Mr. Freestone of Wartime Housing and allow him to tell you that permission has come through and the building is yours. The next hymn on the order of service is the Doxology. 396-400 word

– June 4th – We're here.

The choice of Welland for this trial project was likely no accident. In Rev. Harvey Forster, Superintendent of the All People's Church and Industrial Mission from 1925 to 1960, the summer student-in-industry work camp had a strong advocate for the engagement of the church in the lives of working people. The All People's Church and Maple Leaf Mission were located on the "wrong" side of the canal, amidst the factories and homes of largely eastern European families who had been encouraged to move there for work in the industrializing years during the re-building of the Welland Canal in the first part of the twentieth century.

Rev. Harvey Forster and Rev. Fern Sayles, United Church ministers for the congregation and mission, were well-known and highly respected among the working class community, having supported their efforts to unionize in the early forties and protested the government's seizure of the Ukrainian Hall in 1940 as part of the orders-in-council which made the Communist Party illegal in Canada and imprisoned many of its leaders for three years.[23] When Harvey Forster was elected President of Hamilton Conference in 1943, *The Observer* noted that "his sympathies were undoubtedly with the common people, their economic and moral rights. The common labourer, and Canadian-born and foreign workers, find in him a friend."[24]

Having Harvey Forster on the ground facilitated the efforts to find a location for the work camp in the Crowland industrial district of Welland and offered a knowledgeable and passionate resource person for the study sessions of the camp. In his September 1945 article in *The Observer*, Jack Paterson reports that "Dr. Harvey Forster has been coming every Tuesday night to lead a series of discussions on finding God in History, the Social Order . . . tonight Finding God through Economics."[25]

The Giant Forge Summer Student-in-Industry Work Camp in Welland

This pioneering summer work camp brought students together to live as a cooperative Christian community and work in factories. It was partly born of the observation that although students were working their way through school in the summers while often attending religious student events, there was no sense of connection between work and worship. Jack E. Paterson, a participant, stated that "either work lacks Christian fellowship with student friends or discussion is carried on in an unreal

world devoid of work."[26] The Canadian Work Camp Committee and the SCM wanted to bring these together.

Lex Miller's Report in the 1945 work camp log suggests that Eunice Pyfrom's conscription of him as work camp director may not have been an answer to his prayers, but in hindsight it certainly appears to have been the work of the Spirit. This work camp became the model for all subsequent SCM work camps, either in the ways in which the organization and theology underlying its arrangements were followed, or amended. It was the blueprint, and a radical blueprint it was.

Because of its pioneering role in both demonstrating the positive impact of this type of summer experience for Christian students and the model created by those who found themselves in Welland in that last summer of World War Two, it is useful to explore some of the organizational details. Following a study of the Rochdale Principles,[27]the camp was established as a cooperative with guidelines developed for setting up a cooperative camp management and a finance system for the summer. This suggests that the earlier side-eddy related to cooperatives is not in fact tangential, but a real component of this unique experiment in "Acts of the Apostles" living.

The Rochdale Principles are: open membership, democratic control (one person, one vote), distribution of surplus in proportion to trade, payment of limited interest on capital, political and religious neutrality, cash trading (no credit extended), and promotion of education. The Primary Principles[28] adopted by the Giant Forge work camp included: one member equals one vote (irrespective of capital investment), capital investment is made with little or no interest, there are patronage dividends, cash terms, open membership and education expansion.

There were General Meetings at the beginning and end of camp, but operationally, the camp was divided into three executive groups of camp members who each took turns running the camp for a month. Each Executive had a Secretary and Historian, a General House Manager who supervised all the chores, an Accountant's assistant, an Education Convenor who worked with a committee and the Director, a Worship Convenor who also worked with a committee and the Director, a Social Convenor, and a Kitchen Committee responsible for organizing kitchen help, menu planning, and budgeting and buying food.

The work camp was self-funding, with a small grant from the Canadian Work Camp Committee. Everyone provided a ten dollar loan up front for cash flow, and paid weekly room and board. The understanding

was that if there was any surplus at the end of the camp, ten to twenty per cent would go to the Canadian Work Camp Committee and the rest would be divided among participants in proportion to the volume of monetary business they had done with the camp.[29]

There were also special funds established on a cash basis. One was the Medical Pool, which was voluntary – fifteen cents a week, created because two members of the Camp came down with Chicken Pox early in their time at the camp. The Medical Pool helped offset any medical costs incurred while at the work camp, any surplus at the end of the summer was distributed to participants in the pool.[30] This was prior to Medicare (1966), and the now more common practice of employers providing a certain number of paid sick days per month as part of their employment benefits. (Paid sick leave is still not required under the Employment Standards Act).

Recruited from SCMs across Canada, these work camp pioneers[31] were almost equally male and female. Living co-educationally in a camp-like setting, there were many opportunities to encounter each other in real ways not so easily achieved in university and church settings. Work campers were responsible for finding their own jobs upon arrival and did so in places like Atlas Steel, Joseph Stokes Rubber Co., Plymouth Cordage Co., Page Hersey Pipe and Tube Co., Metallurgical Co., John Deere Co., and Haun Drop Forge Co. For the most part this was heavy work in newly unionized environments. The United Electrical Union had successfully organized in Welland in the early forties, but not all employers, including Atlas Steel, were willing to bargain with them. Harvey Forster had accompanied a delegation from Welland in March 1943 to Queen's Park, demanding legislation to guarantee labour's right to organize, make collective bargaining compulsory and outlaw company unions. This legislation was indeed passed by the Federal government in 1944.[32]

Wage Pool

One of the innovations of the first student-in-industry work camp, and part of the work camp legend ever since, was the wage pool. It was voluntary and its purpose was to create a "just wage" recognizing that people's earnings for the summer were different, due to a range in hourly wage from thirty to eighty cents an hour.[33] People's expenses to get to the camp were different as well and some had overtime pay, some received bonuses, some missed work because of sickness, and women's wages were generally lower than men's. There were many sources of inequity. In

addition, the financial needs of those upon leaving camp were different. It is unclear from the record who introduced the wage pool idea, although at the closing banquet, Margaret Albright in a tribute to Lex Miller's impact on the work camp stated, "our practical venture in Christian brotherhood, the wage pool, grew from the seed of his planting."[34] It may have been a logical extension of the SCM's practice of having a travel pool for its regional and national meetings, or Miller's involvement with the Iona Community and the movement for national average wage in England[35] may have influenced the work camp or provided a model from which to build. It is interesting that on the night the Wage Pool Committee posted its results at the end of camp, Miller led his last educational session on "Marxism and its Christian Implications."[36]

Predictably, there was some difference of opinion about how to establish a wage pool. The work camp executive report in "The Giant Forge Log" outlines its proposal as well as one put forward by a camper which it did not endorse, but which proposed a form of taxation of those with higher incomes to bring those with lower summer incomes up to the minimum of two-hundred dollars for the summer.[37] The process proposed and adopted by the work camp executive was complex but, basically, all participants put their earnings into the wage pool and everyone was paid what was considered an average wage – twenty dollars per week from ninety per cent of the pool. Ten per cent was used to compensate those who had received overtime or bonuses or those with particular needs. The wage pool was a voluntary feature of almost every subsequent work camp, although the system varied and was created anew each time. Many who were interviewed reported that this was one of the most radicalising and community-building aspects of the whole work camp experience.

In his contributions to the *"Giant Forge Work Camp Log,"* Lex Miller connected the experience of the gritty Welland work camp with the idyllic setting of Iona where he had spent his last four summers and observed that in both settings, "except the Lord keep the city – the watchman waketh but in vain."[38]

Reflecting on the opportunity created by the end of World War Two, he stated:

> We have the certainty that we are in for a three-front struggle for the integrity of our own souls, for the true health of the church and for the real good of the wider society. We have had it rubbed into us, so that we shall not forget it all our life long, that the place where men earn their bread is to be the place of holiness; and that it will take us all of

> our years to help make it so. We have also grasped the truth that it is no good taking up this challenge unless we see how costly it may be. The camp wage-pool is our symbol of that, in a mild way.

But best of all, we've learnt that wherever the struggle takes us and whatever it costs us, we shall never go alone and we shall never really be poor. You in Canada, and I in New Zealand, and all the servants of Christ throughout the world, know that we can depend on one another while together we depend on Christ and he is wholly dependable.[39]

SCM Work Camps Launched

The Welland student-in-industry work camp was judged a great success and the SCM and Canadian Work Camp Committee agreed to continue their partnership and hoped to expand to having more than one work camp each summer. At the 1945 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Work Camp Committee, held over Thanksgiving at Camp Thayendenaga (later to become the home of Five Oaks under Bev Oaten's vision and leadership), the Committee agreed to change its name to the Christian Work Camp Fellowship (CWCF). Board members believed the name change reflected the purpose of the organization: "professing Christians of all creeds uniting in a common fellowship to give expression to their faith by physical work."[40]

The SCM and Canadian Work Camp Fellowship continued their collaboration in organizing summer student work camps. The CWCF also continued to organize short-term volunteer work camps. In 1946 the CWCF and SCM added a student-in-agriculture work camp in St. Vital, on the outskirts of Winnipeg, directed by Frank Ball and Isobel Benham, to the student-in-industry work camp in Brantford, directed by John and Gwen Grant.

In 1947 there were three co-sponsored work camps, a student-in-agriculture camp in Dixie, Ontario, directed by Marjorie Peck and Earl Hawkesworth, and two student-in-industry camps, one in Brantford and the other in Montreal. The Brantford campers lived in a machine shop at the old RCAF airport. It was an international Canadian/American camp co-directed by Gerry Hutchinson, General Secretary of the Canadian SCM and Gale Engles, an American who had worked with Displaced Persons in Europe for two years and was about to go as Chaplain to Stanford University. In Montreal Cyril and Marjorie Powles (Secretary of the

McGill SCM) directed a student-in-industry work camp at St. Columba House.

That same summer, Bev Oaten directed the first WSCF volunteer work camp in Bievres,[41] near Paris, France, where students were engaged in post-war rebuilding of the French SCM – the Fede's, office and conference centre, La Roche Dieu.[42] In another example of the international aspect of the SCM work camps, the Canadian work camps contributed to Bev's travel costs.

1948 saw work camps in Brantford and Dixie once again, and in 1949 Lex Miller and his wife Jean returned to Canada to direct the Montreal student-in-industry work camp with primarily senior work campers, (people who had previously attended a work camp). Lex was available to direct the Montreal work camp because he had come to Union Seminary in New York with his family in the fall of 1948 to begin a PhD in Religion at Colombia.[43]

The camp lived at Chalmers United Church in Verdun where Gardiner Ward was in ministry. The evening study and discussion sessions were intense and grappled with the long term implications of the church aligning itself with the working class. Miller's publishing in the area of Christianity and Marxism,[44] and work as a Christian vocation[45] provided a focus for discussion and debate as did the immediacy of labour struggles such as the Asbestos Strike. Resources provided by Miller were supplemented by many guest speakers. Regular Bible Study and a series on the Twentieth Century Christian kept the discussions lively, and discussion of the connection of the Christian Church to specific political parties included the Communist Party.

A number of McGill SCMers had become involved with the Society for a Catholic Commonwealth (SCC)[46] by this time, and had a specific sense of the place of Eucharist in the practice of the church and a theological understanding that made a strong connection between radical politics and high church liturgy. Unfortunately, in this instance it created a barrier to a joint Eucharist for all campers. The Society of the Catholic Commonwealth (SCC) was a religious community founded in 1939 in Massachusetts by Frederick Hastings Smyth (1888-1960), an American Episcopalian priest and Christian Marxist theologian. Smyth was invited as a guest speaker to the second Arundel Conference[47] of the Anglican Fellowship for Social Action[48](AFSA) near Montreal in 1944 and again in 1947. A number of Anglican SCMers present at these events were inspired by Smyth's radical political and liturgical marrying of a particular Anglo-

Catholic Eucharistic theology, known as anamnesis, with a dialectical political critique.

Cyril Powles described Smyth's theology of the offertory and its powerful attractiveness for some SCMers at the time in these words: "when you came to the Eucharist you brought your work and that work was part of the bread and wine that were offered in the offertory and that offertory theology, the idea that your work is offered in your worship and forms part of the material basis of your worship was our theology at that time."[49] SCC's contact with the radical SCM McGill students, experienced in the practical solidarity of SCM work camps, brought a new lease on life to the Society, even as it became the logical next step for many graduating SCMers. Several former United Church SCMers, some who were preparing for ministry in the United Church of Canada, became Anglicans in order to join the Society.[50]

They, along with a number of SCMers from the 1949 Montreal student-in-industry work camp also joined in the formation of a co-op in Montreal called the COOP at the end of the 1949 work camp. The Montreal COOP included both those sharing accommodation and others who came to meetings, and together produced and circulated newsletters reflecting their thinking and discussions. The COOP lasted two years and was a first effort of several subsequent initiatives, where those radicalized and inspired by their work camp experiences sought to find a sustained way to support Christian engagement in the lives of working people.

Lex Miller was undoubtedly a key influence in these choices. Reading Lex Miller's books, it is not hard to see both how he influenced the work camp movement in the SCM in a seminal way, and how his experience in the Canadian SCM work camps and on-going correspondence with many Canadian SCMers influenced his own writing and theology. Interviews with those who attended the 1945 and 1949 work camps reflect what a charismatic person he must have been to have so profoundly inspired and shaped the vocational and life choices of so many. Many of those interviewed during my research spoke of Lex Miller as a major architect of the SCM work camp movement, both those who had met him, those who had heard of him and those who had only read his books.

SCM Takes on Work Camps by Themselves

By the 1950s, SCM work camps had become something of an

institution and with this came the growing pains and struggles common to the process of movements becoming established and permanent. Discussion of the focus and purpose of work camps can be found in the record throughout the 1950s. Lex Miller was aware of it even before this as he writes in a 4 December, 1948 letter to Dorothy Beales:

> The suggestion from all sides about a crisis over work camps seems to have been a false alarm. Nobody wanted to turn them into either Quaker shows or Marxist shows though various personal letters had given that impression. John Rowe it was (excellent man) who framed the resolutions which confirmed the basis essentially as we worked it at Welland. Two general safeguards 1. a committee is to examine and make recommendations about worship. 2. recruiting is to aim at a more miscellaneous section of students. No uniform Quaker or Marxist or neurotic flavour if you please. John Rowe was quite astonished at the suggestion that he was supposed to want Marxist camps: so was Vince . . .[51]

Around this time a Handbook for Work Camps was created and begins with a philosophy section: "The underlying philosophy of all work camps is that work and worship, daily labour and Christian faith, belong inextricably together in the total offering of one's life to God. Student Work Camps are not service projects; they are learning situations in which students, through participation in actual pay-envelope jobs are enabled to test the validity of this philosophy and to discover its implications and contradictions in contemporary society,"[52] but goes on to recognize the different types of work camps and concludes with:

> Closely related in the Work Camp experience to the experiment in the inter-relatedness of work and worship is the experiment in community living. This is not a sentimental feeling of "everybody being a good fellow." That wears off after the first two weeks. It is rather a discovery, through actual experience of the ways in which the possibility of true community is denied by the impersonal and highly competitive organization of modern society. This has emerged most clearly in the past, through discussions about wage pool . . . The total camp experience rests upon and develops from basic Christian assumptions – belief in God as Creator and Redeemer; belief in the dignity of human beings as children of God; belief that the purpose of social organization is to enable men and women to live as children of

God.[53]

In 1951 the national council of the SCM decided to take on sole responsibility for organizing summer student work camps. I haven't followed the CWCF story but it seems they continued to organize short-term voluntary work camp opportunities. However, both Bev Oaten and Eunice Pyfrom were also heavily involved at this time in the creation of Five Oaks, another strategy for bringing together work, worship and study in order to equip lay-people for their vocation in the world.

The first meeting of the SCM Work Camp Committee on 2 October 1951 began with an evaluation of the first six years of experience with work camps, and also received input from the previous summer's Student in Industry Camps in Toronto and Montreal, to the effect that there should be clarity about the particular philosophy of student-in industry camps. It was also suggested that some thought be given to offer these as senior work camps, while others such as Mental Health or general work camps would be good entry points for students not necessarily focused on the place of industry in social, political and theological issues.

In the 1951 Work Camp Committee Minutes, Harriet Christie, SCM Associate Secretary, remembers the beginning of work camps, a mere six years previously, as reflecting various factors:

> - visit of Lex Miller to Canada and his interest in the church's task in this area
> - desire to continue the experience of short-term work camps in camps of long duration, particularly the experience of the relation between work and worship
> - desire to give students an experience of working in industry
> - desire by students to have an experience of living in Christian community
> - and attempt to find where faith has relevance in the modern world.[54]

The general discussion recorded in these minutes reflects a diverse perspective ranging from those who think that "the industrial situation is basic to everything else in our society and that only by tackling it can we get to the root of other problems,"[55] to those who think the most important benefit of work camps was "what happens to persons not problems. The work camp is merely a technique of things happening to persons and we should use the technique around any specific problem in which what happens to people creates community."[56] Nevertheless it is fascinating to

see that six years after Eunice Pyfrom pressed him into service as Director of the first student-in-industry work camp, Lex Miller's role has become part of the legend even though his participation and leadership was fortuitous, rather than planned.

The suggestion of having a senior student-in-industry work camp was adopted, and it took place at Bathurst St. United in Toronto in 1953 with Bob Miller, National SCM Study Secretary, as Director. Dick Allen reports that there was an expectation going into the work camp that it would evolve into a permanent Christian community engaged in factory work and intentional Christian communal living.[57] Muriel Anderson remembers that members of the work camp looked for a house that summer and agreed to buy 105 Howland Ave.[58] This purchase enabled the establishment of Howland House by Bob Miller in the Fall of 1953, whose story is another example of the effort on the part of those transformed and radicalized by SCM work camps to create a more permanent and sustained means of collectively engaging as Christians with the realities of industrial workers' lives.

The Work Camp Legacy

As the 1945 Welland work camp drew to a close, Lex Miller recognized the life-long impact of the work camp experience when he asserted that "social and political, industrial and economic, rural and urban life is wholesome (healthy = holy) only when it too belongs to God . . . to act out what (this) means will be a lifelong business."[59] Many work campers of this period and those which followed made the commitment to be the church in the midst of the working class, a lifelong business.

Some ran repeatedly for political office and were elected municipally, provincially and federally. Others took their leadership into the universities, still others to the church and theological education. Serving the church in partnership with churches in other countries was the choice of many, while others chose the domestic mission field, including life-long presence in working class communities and work places. Those who participated in Howland House over its twenty years found themselves reflecting this variety.

The SCM work camps gathered together and reinforced the radicalism that existed in the McGill SCM, a direct inheritance of the tradition of the FCSO through RBY Scott and J. King Gordon, and influenced by the contacts with students from Queens and Emmanuel,

inspired by Gergory Vlastos, John Line and others. They were a Canadian expression of the worker-priest movement in France, which transferred their connections to workers and their movements from the forced labour camps of World War Two into a mission among the working class of France.[60]

The presence and participation of Lex Miller was a key factor, but the 1951 return of Bob Miller (no relation to Lex) from studies with Karl Barth and others in Basel, Switzerland after the war sealed and empowered this direction. Bob Miller, as SCM Study Secretary from 1951 to 1957, travelled across the country sharing the theology, challenges and vision of a post-war ecumenical church with students through books, speakers and the opportunity to experiment and explore provided by summer work camps. He helped solidify the connection of this Canadian SCM innovation to movements like the German Ecumenical Lay Academies and Kirchentag,[61] emerging in Germany after the war; the worker priests in France and Belgium; and the great emphasis on the laity as the presence and ministry of the church in the world, receiving focus and emphasis with the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

In the midst of changing political, theological, economic and social times, work camps gave the SCM a programmatic strategy and model which was community- building, theologically-stretching and provided experiential learning that was socially and politically radicalizing. With the Canadian universities expanding dramatically,[62] the work camps provided a consistent focus while other elements of SCM on campus began to change.

Far from withdrawing from the struggle to change the basic social order, the SCM work camps provided a formative and transformative experience of the material conditions of working people, and a theology which affirmed God's transforming presence in daily work. The urgency as well as the ambiguity of this engagement with the realities of workers' lives is expressed in Bob Miller's reflection on the 1951 Toronto work camp at St. James Cathedral, which he co-directed:

> We worked. And made new kinds of friends in a terrible and wonderful new world. Our capacity for sharing the life and lot of labouring people wasn't very great, but we were there with them, and have carried a little bit of them and their world away with us. We aren't the poorer for it . . . We tried to relate our Christianity, the Church and the Bible. None of us really did succeed. Likely we were not even much further in our understanding of how to do it, but we

> were "in the world", really – and the seed of a sobering realism can flower for us in a new Bible, a concrete Gospel, a reformed Church and our "relating" should never again be abstract. It won't be easier, but it will be "realer."[63]

Through the years of SCM work camps, students of successive generations grappled in local and national contexts with what the demands of the gospel mean for the social engagement of Christians and the Church in Canada. Many of them made this a lifetime vocation, both within and outside the church. In doing so they contributed to and helped fashion channels where the continuing streams of a socially-incarnated Christianity in Canada and around the world could flow.

Endnotes

1. Lex Miller, *The Giant Forge Log*, p. 16, 85.076C, Box 121-10, United Church of Canada Archive, Toronto (UCCA).
2. Gidney, *A Long Eclipse: The Liberal Protestant Establishment and the Canadian University, 1920-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 48.
3. Roger Hutchinson, "The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order – A Social Ethical Analysis of a Christian Socialist Movement" (Ph.D. diss., Victoria University, Toronto, 1975), 1.
4. There were more than 60 work camps between 1945 and 1970 ranging in size from 10 to 30. A thousand is a conservative estimate of students impacted.
5. Gidney, *A Long Eclipse*, 50.
6. Minutes of the 17 January 1945 SCM National Executive Committee, Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 4-14, UCCA.
7. www.service-civil-international.org
8. www.service-civil-international.org
9. Robin Boyd, *The Witness of the Student Christian Movement: Church Ahead of the Church* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007), 106.
10. Jean Oaten, *Five Oaks: Its Roots and Growth (*Paris, Ontario: Five Oaks, n.d.). On page seven, Bev Oaten describes his enthusiasm for work camps which was also to permeate the establishment of Five Oaks, with these words:

"I had been camping since the early 20s, but here exciting new elements appeared. Work was a great leveller. The intellectual had to learn from the muscle types. The technically skilled enjoyed showing the novice how. There was a new understanding – you nail on a board which a brainy girl has sawed crooked and you both learn about each other. Close standards of workmanship and of production made for mutual dependency and group loyalty. Each work camper read and discussed and lived in a new community situation – a depopulated area, a city slum, an over-crowded tourist area. The study had new reality and scope, high participation and learning value. But, most surprising of all, work camp worship, often in the Quaker manner, under these conditions, frequently achieved a direct confrontation with God. I had a tremendous sense of his blessing on the work of our hands of our readiness to find and do His will."

11. Article reprinted from *The Pathfinder*, Acc. No. 85.076C, File 2-13, UCCA.
12. Article reprinted from *The Pathfinder*, Acc. No. 85.076C, File 2-13, UCCA.
13. Article reprinted from *The Pathfinder,* Acc. No. 85.076C, File 2-13, UCCA.
14. Article reprinted from *The Pathfinder*, Acc. No. 85.076C, File 2-13, UCCA.
15. "Preliminary List of Work Camp Locations – 1942," Acc. No. 85.076C, File 2-13, UCCA.
16. http://www.campus.coop/history.
17. The name Rochdale House likely reflects the fact that the cooperative movement around the world uses the Rochdale Principles, first developed in 1844 by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in Rochdale, England. The Principal of Victoria University had his offices on the main floor and twelve men occupied the top two floors as a student cooperative. Victoria College contributed the house to this purpose for the cost of upkeep (Gidney, *A Long Eclipse*, 184). This first appearance of Rochdale House would presage the larger experiment of Rochdale College, established a few blocks away at Huron and Bloor in 1968 and among other claims to fame, housing the SCM Book Room from 1968 to 1988.
18. http://www.campus.coop/history.
19. *The United Church Observer*, 1 February 1968.
20. Rev. Norman H. MacKenzie, 1915-1989. Biography File, UCCA.
21. Rev. Norman H. MacKenzie's 25 September 1945 letter from Lanchow, Kansu, China, Biography File, UCCA.
22. "*The Giant Forge Log*," 2. Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10, UCCA.

23. Fern A. Sayles, *Welland Workers Make History* (Welland, ON: Winnifred Sayles, 1963) , 193

24. *The United Church Observer*, 1 July 1943.

25. *The United Church Observer*, 15 September 1945.

26. "*The Giant Forge Log*," Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10, UCCA.

27. The *Rochdale Principles* are a set of ideals for the operation of cooperatives. They were first set out by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in Rochdale, England in 1844, and have formed the basis for the principles on which co-operatives around the world operate to this day.

28. "*The Giant Forge Log*," Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10, UCCA.

29. "*The Giant Forge Log*," Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10,UCCA.

30. "*The Giant Forge Log,"* Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10, UCCA.

31. Dave Rigby, Bill Shaver, Vince Goring, Frank Haley, Ian Kelsick, Les Pickering, Isobel Deeth, Eileen Kennedy, Isabelle Dobbie, Lawrence Lee, Pam Mitchell, Don Anderson, Dorothy Beales, Vera Beck, Joyce Belyea, Dave Critchley, Elizabeth Driscoll, Peter Ehrenburg, Cae Gillon, Muriel Guest, Kay Halpin, Phil Lewis, Jack Paterson, Dave Ross, Jim Seunerine, Keith Smith, Muriel Stephenson, Tom Walden, Elsie Woo-Wing, and Jan Zieman.

32. Privy Council Order 1003, known as P.C. 1003, proclaimed in February 1944, finally created the machinery necessary to enforce a worker's right to choose a union, to impose collective bargaining and a grievance procedure and to curb unfair practices by unions and management (Canadian Labour History, Canadian Labour Congress, action.web.ca/home/clcedu/attach/labourhistory.pdf).

33. "*The Giant Forge Log*," Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10, UCCA.

34. "*The Giant Forge Log*," Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10, UCCA.

35. Alexander Miller, *Christian Vocation in the Contemporary World* (London: SCM Press, 1947), 71.*The National Average: A Study in Social Discipline* recounted the experience of The Shadwell Group in England who participated in a common economic discipline to live on the national average income in order to express economic identification with the wider society and as a measure of rough economic justice.

36. *"The Giant Forge Log,"* Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10,UCCA.

37. *"The Giant Forge Log,"* Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121-10, UCCA.

38. *"The Giant Forge Log,"* 14, Acc. No. 85.076, Box 121-10, UCCA.

39. *"The Giant Forge Log,"* 16, Acc. No. 85.076, Box 121-10, UCCA.

40. *The United Church Observer*, 1 November 1945, 8.

41. Oaten, *Five Oaks Centre Its Roots and Growth*, 2, 9.

42. Hans Reudi Weber, *The Courage to Live: A Biography of Suzanne de Dietrich* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), 63.

43. 12 August 1947 letter from Lex Miller to Dorothy Beales, provided by Dorothy Beales Wyman.

44. Lex Miller, *The Christian Significance of Karl Marx* (London: SCM Press, 1946).

45. Alexander Miller, *Christian Vocation in the Contemporary World* (London: SCM Press, 1947).

46. The Society of the Catholic Commonwealth (SCC) was a religious community founded in 1939 by Frederick Hastings Smyth, (1888-1960) described in their Society pamphlet as "a society within the Anglican Communion whose primary purpose is, under God, to bear intensive witness to the Incarnational, Sacramental and therefore essentially social character of the Christian Religion."

47. Stephen F. Hopkins, "Anglican Fellowship for Social Action" (MA Thesis in Theology, University of St. Michaels, Toronto School of Theology, 1982), 62.

48. According to Steve Hopkins, AFSA grew out of the progressive mood in the Anglican Church generated by the 1941 Malvern Conference in England under the leadership and inspiration of then Archbishop of York, William Temple. Its core membership in Montreal were part of the Diocesan Social Service Committee. A catalyst was the 1-3 May 1943, FCSO-sponsored conference in Montreal, titled "Toward a Christian Society." The organization emerged in 1945 with a series of principles which set it apart as a Canadian expression of an incarnational socialism.

49. 25 January 2010 interview by Betsy Anderson with Cyril and Marjorie Powles.

50. Dan Heap and his soon to be wife Alice Boomhour, and Bruce Mutch and his soon to be wife Ann Campbell left the United Church and became Anglicans and subsequently members of the SCC.

51. 4 December 1948 letter from Lex Miller to Dorothy Beales, provided by Dorothy Beales Wyman.

52. Handbook for Work Camps, Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121, UCCA.

53. Handbook for Work Camps, Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121, UCCA.

54. SCM Work Camp Committee Minutes, 2 October 1951, UCCA.

55. SCM Work Camp Committee Minutes, 2 October 1951, UCCA.

56. SCM Work Camp Committee Minutes, 2 October1951, UCCA.

57. Interview with Dick Allen, 24 February 2009.

58. Interview with Muriel Anderson, January 2005.

59. "*The Giant Forge Log*," 14, Acc. No. 85.076, Box 121-10, UCCA.

60. Oscar L. Arnal, *Priests in Working- Class Blue: The History of the Worker-Priests (1943-1954)* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 59.

61. The Kirchentag (or church day or week) was started by Reinhold von Thadden as a lay movement among German Protestants in 1949 and continues to this day. It has always had a bias toward the integration of theological, social and political themes (www.kirchentag.org.uk/contents.htm). The German Evangelical Lay Academies began in 1945 just after the war ended with the initiative of Dr. Eberhard Mueller "where people from the isolated social and vocational circles of Germany society might come together on neutral ground in common search for answers to baffling everyday problems" (Lois Wilson, "Town Talk: A Case History in Lay Education" [BD Thesis, University of Winnipeg, 1969]).

62. Gidney, *The Long Eclipse*, 89, "The sheer size of the enterprise expanded dramatically. Enrolment in Canadian universities increased from 64,731 in 1945 to 72,737 in 1955, 204, 245 by 1965 and 309,469 by1970, overall roughly a five-fold increase.

63. "*St. James Cathedral Toronto Work Camp Log,"* 1951, Acc. No. 85.076C, Box 121, UCCA.