

Axed:
The 1972 Fallers' Wildcat Strike

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Chapter One – Introduction

In her 1983 study of the logging industry in British Columbia, Patricia Marchak noted a distinct void in the field and called for a “more intensive” study of the industry and its workers.¹ This essay attempts to fill at least part of that void by examining a point in the history of the British Columbia logging industry where a paradoxical blend of industrial and craft unionism would come to a close in the coastal region.² The International Woodworkers of America (IWA) fallers’ wildcat strike of 1972 was this turning point. This essay will provide an explanation of the strike’s context and origins as well as a detailed account of the strike itself. From 1945 to 1975, the dominant industrial paradigm in British Columbia was one of intensified capital accumulation and technological/managerial control, augmented by an inclusive and monopolistic industrial relations system. During this period, known as the Fordist era, Piore and Sabel describe craftwork as being reduced to a “discredited paradigm,” as the transition to a Fordist system undermined craft-status labour.³ As a part of this process, craft labour would be replaced by an industrial workforce of subordinated labour, which would surrender not

¹ Patricia Marchak, *Green Gold: The Forestry Industry in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), xvi.

² For the purpose of this essay, the “coast” refers to the logging region encompassing Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlotte Islands, and the length of coast running from the Alaskan Panhandle to the United States border, extending inland for some distance. The two broad subdistricts involved are the Vancouver district and the Prince Rupert district (which overlaps with the interior logging district). For a complete map of the forest district boundaries, see *Selected Forest Industry Statistics of British Columbia* (Vancouver: F.L.C Reed and Associates, 1973), 10.

³ Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 48.

only time but also autonomy over the method of production.⁴ At least in the coastal logging industry, this characterization is not entirely accurate. While unionized craft-status fallers occupied a place within the factory regime, it was not until the 1972 wildcat strike that their status was eliminated.⁵ For those fallers who chose to remain within the factory regime, under direct employment and union representation, “real” subordination would occur.⁶ Though some would leave the union to preserve their status by becoming independent contractors, many would initially remain with the union and accept the terms of subordinated employment.⁷

While starting with a narrative of the fallers’ wildcat, from April to August 1972, may make a certain chronological sense, it makes very little analytical sense. The conflicts between players and paradigms, visible as disruptions to industrial harmony, do not come out of the woodwork. For this essay, a historical analysis of the mechanics of work and conflict will precede the narrative of the strike to provide context and explanation. Chapter one examines the work process of falling, identifying the faller as a craftworker within a factory regime. Braverman’s analysis of deskilling and mechanization is a useful starting point, but is in need of refinement to account for the fallers’ craft status. Chapter two looks at the history of the conflicting forces which spill out of the methods and mode of production, between unions and the logging companies, as well as within the unions themselves. This chapter focuses on the history of the IWA’s

⁴ This is what Harry Braverman refers to as “power over labour.” For more on how power over labour fits into the deskilling of labour under capitalism, see Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York, London: Monthly Review, 1999).

⁵ A wildcat is a strike which is illegal, insofar as it does not comply with the strike guidelines of the province’s labour code.

⁶ See Gugleimo Carchedi, “Reproduction of the Social Classes at the Level of Productive Relations,” *Economy and Society*, vol 4 no 4, pp 362-363. “Real” subordination is where the worker loses power over his labour, whereas “informal” subordination is the loss of control over the products of labour.

⁷ Andrew Neufeld and Andrew Parnaby, *The IWA in Canada: The Life and Times of an Industrial Union* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2000), 194.

formation and how fallers came to be represented in a subordinate position within their union, as well as describing the aspects of the fallers' work that were anathema to both the IWA and industry. Chapter three will provide a narrative of the conflict itself, showing the end result of the structural subordination of fallers described over the previous two chapters. However, whatever conclusions about causation and context can be reached, one thing remains clear after the dust of the 1972 wildcat had settled: that fallers found their best of both worlds status revoked, losing the advantages of being both independent contractors and industrial union members.

The 1972 fallers' strike started on 17 April 1972 and lasted until 11 August 1972. The strike occurred in the shadow of the large-scale legal IWA strike that summer, where 28,000 woodworkers walked out between 22 June and 17 July. The totality of the fallers' action, as almost 100 percent of fallers had dropped their saws by mid June, should not be conflated with the strike action waged by the rest of the woodworkers. The two strikes were fought separately by the union executive and the Faller's Society, the independent voice of fallers within the IWA, not only over fundamentally different terms and concerns, but also between the philosophies of craft and industrial unionism. These broad differences manifested themselves in the stated intentions of the two groups. The fallers were concerned with the preservation and standardization of their piecework system.⁸ The union executive's concerns were more broad-based: the advancement of across-the-board increases in wages and benefits.⁹ Ultimately the fallers would lose their battle, despite a tenacious fight over the course of five months, and would accept the terms imposed upon them by the contract. This amounted to a \$80.52 day-rate, which not only

⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 1 May, 1972.

⁹ *Western Canadian Lumber Worker*, July-August, 1972.

severely curtailed the earnings of many fallers, but also eliminated the fallers' flexible piecework remuneration. This would open the door to the imposition of a regime of control and regularity on the work process of falling, at least for those workers who remained under union representation.

Chapter Two - Work

“Equipped with saws, wedges, axes, bottles of oil, and springboards, the head faller would size up the tree and decide in which direction to fall it, then, cutting out the springboard holes with the axes they fixed their boards high above the butt and mounted them... First they would chop the undercut with razor sharp blades, then on the opposite side a few chops to cut away the rough, thick bark, and the saw was placed in the cut... At last within an inch or two of the undercut, with a blow given to the wedge the tree shuddered and fell, slowly at first, and then with the roar of severed wood, its needles swishing through the air, it crashed through everything in the forest in its path, and landed springing on the forest floor.”¹⁰

- Description of early falling, from *Tough Timber*.

Over the last 160 years of the logging industry in British Columbia, forest resource exploitation has been radically transformed in size, scope, and intensity.¹¹ Chief among the developments has been the reorganization of production around an industrial model that Rajala calls the “forest factory.”¹² Rather than continue with an analysis of that factory model as a whole, a task-centric inquiry into logging’s structures of production can help articulate the role and effects specific tasks have on productive processes. As the industry rapidly adopted new technologies and the principles of scientific management throughout the early twentieth century, falling quickly became recognized as the main bottleneck of the productive process.¹³ When mechanization, the means of intensification and subdivision of labour along the production line, eventually

¹⁰ Myrtle Bergren, *Tough Timber: The Loggers of B.C.* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1966), 15-16.

¹¹ There are many works of scholarship which deal with this transformation in the industry. For a summary of the key aspects of the industry’s technological amplification, including the effect on skilled labour, see Richard Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rainforest: Production, Science and Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), as well as Gordon Hak, *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry, 1934-1974* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007). For a more mechanical history of the forest industry from the viewpoint of the independent producer, see Ken Drushka, *Working in the Woods: A History of Logging on the West Coast* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1992).

¹² For a complete discussion of the ‘forest factory’ model see Richard Rajala, “The Forest as Factory: Technological Change and Worker Control in the West Coast Logging Industry, 1880-1930,” in *Labour/Le Travail*, vol 32 (Fall 1993), pp 73-104.

¹³ Rajala, “The Forest as Factory,” 77; Drushka, *Working in the Woods*, 220.

reached the faller a curious effect occurred that was wholly different from the effect on any other worker involved in the logging process. Instead of diminishing the fallers' craft status through mechanization, reducing him to skilled or semi-skilled proletarianized labour, it increased the fallers' productivity and maintained the work's disconnection from the factory line.¹⁴ The full incorporation of the chainsaw in the postwar era was accomplished without overly degenerating, negating, or restructuring the fallers' range of creative labour application.¹⁵ As such, Harry Braverman's thesis that mechanization is used as the means of control by capital to degrade skilled labour is in need of refinement when applied to fallers.¹⁶

Coastal logging is essentially a three stage process from 'stump to dump.' The first stage, falling, was accomplished with axe and crosscut saw prior to the chainsaw's introduction. The logs were then yarded, bringing the timber out of the woods to be collected at a central site. This phase involved the animal power of oxen and horses before the industry transitioned to steam power and then to internal combustion. Finally, the logs are conducted either to tidewater or directly to sawmill. This stage was performed by rail in the late nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century, when truck logging allowed greater flexibility and access to higher elevation timber.

Despite the incorporation of the factory regime in the surrounding forest, the actual work of falling underwent very little modification until the chainsaw was

¹⁴ Women working directly in the logging industry were rare, with falling in particular dominated by men. Women's woodworking employment was limited to manufacturing and value-added industries. For an example of women's experience with employment in forest industries see Susanne Klausen, "The Plywood Girls: Women and Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant," in *Labour/Le Travail*, vol 41 (Spring 1998), pp 199-235.

¹⁵ This is what Rajala refers to as the "physical and conceptual skills" usually denigrated by mechanization in the logging process. Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 50.

¹⁶ Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, 297-298.

developed in the 1930s.¹⁷ Early falling was an incredibly arduous and labourious task, requiring the use of cross-cut saws and axes wielded by loggers perched precariously on springboards fixed into a tree's trunk. Not only could a coastal Douglas Fir of up to six or seven feet in diameter take the better part of a day to cut down but, since fallers were paid on a piecework rate, damaged timber from a misfell resulted in severely reduced pay.¹⁸ Falling is also craftwork, a rarity within logging's productive process, and remained as such until 1972 for union fallers. An understanding of where falling fits in relation to the production line, and why it merits the distinction of craftwork, can be achieved by contrasting the trajectory of falling's technological development to the dramatic evolution of productive methods in the logging industry as a whole.

Once the log was on the ground, and bucked into lengths, loggers were the focus of an intensive regime of scientific management and technological control over the labour process. In general, industrial capitalism's focus on production in the early twentieth century was the centralization of managerial power and production, developed in tandem with the technology, which characterized the modern factory regime. This system's apex, mass production, only existed after the 1970s in the interior region. On the coast the drive toward a mechanically-directed and predictable productive system had been in progress since the adoption of the steam donkey in the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁹ Replacing a team of horses or oxen with a steam-driven engine not only replaced the oxen, the tools of production, but also eliminated the teamster, a skilled worker who exercised enormous

¹⁷ Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 7.

¹⁸ Richard Rajala, *The Legacy and the Challenge: A Century of the Forest Industry at Cowichan Lake* (Lake Cowichan: Lake Cowichan Heritage Advisory Committee, 1993), 17-18.

¹⁹ Marchak, *Green Gold*, 48.

creative control over the pace and method of his labour.²⁰ Even within this early instance of factory regimentation, two distinct trends can be noted: the rational economic impetus of increasing productivity, and reorienting productive control away from labour in favour of managerial direction by means of machine pacing. The introduction of a different power source, from animal to mechanical, did not cap the advancement of the yarding system. Rather, the work process of yarding, once opened up to machine pacing, allowed for further managerial and technological intervention into the production process.²¹ Furthermore, as the mechanical complexity of the yarding process deepened and individual task ranges within that process were subdivided, an overall decline of conceptual and physical worker skill occurred.²² The yarding process continued its technological advancement well into the latter part of the twentieth century, as the logging systems which brought the logs out of the woods became increasingly flexible and adaptive. There is a direct lineage in these processes from the rude methods of ground lead logging pre-1900s, to the increasingly complex and efficient high lead and skidder systems of the first half of the century, to the portable steel spars of the 1950s and 60s.

Technological incorporation and adoption of the factory model in logging does not necessarily dictate that workers were completely subordinated by mechanized production.²³ Rather, although sluggish at the outset in organizing into unions, loggers would eventually fight collectively for their interests.²⁴ However, regardless of agency,

²⁰ Gordon Hak, *Turning Trees into Dollars: The British Columbia Coastal Lumber Industry, 1858-1913* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 124; Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 16.

²¹ Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rainforest*, 19.

²² Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rainforest*, 20.

²³ Rajala, "The Forest as Factory," 104.

²⁴ Hak, *Turning Trees into Dollars*, 148-149.

loggers would still find themselves at the receiving end of an increasingly systemic deskilling and subordination process, matching Braverman's theory of labour degradation.²⁵ However, when examined closely, this statement is more applicable to the post-bucking factory line, rather than to the fallers' own labour. Even though the interior was starting to see the incorporation of feller-buncher technology by 1970, where gentler terrain and smaller tree diameter permitted, falling by chainsaw retained its autonomous craft status on the coast region in 1972.²⁶ Braverman's degradation of work thesis is valid so long as workers became components, rather than wielders and owners, of mechanical power.²⁷ In the former scenario, this translates to a rationalized production process, necessarily reducing task range and creative application of labour. In Braverman's words,

The manner in which labour is deployed around the machine – from the labour required to design, build, repair, and control it, to the labour required to feed and operate it – must be dictated not by the human needs of the producers but by the special needs of those who own both machine and labour power, and whose interest it is to bring those two together in a special way.²⁸

Coastal falling remained bifurcated from the factory regime throughout the postwar era, and the fallers' status as a craftworker proved durable. In general, craftwork can be seen as labour which remains impenetrable to the basic tenets of Taylorism. As defined by Braverman, these tenets are the disassociation of skill from the labour process, the divorcement of conception from execution, and the negation of control over the

²⁵ Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 48.

²⁶ Marchak, *Green Gold*, 48.

²⁷ Braverman articulates this point by utilizing the research of James R. Bright on the managerial implications of automation. Bright noted that as mechanical complexity increased past the point where the worker controls its function, managerial power takes over. While Bright, selectively sampling chemical workers, concluded that workers' skilled involvement increases as a result of mechanization amplification, Braverman contests this point and asserts that the process is one of "operations to maintenance," and decreases the skilled involvement in the work process (Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, 146-156). As the faller is a conductor of both 'operations and maintenance,' the effect of mechanization on his labour is differently defined.

²⁸ Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, 134.

labour process through knowledge monopolization.²⁹ Thus, a craftworker is a labourer who creates surplus value, but exercises knowledgeable control over the productive process and whose range and application of skill is not controlled by a third party. Since the craftworker engages in a radically different paradigm of production, any point on the production line where degraded factory labour and craftwork labour connect is a bifurcation point. To understand how this relates to falling, consider Patricia Marchak's definition of pre-mechanized labour which she conflates with "crafts-shop production." In logging, Marchak uses craftwork to describe a "pre-mechanized system" which "involves individuals or small groups of independent workers engaged in a total production task," using tools that are owned by workers and light enough to be transported.³⁰ However, Marchak's usage of mechanization as it relates to work demands revision. Studies of logging labour processes focus on mechanization as means of controlling production, as in a conveyor belt on a factory line, as well as a description of the machinery used in that production. For the analysis of fallers, bifurcated yet still connected to a more typical industrial production line, this conflation is problematic, as it confuses mechanization as a method of control with mechanization of the tools of production.

Braverman's description of machine-paced labour does not apply to mechanized hand falling, as the faller maintains control over the pace of production. Unlike the assembly line worker, whose work consists of repetitious actions, the craftworking faller still owns the power over his labour. While supervisory bullbuckers, the 'faller foremen,' are present, they do not exercise the sort of control over production that Braverman

²⁹ Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, 77-83.

³⁰ Marchak, *Green Gold*, 162.

describes.³¹ Falling a tree requires an immense amount of creative judgement depending on the particular tree and landscape conditions. Not only does skilled cutting determine the value of a felled tree, as a broken tree can result in a near worthless log, but the worker also benefits from the increased value his skill adds to the product. This is because, until 1972, coastal fallers were largely compensated on a piece rate basis. While the introduction of the chainsaw in the 1940s and the 1950s mechanized the fallers' labour and affected the deployment of skill, it did not do so in a degrading fashion. Rather, the skill-set needed to be an effective faller only increased as the chainsaw opened up the possibility of directional felling at increased angles. This is articulated in the words of one government manual, which declared that "it should not be inferred that directional felling is simple" and that "on-the-job training and many years of experience are essential to perform this task with precision."³² Moreover, while falling did become less physically taxing, the adoption of the chainsaw required the knowledge and application of technical skills to maintain a saw in good working order.

Bergren's description of early twentieth century falling quoted at the beginning of this chapter remains valid even in view of modern falling, at least in terms of the productive process. Even when reliable and portable chainsaws were adopted *en masse*, the craft of adding value to a log by cutting it down was more amplified than changed. While the development of chainsaw technology had been underway since the 1920s, and had long been sought by an industry keenly aware of the faller bottleneck, it was the

³¹ Braverman describes the process of scientific management as one where the work process is "dissolved" and returned back to the workforce into rigidly management-controlled component parts. The intention of such is to "treat the workers themselves as machines" (Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capitalism*, 118-119). For the process of falling, the bullbucker exists as an envoy between employer and employee, and not as controller or director of the processes Braverman describes.

³² F.J Petro, *Felling and Bucking Hardwoods: How to Improve Your Profits* (Ottawa: Department of Fisheries and Forestry, 1971), 12

shortage of skilled fallers in the 1930s and 1940s which encouraged the industry's pursuit of saw mechanization.³³ Despite their initially cumbersome weight, ranging from 135-165 pounds, and the continuing requirement of two-man operation, the saws became industry standard during the Second World War.³⁴ Aiding their adoption was the coincidental negation of the German Stihl saws' patent protection, which would complement the already burgeoning domestic saw production.³⁵ As designs were refined in the years between 1945 and 1972, the lightest saws fell in weight to around 20-25 pounds, permitting one-man operation.³⁶ The fallers' individual productivity was, quite understandably, entirely transformed by the chainsaws which replaced the manual crosscut saw as the primary means of falling trees.³⁷ Rather than the painstaking process of falling trees by hand, mechanization allowed for falling at a rapid pace. Furthermore, while the chainsaw would displace labour, reducing felling crews down to one man per tree, it did not dilute the skill or autonomy of the individual faller. Moreover, as prices of chainsaws dropped early on, and because of their piece work, fallers had an incentive to own their saws personally to ensure maintenance and proper performance.³⁸ The explosion of faller productivity allowed by the chainsaw coincided with postwar technological innovation, as previously detailed. As truck logging facilitated access to increasingly high elevation timber, portable steel spars further complemented the process's efficiency and productive capacity. These changes did away with skilled

³³ Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 34. Drushka, *Working in the Woods*, 222-224; Rajala also notes that the aging population of loggers may have also contributed to the chainsaw's adoption. Young workers were not attracted to the profession, as the long hours of backbreaking labour was an effective deterrent.

³⁴ Drushka, *Working in the Woods*, 226; British Columbia, Department of Labour, *The Logging Labour Force in British Columbia (Coast Region)* (Victoria: 1969), 9.

³⁵ Drushka, *Working in the Woods* 225; Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 32.

³⁶ Department of Labour, *The Logging Labour Force in British Columbia*, 9.

³⁷ Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 33.

³⁸ Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 153.

rigging crews, and allowed much more rapid movement from cut-block to cut-block. Taken together, postwar technological innovation resulted in a yearly cut increase of 80.1 percent between the years 1963 and 1978 even though the workforce expanded by just 29.9 percent.³⁹ Therefore, a tremendous amount of productive power would rest in the hands of a relatively few craftworking fallers by 1972.

Survival and success as a faller requires extensive training and the accumulation of skills over a period of many years.⁴⁰ Following in a craftwork tradition, the training of fallers and the regulation of their work was generally informal and resembled an apprenticeship system.⁴¹ Even as late as 1972, the craft of falling was primarily learned from other fallers.⁴² When the chainsaw was introduced in the 1930's, fallers reacted to the change by setting up informal saw training programs.⁴³ Not until 1971, with the introduction of a training program at the Prince George Vocational School, did the industry achieve its goal of intervention and control over faller training.⁴⁴ While fallers controlled the transmission of knowledge before the 1972 wildcat, the following decades saw the authoritative centre of faller training shift increasingly from the jobsite and individual mentorship to the institutional structures of industry and state. While fallers were included in the process of designing the resulting courses and programs, the changing attitude toward faller training reflected new levels of industrial control, even if

³⁹ Marchak, *Green Gold*, 172.

⁴⁰ Allan Lundgren, *Many Flowers: A Loggers Story* (Duncan: Printcraft, 2007), 82.

⁴¹ Allan Lundgren describes this breaking in process from father to son in *Many Flowers*, 80-84. This family tie is important, as Marchak notes in *Green Gold* that a staggering 47.1 percent followed their fathers into the profession when surveyed between 1977 and 1978. See Marchak, *Green Gold*, 137.

⁴² Allan Lundgren, personal interview, 5 February 2010; Faller Bill Boardman also talks about breaking in new fallers, showing how the practices still continue on today in the documentary *Death in the Forest*, Gordon McLennan, dir., Dilemma Productions, 2007.

⁴³ Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 34.

⁴⁴ "Who Says Logging Can Be Learned at School," *Truck Logger*, March-April 1971, 14.

intended for the workers' own safety.⁴⁵ However, Bill Moore, president of the Truck Loggers Association during the 1972 strike, was probably not alone in his perception that the fallers "left something to be desired" in their teaching.⁴⁶ But training was not the only means by which fallers exercised control over their labour before 1972.

One of the most visible aspects of their craft which set the fallers apart from other unionized logging workers before 1972 was their piece rate pay system.⁴⁷ Called bushelling in logger's slang, incentive payment had long been a part of the industry, adopted as a standard practice on the Queen Charlottes during the Second World War.⁴⁸ By 1972, this incentivized work system provided an average rate of around one dollar per thousand board foot, with the details being locally negotiated by a faller or a group of fallers with the company or a representative bullbucker.⁴⁹ Between the contracts of 1953 and 1972, the "minimum basic rate" had not changed, though each contract recognized the existence of "sliding scales" and local variances.⁵⁰ When combined with a cost of living bonus of between \$20-30 a day, by the late 60's and early 70's a unionized faller could earn upwards of \$200 a day with an average ranging from \$60-100, and the most productive could earn over \$30,000 yearly over the course of 150-200 work days.⁵¹ As a

⁴⁵ Allan Lundgren, personal interview, Duncan, BC, 5 February 2010.

⁴⁶ Bill Moore, "The Trees that Didn't Fall Last Summer," *British Columbia Lumberman*, September 1972, 24.

⁴⁷ Beyond logging, there were other woodworkers who worked on a piece rate system, as with shingle sawyers. However, their direct connection to the factory line makes assessment of their pay rate different from that of a faller.

⁴⁸ Bill Moore, "The Trees that Didn't Fall Last Summer," 24.

⁴⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 24 May 1972; Allan Lundgren, personal interview, 5 February 2010.

⁵⁰ Section (a) on page 12 of the Coast Master Agreement for 1970-71 sets out that the 1953 "minimum basic rate" will be used as a baseline, where a "sliding scale is in effect [the rate] will be set in accordance with established procedure. However, section (b) also allows for the right to "negotiate a new minimum basic rate for such timber," depending on the status and quality of timber (British Columbia Archives, Ministry of Labour, GR 1536 Box 8 File 12, Master Agreement between Members of Forest Industrial Relations and the International Woodworkers of America 1970-1971.)

⁵¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 10 May 1972; Allan Lundgren, personal interview, 5 February 2010; Bill Moore, "Bargaining Table Warfare – Forever?," *British Columbia Lumberman*, May 1972, 25; British Columbia,

piece rate system, the average earnings of a faller could vary sharply, often modified by prevailing conditions and days worked, though the sliding scale compensated for working in small timber and steep terrain. One faller, writing to the *Pacific Tribune* using the oft used-pseudonym "Shorty Undercut," complained of the negative financial implications of a day rate, protesting that in 1971 he had made \$12,000 over 100 days of active falling, his time cut short by an injury.⁵² By way of comparison, the day rate adopted in 1972 would have reduced Shorty's earnings to \$8052, at \$80.52 a day. "The faller-bucker may be viewed as expensive and inefficient in a world of mechanical operations," noted a 1969 government report on logging industry labour, going on to observe that "he is indispensable to the industry and is likely to remain for some time to come."⁵³ What makes the faller expensive is his piece rate, which confirms worker control over the method and pace of production. What makes him indispensable is the challenges posed by his labour on terrain where the division and deskilling of labour seemed nigh impossible.

High wages, observed 1970 coast contract mediator Justice Nathaniel Nemetz, were the logger's reward for working an incredibly hazardous job.⁵⁴ Long considered the industry's most dangerous work in an already accident-prone industry, one needs only look at the Worker's Compensation Board illustrations in the *Western Canadian Lumber Worker* to get a sense of the work's grisly peril. One piece entitled "Down Came Death," detailing a young and inexperienced faller's death on the job, described the fatality as the result of lining up a few trees in close proximity with backcuts and undercuts, and then

Department of Labour, *Summary of Activities, Special Issue, Recommendations of the Honourable Mr Justice N.T. Nemetz*, vol 17 no 33, August 1970, (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1970), 8.

⁵² *Pacific Tribune*, 2 June, 1972.

⁵³ Department of Labour, *The Logging Labour Force in British Columbia*, 38.

⁵⁴ Department of Labour, *Summary of Activities, Special Issue, Recommendations of the Honourable Mr Justice N.T. Nemetz*, 8.

falling them one at a time.⁵⁵ The faller was hit by one of his prepared trees as he limbed a downed tree. High accident rates for fallers had long been blamed on the piecework system, with the assumption the incentive to produce more would encourage corner cutting and unsafe practices.⁵⁶ However, an analysis of compensation claims from 1973, after the elimination of piecework from the terms of the coast master contract, reveals that injuries and fatalities are not at all causally connected to piecework. Rather, the age of the faller, the size of the company which employed him, and the local terrain were found to be the main variables behind worker injury.⁵⁷ The younger the faller, the more hazardous the terrain, and the smaller the company, the more likely the faller was to fall prey to injury or fatality. Furthermore, coastal fallers were found to have lower accident rates than their interior counterparts. Regardless of quantifiable fact, however, the perception of fallers as unsafe was deep rooted in the industry. Bill Moore, writing in the January 1972 edition of the *BC Lumberman*, made a number of predictions for the coming year including the end to piece rates, arguing that they caused accidents and were "not compatible with the times."⁵⁸

As has been shown, the fallers' position at the head of the production line separates him from the rest of the forest factory regime. As craftworkers, they were not subject to the subordination imposed on the yarding crews by sophisticated overhead cable logging systems. When combined with tool ownership, piecework rates of pay, and independence from the production line, the range of skill and creative application of

⁵⁵ *Western Canadian Lumber Worker*, December 1960.

⁵⁶ *Truck Logger*, Summer 2007; Keith Mason, Workmen's Compensation Board, *The Effect of Piecework on Logging Accident Rates (Incorporating a Different Approach to the Exposure Problem)* (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1974), 8.; Bill Moore, "In Spite of Ourselves - 1972!," *British Columbia Lumberman*, January 1972, 23.

⁵⁷ Mason, Workmen's Compensation Board, *The Effect of Piecework on Logging Accident Rates*, 17.

⁵⁸ Moore, "In Spite of Ourselves - 1972!," 23.

labour confers upon the faller a unique status. Effectively, the faller straddles two camps, that of the industrial worker by his membership in an industrial union, and of the independent craftworker who sets his pace and profits from his own skilled production. This contradictory double status would prove to be a strained one. The IWA opposed both chainsaw ownership and piecework, fearing a slippery slope to full contract logging and flexible employment, potential divisions, and breakaways from the union.⁵⁹ For their part, the logging companies began to oppose piecework on the grounds of the comparatively enormous sums of money fallers earned and the unpredictable production rates of piece rated work.⁶⁰ The tension between craftwork and industrial methods of production, and the social and political relations which evolved out of that dialectic, would be played out in the negotiations and conflict between the IWA, the logging companies, the state, and the fallers.

⁵⁹ Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 126, 152.

⁶⁰ Bill Moore, "In Spite of Ourselves - 1972!", 23.

Chapter Three – Conflict

“The strength of the union lies not in the skill of the negotiators, but to what extent the rank and file membership is “informed,” “involved,” “united” and “determined.” The rank and file must be allowed to participate in the decision making, at the present time the average individual in our union feels detached from the mainstream of decision making as the decisions are often made “for us” rather than “by us.” We must find ways and means of restructuring our union apparatus to allow for greater participatory democracy before we can hope to be on equal footing with the employers during negotiations.”

- Draft Policy Proposal of the Faller’s Society, November 12th, 1972.⁶¹

Strikes and lockouts are disruptions to the productive process rooted in disagreement over the terms of employment. A return to production and industrial harmony is negotiated by the interested parties, the workers and owners of production. In British Columbia’s post-Second World War logging industry, these two parties were primarily the industrial unions and capitalists who bartered over the terms of labour as part of the Fordist compromise.⁶² In both the interior and coastal regions, fielding an army of logging subcontractors, known as ‘gyppo’ crews, would provide large firms with an increasingly attractive alternative to the direct employment of workers. This new logging system included the proliferation of small companies operating on contract with large corporations, cutting up the line of corporate oversight and responsibility.⁶³ However, the coast developed as a more centralized industry than the interior, resulting in an insoluble mix of craftworkers and industrial workers within the IWA. The tenacious independence of fallers, both socially and within the productive process, was ill-suited to

⁶¹ University of British Columbia Archives (hereafter UBCA), MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, Draft Policy Proposal, 12 November 1972.

⁶² For a discussion of the mechanics of the commoditization of labour power see Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, 37.

⁶³ Marchak, *Green Gold*, 174.

the regime of pluralistic legalism that characterized the Fordist compromise.

Furthermore, the labour legalism of the postwar era would favour more conservative industrial unions as the only legitimate collective bargaining agents. These structural conflicts within the union would be exposed in 1972 when the fallers struck on their own accord in defiance of both industry and the IWA. While conflict within the IWA is usually considered in a political sense, as in the intra-union conflict of the 'red wars' and Syd Thompson's opposition unionism of the 1960's and 1970's, tension as a result of divisions within the labour process is largely unexplored territory. This division, between craftworking labour aristocrats, the fallers, and the rest of the woodworking industry, would be articulated by the 1972 fallers' wildcat.

In the early twentieth century, attempts to organize woodworkers into an industrial union came from the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a notoriously militant and defiant union which sought to organize semi-skilled and skilled transient workers, including loggers.⁶⁴ However, it was the Lumber Worker's Industrial Union (LWIU), founded in 1919 and broken by 1923, that made the first real systematic effort to organize British Columbia woodworkers into an inclusive industrial union. While the LWIU was almost exclusively a logger's union, this was more because it had difficulty attracting millworkers to join ranks.⁶⁵ Part of the reason why the LWIU did not survive was because of what Hak called the "wobbly insurgency," referring to IWW-minded workers dragging the union down by the "undue emphasis on job action and economic

⁶⁴ Richard Rajala, "A Dandy Bunch of Wobblies: Pacific Northwest Loggers and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1900-1930," in *Labour History* vol 37 no 2 (Spring 1996), 234. Rajala holds that the mobility of the workers mutually reinforced by their solidarity.

⁶⁵ Gordon Hak, "British Columbia Loggers and the Lumber Workers Industrial Union, 1919-1922," *Labour/Le Travail* vol 23 (Spring 1989), 77-78. Hak explains this problem by showing how the millworkers and the logging workers were not "synchronized," owing to a series of defeats suffered by Lower Mainland mills following the Winnipeg General Strike.

confrontation.”⁶⁶ The reputation of the ‘wobblies’ was antithetical to the sort of union that the LWIU envisioned, as the IWW was hostile to the idea of bureaucratic unionism at the expense of local control.⁶⁷ This conflict would not disappear with the LWIU. The IWA, founded in 1937, would find itself embroiled in a similar conflict, sans wobblies. The union’s early organizers in the 1930s, men such as Hjalmar Bergren, attested to the difficulty of conquering what they called the “wobblyism” of many loggers whose perception of conflict and job action were thought to clash with the centrally controlled, platform-driven unionism envisioned by organizers.⁶⁸ When workers with a wobblyist streak had a particular grievance, they often protested spontaneously or packed off to ply their craft at another camp. This spontaneous, individual resistance, dubiously blamed on the IWW’s legacy, was in sharp contrast to the strong central control promoted by the early IWA. Even as late as 1948, many IWA unionists were fingering “transient” camp loggers as, in the words of union member Mark Mosher, only “interested in making the fast money” instead of promoting the welfare of the wider union.⁶⁹

In the early days, the IWA promoted a platform which targeted industry-wide grievances and preferred strategic, not tactical, job action. In Bergren’s words, the point was “to organize against the boss, not against the bullcook.”⁷⁰ This reflects an industrial union perspective that looked more and more to community-rooted family men known as “Home Guards,” who were thought to provide a stable and dependable rank-and-file for the budding union.⁷¹ Rather than fighting over the myriad grievances of disparate camp

⁶⁶ Hak, “British Columbia Loggers and the Lumber Workers Industrial Union, 1919-1922,” 81; 77.

⁶⁷ Hak, “British Columbia Loggers and the Lumber Workers Industrial Union, 1919-1922,” 81.

⁶⁸ Bergren, *Tough Timber*, 101.

⁶⁹ Stephen Gray, “Woodworkers and Legitimacy: The IWA in Canada, 1937-1957” (Ph.D. diss Simon Fraser University, 1989), 273.

⁷⁰ Bergren, *Tough Timber*, 101.

⁷¹ Gray, “Woodworkers and Legitimacy,” 274; Bergren, *Tough Timber*, 100.

loggers, centralized platforms, policy, and control were seen as a way to avoid quixotic failures, such as the 1938 Blubber Bay strike which nearly destroyed the union and reduced its already minimal membership from 3,500 to 226 with almost nothing to show for it.⁷² However, beyond the rhetoric of organizers explaining why the strike was lost, Blubber Bay was more about a shift in policy toward working inside a legalistic structure.⁷³ This is in contrast to building up a challenge to the entire capitalist order based upon grassroots militancy which so concerned the IWW. As Parnaby notes, the strike was supposed be “an organizational hit and run,” to test the province’s labour legislation as a prelude to fighting the larger companies in logging and sawmilling.⁷⁴ This was not out of tune with the history of woodworker unionism in British Columbia. The IWA, the LWIU and the IWW all had difficulty organizing an industrial union in the pre-war years which had both the legitimacy and the strength to fight toe-to-toe with monopoly capital in British Columbia. With the introduction of British Columbia’s Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (ICA) in 1937, just before the Blubber Bay strike, the province had incorporated the idea of collective bargaining into the labour code but had left vague the definition of what actually constituted a bargaining agent.⁷⁵ This was part of a larger scheme by Premier Patullo’s Labour Minister George Pearson to restrict and subvert any attempts at American Wagner Act-style collective bargaining and industrial unionism in British Columbia.⁷⁶ The legal structure that the ICA Act erected would further the state’s involvement in the industrial sphere as a referee, forging the

⁷² Bergren, *Tough Timber*, 127, 125; Andrew Parnaby, “What’s the Law Got to Do With It? The IWA and the Politics of State Power in British Columbia,” *Labour/Le Travail* vol 44 (Fall 1999), 43.

⁷³ Gray, “Woodworkers and Legitimacy,” 36.

⁷⁴ Parnaby, “What’s the Law Got to Do With It?,” 33.

⁷⁵ Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 72.

⁷⁶ Parnaby, “What’s the Law Got to Do With It?,” 10.

rules and regulations which would necessitate the union's embracing industrial legalism at the expense of "combat and collectivity."⁷⁷ The full consequences would not be understood for some time, but, after Blubber Bay, legal recognition would prove as important as consistent membership strength to secure the union's success.

The fourteen-month Blubber Bay strike would ultimately go sour for the IWA, owing to hostility toward Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) affiliated unions, a wider reluctance by the state to directly engage in industrial diplomacy, and hesitancy to recognize the IWA as a legitimate bargaining agent.⁷⁸ Early setbacks aside, major breakthroughs were made during the production quotas and labour shortages of the Second World War, which gave the state and capital unprecedented impetus to pre-empt potential disruptions to industrial harmony. Prompted by the Hart coalition government's rewrite of the ICA act in early 1943, which automatically gave bargaining authority to a representative union and made it illegal for bosses to prevent organization, the IWA signed its first logging contract with the Batco Logging in Campbell River in April 1943.⁷⁹ By October the IWA struck the airplane spruce production camps of Thomas A. Kelley, J.R. Morgan and Pacific Mills on the Queen Charlottes in 1943, tying up the flow of the vital war material and forcing the companies to capitulate by the end of the

⁷⁷ Parnaby, "What's the Law Got to Do With It?," 45.

⁷⁸ Jeremy Webber, "The Malaise of Compulsory Conciliation: Strike Prevention in Canada during World War II" in *Labour/Le Travail* vol 15 (Spring 1985), 61; The CIO was a radical splinter of the American Federation of Labour, originating in the United States in 1935. The CIO was able to rapidly organize previously unorganized primarily semi- and unskilled workers under the Roosevelt government's Wagner act in 1935, much to the disapproval of the more conservative AFL. Not only did the strength of the CIO make them a useful affiliation for the IWA in 1937, but their left-wing politics fit well with the communist core of woodworker organization in British Columbia before the red purges of the 1940s and 50s. This same perception of communist sympathies, as well as foreign influence from the United States, would provide many employers with a vocabulary for opposing the new industrial unions. For more on this subject as it pertains to woodworkers, also see Parnaby, "What's the Law Got to Do With It?" and Neufeld and Parnaby, *The IWA in Canada*.

⁷⁹ Richard Rajala, "No Camp Large or Small Shall Be Missed: The IWA and the Loggers' Navy in British Columbia: 1935-45," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* vol 97 no 3 (Summer 2006), 121.

month.⁸⁰ With recognition achieved on the Charlottes, other companies quickly followed suit. By December 1943, 23 camps and 8000 workers were covered by collective agreements negotiated by the IWA.⁸¹ With the King government's 1944 adoption of order-in-council PC 1003 and the 1946 Rand decision, granting bargaining authority and automatic dues check-off in exchange for union proscription of wildcat strikes, British Columbia's labour relations regime quickly took on the contours of the post-war compromise. However, as Fudge and Tucker note, the sum of post-1946 labour legislation in British Columbia was met with approval by corporate interests as it wrapped newly enfranchised unions in a "straightjacket of legality," a move which would further cultivate bureaucratic unionism fundamental to the Fordist compromise.⁸²

The sort of unions which prevailed after 1946 differed in spirit from the life-or-death unionism of the 1930s. At first, traditional protest and rhetoric remained as much a part of the union as the new tactics and sensibilities needed to negotiate the waters of industrial legalism.⁸³ Fighting with pens instead of pickets, the union's mixed tactics resulted in negotiation difficulties during the 1946 strike, where it was outmanoeuvred by the likes of Stuart Research (the precursor to Forest Industrial Relations) and government-appointed arbitrator Justice Sloan.⁸⁴ In the words of Gray, the union was "playing two games at once, and neither of them well."⁸⁵ The result was a lesser agreement which, despite the check-offs, did not guarantee a closed shop. The IWA would grudgingly accept its limited gains: voluntary check-off, rather than an automatic

⁸⁰ Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy," 119, 121, 131; Rajala, "No Camp Large or Small Shall Be Missed," 123.

⁸¹ Neufeld and Parnaby, *The IWA in Canada*, 75.

⁸² Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, *Labour Before the Law: The Regulation of Collective Action in Canada, 1900-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 295, 296.

⁸³ Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy," 222.

⁸⁴ Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy," 230;

⁸⁵ Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy," 229.

check-off, and union recognition by industry.⁸⁶ However, the union would not make the same mistake twice, learning to play by the rules of the courts rather than expend energy challenging the paradigm of capitalism on its own turf.⁸⁷ Not only did the negotiation publicly file the teeth of the notoriously militant union, but also reflected a wider shift in industrial relations toward the Fordist compromise. The United Auto Workers, who fought the trail-blazing strike in 1945 which led to the Rand decision, also saw this transition. By the early 1950s the picket lines became, as Don Wells notes, “eerily devoid” of any sort of class conflict mentality which had spurred the unions through the war years.⁸⁸ Contract negotiations instead of picket lines became the fronts of class conflict. This difference brought a profound potential for alienation should the deepening divide between an increasingly bureaucratic executive and rank-and-file be tested.⁸⁹ From the 1952 strike onward, the IWA was held to account for the militancy of its workers and, with every passing contractual negotiation, the IWA’s increasingly conservative executive became more and more inclined to the tenets of business unionism.⁹⁰ But there were other unforeseen consequences of the postwar compromise, namely the nature of reaction by disenfranchised workers protesting outside the channels of their industrial union.

⁸⁶ Neufeld and Parnaby, *The IWA in Canada*, 105.

⁸⁷ Gray notes that IWA representatives during the hearings were particularly unsuited to the task of legalistic negotiation and were trounced by Stuart Research’s professional researchers, and made vague Keynesian arguments backed by out-of-date and superfluous data (Gray, “Woodworkers and Legitimacy,” 226).

⁸⁸ Don Wells, “The Impact of the Postwar Compromise on Canadian Unionism: The Formation of an Auto Worker Local in the 1950s” *Labour/Le Travail*, vol 36 (Fall 1995), 170.

⁸⁹ Peter McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada, 1943-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 6. Alienation is usually used in the context of describing the divorcement of a worker’s connection to the products and means of production by the transition to a factory system. The same conceptual framework can be applied to the rank and file of unions, who become divorced from the machinery of negotiation and the products of their struggle.

⁹⁰ Fudge and Tucker, *Labour Before the Law*, 304.

The Fordist compromise enfranchised large industrial unions, who arranged the tacit consent of workers to the increasingly micromanaged and routinized work of industrial capitalism in exchange for increased representation and compensation. As McInnis notes, once industrial legality was established as a normalized process, the mentality it brought dictated that deviations in industrial relations, like illegal striking and lockouts, seemed either useless at best or socially malicious at worst.⁹¹ In particular, woodworkers found themselves alienated from the processes used to resolve workplace grievances.⁹² Far removed from the urban offices of their executive, with local issues subordinated to the mass interests of the union rank-and-file, loggers frustrated with the framework of bargaining might resort to local and illegal wildcat striking. As such, the wildcat strike is not only a bilateral conflict between the employee(s) and the employer, but also represents a protest inherently against the machinery of industrial legalism.⁹³ In British Columbia, 36 percent of all strikes between the years 1946-1973 were wildcats.⁹⁴ Furthermore, in the period between 1971-1973, the percentage of wildcat strikes reached 50 percent, 69 percent of these occurring in forest products industries.⁹⁵ The balance of power dictated by labour law and the mechanisms of industrial harmony explains the prevalence of illegal striking.

The type of unionism that arose in Canada during the wartime era was moulded by the state to encourage industrial harmony, placing the weight of bargaining power in

⁹¹ McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation*, 2.

⁹² Marchak, *Green Gold*, 43.

⁹³ E.G. Fisher, "Strike Activity and Wildcat Strikes in British Columbia: 1945-1975," *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, vol 37 no 2 (1982), 289.

⁹⁴ Fisher, "Strike Activity and Wildcat Strikes in British Columbia: 1945-1975," 289.

⁹⁵ Fisher, "Strike Activity and Wildcat Strikes in British Columbia: 1945-1975"; Nova Scotia had the highest rate of wildcats throughout the country in the post-war era, between 1945 and 1975, weighing in at a 50 percent wildcat rate, with the Canadian average being 30 percent.

the hands of capital.⁹⁶ With the codification of these structures in the post-war era, this imbalance remained. Even though the state and capital declared an era of "free collective bargaining," the nature of industrial negotiation remained anything but.⁹⁷ While court injunctions are useful tools for coercing unionized labour to the terms of collectively bargained contracts, and would become the sword of the state in maintaining industrial harmony, they are less useful at enforcing harmony and discipline when workers protest independently of union direction or endorsement.⁹⁸ Thus, even though unions accepted the onus to act as industrial policemen to protect the terms of contract, it is unsurprising that a wave of wildcat strikes occurred in the early 1970s when worker and union relationships were worsening in the forest industry.

Webber describes the strike's role as "catharsis," a venting of pent-up frustrations and grievances exacerbated by industrial legalism.⁹⁹ During the dry spell of legal contract strikes in the years between 1958 and 1971, wildcat strikes would take this cathartic role as a means of airing grievances. Both industry and union had an interest in bringing such localized, illegal actions under control.¹⁰⁰ Not only was illegal action a threat to the 'marriage' of industry and union, but the shadow steering committees which ran them formed a distinct political challenge to the balance of power during contractual negotiation, where public image was an integral part of bargaining success. But even more potentially damaging was the Faller's Society, formed in 1969 to air their grievances pointed at the workplace and their union.¹⁰¹ This body existed outside of the

⁹⁶ Webber, "The Malaise of Compulsory Conciliation," 88.

⁹⁷ Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz, "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism: Coercion and Consent in Canadian Industrial Relations," *Labour/Le Travail*, vol 13 (Spring 1984), 139-141.

⁹⁸ Fudge and Tucker, *Labour Before the Law*, 297.

⁹⁹ Webber, "The Malaise of Compulsory Conciliation," 88.

¹⁰⁰ *Truck Logger*, January 1971, 14, 17.

¹⁰¹ Neufeld and Parnaby, *The IWA in Canada*, 191.

Fordist structure of industrial relations. The union had faced oppositional mutiny and the threat of breakaway within its ranks before; during the 'red purge' of the 1940s, the communist-led Woodworker's Industrial Union of Canada (WIUC) broke away from the IWA between the years 1948 and 1950, sapping strength and resources. But the union was not alone in its animosity toward breakaways and fractured industrial bargaining. In a 1971 speech, MacMillan-Blodel president Robert Bonner declared ominously that a wholly "ludicrous situation can arise" where one group of workers can go on a strike and keep many more off the job.¹⁰² The whole paradigm of the postwar consensus was not only built on harmony, but also on a monopolization of representation and negotiation. By 1972, at least in the logging industry, fractures in that consensus were beginning to show. However, this is not to say that the union represented all fallers.

On the coast, not all loggers were directly employed by the large companies. While far more prevalent in the interior, 'contracting out' would prove to be an increasingly prevalent strategy of resource harvesting. This was primarily because the isolated cut-blocks and difficult terrain of the coast eventually came to favour production by smaller contracting companies who could operate more profitably and more efficiently than directly employed crews.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the work could be further divided into subcontract schemes, known as phase contracting, as opposed to the 'stump to dump' contracting favoured by Truck Logger's Association.¹⁰⁴ As contractors were not independent commodity producers, holding neither timber rights nor owning forest land, they were an incredibly useful non-competitive source of labour. This type of work

¹⁰² *Truck Logger*, May-June 1971, 40.

¹⁰³ Marchak, *Green Gold*, 48; Marchak also goes on to note that the coast camps had an upper limit on efficient camp size at about 30-50 workers, and that small companies could produce a greater volume in a shorter time for lower cost.

¹⁰⁴ Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 61.

organization is indicative of the core-periphery model of labour under a flexible employment regime, typically associated with the post-Fordist paradigm.¹⁰⁵ As Hayter notes of this type of employment structure, a peripheral workforce is not only financially flexible, as in the case of contractors who operated on a piece rate, but also numerically as they were employed according to the ebb and flow of the market. Should the contractor's crew be unionized and covered under the terms of the regional collective agreement, which many were not, they were nonetheless without the benefits of seniority (as contractor camp seniority rarely transferred) and were much more vulnerable to layoffs.¹⁰⁶ This situation was particularly exploitive for the independent owner-operator, caught in a kind of "no man's land." These vulnerable workers were, as Marchak explains, "very dependant, extremely vulnerable to decisions well beyond their control," and enjoyed none of the benefits offered by union membership.¹⁰⁷

While the contract system provided the structure for flexible employment and owner-operator contractors, the active threat of independent falling came from the invention of the chainsaw. By the 1940's, a decade which saw widespread incorporation of the chainsaw and codification of piece rates, the potential for independent or contract fallers began to emerge as fallers were able to act as phase contractors.¹⁰⁸ While IWA executives passed resolutions against ownership of chainsaws in 1947, reacting to the perceived danger of fallers pursuing employment independent of their union, it never developed a comprehensive policy in conjunction with industry against the ownership of

¹⁰⁵ Roger Hayter, *Flexible Crossroads: The Restructuring of British Columbia's Forest Economy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 269.

¹⁰⁶ Marchak, *Green Gold*, 175, 265.

¹⁰⁷ Marchak, *Green Gold*, 265.

¹⁰⁸ Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, 34-35; Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 152.

saws until 1972.¹⁰⁹ Much like elimination of piece rates from the terms of contract the same year in favour of a day rate, companies would control the terms of the productive process by arranging for the “supply and maintenance of all necessary tools for falling and bucking,” and do so with the support of the IWA executive.¹¹⁰ Any company violating this clause who held a contract with a FIR-represented company were the subject of investigation and correction.¹¹¹ The IWA went along with the day rate as the union had always opposed piece rates, even back to the LWIU, seeing the scheme as a vehicle for speed-ups, unsafe practices and labour exploitation.

By 1972, as quasi-contractors who owned their own saws, worked by an aristocratic craft ethic, profited by their skilled labour, and had become more hostile to their union representatives, the potential for mass breakaway surely must have been on the minds of disenchanting fallers. After all, the potential for breakaway was not a baseless fear. One Franklin River faller, commenting on the 1972 wildcat strike immediately after the day rate was instituted, suggested resorting to independent contract falling.¹¹² While not occurring overnight, owner-operator contract falling would eventually become the new normal.¹¹³ Furthermore, fallers suspected that it was already happening. At least one logging company, MacMillan-Bloedel, commented in an internal memo that its directly employed loggers were beginning to think that the firm was in the process of shifting all of its logger operations over to contractors.¹¹⁴ As long as fallers

¹⁰⁹ Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 152.

¹¹⁰ British Columbia Archives, Ministry of Labour, GR 1536 Box 8 File 17, Collective Agreement between Ucluelet Contracting and the International Woodworkers of America 1972-1974, 13.

¹¹¹ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, R.W. Bonner to H.R. Chisholm and J.R. Forrest, 6 March 1973.

¹¹² Neufeld and Parnaby, *The IWA in Canada*, 195.

¹¹³ *Death in the Forest*, Gordon McLennan.

¹¹⁴ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 16, R.M. Bibbs to D.W. Timmis, 10 July 1972.

remained unionized, they could take advantage of both contract conditions of employment, with the added benefits of union protection and representation.

As the 1972 strike would demonstrate, fallers would not take challenges to their special status lying down. Fallers, generally the highest paid loggers, did not want to see that position eroded. They supported concepts like the daily guaranteed wage to protect their wages in the event of poor weather conditions, as well as increases to their piece rates, but would tolerate no threats to their special status.¹¹⁵ The fallers understood that their piece rates were a key component of that status, their higher wages, and their individual freedom over the terms and means of work. Falling represents a rogue vestige of independent craftwork traditions; separated from the labour process physically through craftwork, fallers were also socially separate.¹¹⁶ As Braverman points out, there is a general law within the capitalist division of labour: within the industrial process those who retain "special knowledge and training" are distanced from those who practice labour with a low-skill task range.¹¹⁷ In turn, this status is then reflected in a social division of labour, stratifying the working class and giving rise to the labour aristocracy. The labour aristocrat is separated from the rest of the working class, in that the worker has forged a privileged position within the working class based upon a craft status, yet still participates in the class struggle between labour and capital.¹¹⁸ This potential intra-

¹¹⁵ Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy," 308.

¹¹⁶ Allan Lundgren, personal interview, 5 February 2010.

¹¹⁷ Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, 57-58.

¹¹⁸ H. F. Moorhouse, "The Marxist theory of Labour Aristocracy," *Social History*, vol 3 no 1 (January 1978), 63. While Moorhouse is a critic of the labour aristocracy framework, deriding it both as overly 'rational' and 'unclear' (82), his summary of the Marxist approach to the subject is ultimately more valuable than his protestations against it. Reflecting a more restrained opinion, the one utilized in this essay, is Richard Price's estimation, arguing that "the labour aristocracy was only one among many lines of segmentation which fractured the working class and that it was not necessarily the most important of these." See Richard Price, "The Segmentation of Work and the Labour Aristocracy," *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (Spring 1986), 269.

class conflict would manifest itself in 1972. Reflecting an uneasy incorporation of craftwork and industrial work in west coast logging, the divisions within the union are explained by the presence of a craft union ethic within the structure of a monopolistic industrial union. As socially separate minority interests, the craftworking fallers would be vulnerable to dictation, by both capital and their union.

Chapter Four – Narrative

The fallers' five month wildcat began on 17 April, 1972, with 516 fallers off the job by 19 April, almost three months before the 14 June expiry date of the IWA's coast master contract.¹¹⁹ The Faller's Society, the non-union organization representing coastal fallers, justified their actions to the press by citing the logging industry's failure to standardize their piece rates across all IWA camps, a measure recommended by appointed mediator Justice Nathaniel Nemetz in his 1970 'Clarified Report'.¹²⁰ However, most galling to the fallers was the proposal to eliminate piece rates from the coast master contract. Rather than establishing a standardized system, as Nemetz had advised, this proposal would eliminate piece rates altogether in favour of a day rate. The fallers would have been aware of this by 23 February 1972, when the first round of contract proposals appeared for the coming year.¹²¹ Forest Industrial Relations (FIR), the bargaining body responsible for negotiating contracts with the IWA, reacted quickly to the challenge early on in the strike. MacMillan-Bloedel considered the "faller's business" a priority "to be tackled direct" by both FIR and the IWA.¹²² In memos issued to its employees, MacMillan-Bloedel argued that the fallers' rejection of industry attempts to set pricing formulas would "jeopardize the jobs and earning of the vast majority of our people," and

¹¹⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 19 April 1972; *Vancouver Sun*, 1 May, 1972.

¹²⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 19 April 1972; Nemetz' Clarified report can be found in the *Western Canadian Lumber Worker*, September 1970, 9.

¹²¹ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, Employers Proposal For Amending the 1970-71 Coast Master Agreement, Feb 23 1972; UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, G.J. Towill to All salaried workers in Canada, 6 April 1972.

¹²² UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, R.M Bibbs to R.W. Bonner, 19 April 1972.

that fallers were wildcatting in a brazen attempt to circumvent bargaining procedures and negotiate on their own.¹²³

Despite belief that "many fallers expect and would welcome" court injunctions, presumably for publicity reasons, thirty-six of MacMillan-Bloedel's Franklin River fallers were the target of contempt of court actions on 24 April. The issue stemmed from an injunction granted by Justice F.F. Hinkson earlier that January to prevent fallers from engaging in an unlawful strike.¹²⁴ In the week following, a further eleven injunctions were granted to other companies also hoping to stem the growing torrent of wildcat strikers from crippling log production.¹²⁵ Log availability would become an issue of growing concern to industry as the strike progressed, and MacMillan-Bloedel was surely not alone in grimly noting the impending closures of its mills. No doubt with full awareness of their quickly growing strength and their stranglehold on log production, 400 out of the 1000 active coastal fallers met in a Parksville meeting on 1 May to pledge that "not another tree would be felled in the BC coastal region," and to damn the logging companies for "hiding behind the supreme court."¹²⁶ Despite threats from state and capital, the number of wildcatting fallers reached a total of 800 out of the 1000 fallers employed by FIR-represented companies by 8 May, 339 of them employees of MacMillan-Bloedel.¹²⁷ By mid-June, nearly 100 percent of fallers had dropped their

¹²³ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, MacMillan-Bloedel to All Employees, 21 April 1972.

¹²⁴ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, R.M Bibbs to R.W. Bonner, 19 April 1972; *Vancouver Sun*, 24 April 1972; *Vancouver Sun*, 29 April 1972.

¹²⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, 29 April 1972.

¹²⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 1 May 1972.

¹²⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 8 May 1972; UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, Report on Fallers Strike, 8 May 1972.

saws.¹²⁸ As it turned out, the BC Supreme Court struck down the contempt of court charges against the Franklin River fallers on 24 May, on the grounds that they had acted independently of the IWA and, thus, were breaking the terms of contract as individuals. While one judge insisted that the decision "should not be interpreted as approval of disobedience of court orders," MacMillan-Bloedel's lawyers understood the ruling in a different light.¹²⁹ One of them, F.H. Britton, suggested that the state was washing its hands of the matter and would be unwilling to publicly appear to be taking sides unless the conflict spilt out into violent confrontation.¹³⁰ The matter would have to be solved between the IWA, FIR, and the renegade fallers, with the state acting as a deeply hesitant referee.

Bemoaning the logging industry's hapless position as "caught in the cross-fire" of an "intra-union conflict," MacMillan-Bloedel President Robert Bonner's statements implied that his company, and industry as a whole, had neither a responsibility to resolve the conflict nor culpability for mill closures occurring due to log shortages.¹³¹ In this construction, the fallers are characterized as being the sole responsibility of the IWA. Responding in kind shortly thereafter, Syd Thompson, president of IWA Vancouver local 1-217, argued that attempts to blame mill closures on wildcatting fallers represented industry's effort to "[divide] the millworkers from the fallers."¹³² While industry leaders publicly warned that the faller's strike would have a catastrophic effect on log supply, with mill and pulp plant closures estimated to occur between 15 June and 30 June, an

¹²⁸ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, Record of Proceedings and Decision of the Board of Referees, 13 June 1972.

¹²⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 25 May 1972.

¹³⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 25 May 1972; UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, F.H. Britton to R.W. Bonner, 2 June 1972.

¹³¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 4 May 1972.

¹³² *Vancouver Sun*, 6 May 1972.

additional unsaid variable prompted paranoia about mill closures: unemployment insurance and the publicly unpleasant possibility of calling a lockout.¹³³ On 4 March, confidential memos discussing the potential ramifications of mill closures were passed between MacMillan-Bloedel's vice-president of Industrial Relations, R.M. Bibbs, and Britton. As the fallers were wildcatting unsanctioned by the IWA, Britton hypothesised that any log shortages leading to mill closures caused as a result of an illegal strike would not legally be the result of an official labour dispute.¹³⁴ This situation could allow out-of-work millworkers, and eventually every employee idled by the wildcat, to collect unemployment insurance. This differed from a legal strike, or a union-sponsored wildcat, where UI eligibility would normally be denied. In the former case, woodworkers' livelihood would not be crushed by the faller's strike and the IWA would have an incentive to prolong negotiations to put additional pressure on the companies. As Bibbs noted in a memo to Bonner, FIR-represented companies would be stuck in a situation with "no room in which to move unless the fallers go back to work."¹³⁵

Seen in this light, FIR's refusal to further negotiate with the IWA on the impending coastal master contract until the wildcatting fallers were reined in highlights more than an attempt to divide the fallers from the IWA.¹³⁶ From industry's perspective, harping on the IWA's responsibility for the fallers was the only way to avoid a decision of the Unemployment Insurance Commission favourable to the workers. While both sides would have had little incentive to pursue contract negotiation further until the issue had been resolved, the logging companies had more to lose. FIR-represented companies,

¹³³ *Vancouver Sun*, 6 May 1972; UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, R.M. Bibbs to R.W. Bonner, 30 May 1972.

¹³⁴ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, F.H. Britton to R.M. Bibbs, 4 May 1972.

¹³⁵ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, R.M. Bibbs to R.W. Bonner, 30 May 1972.

¹³⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 18 May 1972.

MacMillan-Bloedel chief amongst them, did not want to run the risk of calling a lockout before resolution of the unemployment question. With the clock ticking, and many of the mills and pulp plants facing closure due to log shortage as early as the end of June, all awaited the decision of the Board of Referees for the Unemployment Insurance Commission.¹³⁷ On 13 June, one day before the expiration of the 1972 master contract, the board's decision drew sighs of relief from industry by refusing the UI application of idled scaler Guillaume Arsenault, ruling that the claimant belonged to a "grade or class involved in the dispute," owing to the fallers' and scalers' joint union membership.¹³⁸ Furthermore, reiterating claims made by industry spokesmen, the board stated that it was in the interest of woodworkers facing unemployment to "exert an inner democratic pressure on the fallers."¹³⁹ As such, the Board seemed to imply that individual workers were legally beholden to pressure their fellow union members to maintain contract conditions. Like the Franklin River contempt decision on 24 May, the fallers were to be entirely the IWA's responsibility, and the state further washed its hand of involvement. Together, the 24 May and 13 June decisions placed the fallers in a limbo, defining them as part of their union, insofar as their work was connected to others' on the production line, but held them responsible as individuals for actions which were in defiance of labour law and union convention.

The comments of both the board and the court reflected a wider shovelling of responsibility for the fallers' strike back on to the IWA, whose intransigence FIR's president John Billings continued to publicly denounce as the crux of stagnant

¹³⁷ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, Labour Relations Assessment, 1972, 4.

¹³⁸ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, Record of Proceedings and Decision of the Board of Referees, 13 June 1972.

¹³⁹ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 349 File 18, Record of Proceedings and Decision of the Board of Referees, 13 June 1972.; *Vancouver Sun* June 17 1972.

negotiations.¹⁴⁰ Coinciding with the stalled contract negotiations and the injunction decision on 24 May was the calling of a strike vote, which saw the 28,000 members of coastal IWA locals approve a strike for after 14 June. Keeping in mind the as-of-yet unresolved UI question, the fallers remained the main stumbling block to further negotiation of the master contract. Furthermore, faller spokesman Chuck Evans' declaration of 'piece rates or war' offered the negotiating parties two unpalatable options.¹⁴¹ Stalemated, the contract negotiations dragged on, closing in on the 14 June deadline without any of the three sides moving far from their positions. While fallers had been invited to participate in the negotiations, disputes soon arose over whether or not those fallers would be elected by the locals through secret ballot or appointed by the fallers' steering committee.¹⁴² Aggravating matters, over 400 fallers in meetings from Parksville to Vancouver reaffirmed their refusal to fall trees until universal coastal pricing formulas were established.¹⁴³ Then, on 16 June, 7,000 of the 28,000 coastal IWA members walked out on an illegal early strike even though their union had served only strike notices. Frustration amidst the rank and file over the slow negotiations had boiled over, despite calls for restraint and patience by union leaders.¹⁴⁴ While these walkouts were no doubt aggravated by a flood of industry layoffs resulting from log shortages, there was also a strong voice of logger support for the fallers. At the 1-71 'Logger's Local' annual meeting on 27-28 May, employers were faulted for using the fallers to stall

¹⁴⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 24 May 1972.

¹⁴¹ *Nanaimo Daily Free Press*, 23 May 1972.

¹⁴² *Western Canadian Lumber Worker*, May-June 1972; *Vancouver Sun*, 29 May 1972.

¹⁴³ *Vancouver Sun* 29 May 1972.

¹⁴⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 16 June 1972.

negotiations. "The vast majority of the meeting was in complete sympathy with the fallers' demands," noted the *Western Canadian Lumber Worker*.¹⁴⁵

The depth of solidarity with the fallers amongst the majority of IWA workers is difficult to assess, as such sentiments did not loom large in media's reports. A *Vancouver Sun* report, quoting the 13 June Board of Referees statement that the union should "exert inner democratic pressure" to force the fallers back to work, claimed that the IWA was fighting a "tense internal struggle," resulting from the wildcatting fallers and the unauthorized early strikers.¹⁴⁶ At the bargaining table, as the IWA and FIRA ignored their demands, the fallers protested that the union was not fulfilling its obligations to fight for a standardized pricing formula.¹⁴⁷ Instead, negotiators haggled largely over wedge issues like hourly wage increases for woodworkers, elimination of room and board camp fees, and fringe benefits.¹⁴⁸ Finally, the IWA leadership issued the strike call and, on 22 June, the first official coast-wide strike in thirteen years began. Regional vice president Jack Moore's hand seems to have been forced by the increase of mutinous strikers from 7000 to 14000 since June 16.¹⁴⁹ FIR's "final position," announced on 23 June, included a 73-cent pay boost over two years, an increase in coverage for the existing health and welfare plan from 75 to 100 percent, and the inclusion of a pension plan.¹⁵⁰ Fallers, however, were appalled at the day rate presented in the offer, consisting of \$80.52 for a 6-1/2 hour day. While the offer was quickly rejected by the fallers' steering committee, the IWA continued to agree to the principle.¹⁵¹ Moore's comment in the *Vancouver Sun* that "the

¹⁴⁵ *Western Canadian Lumber Worker*, May-June 1972.

¹⁴⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 17 June 1972.

¹⁴⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 17 June 1972.

¹⁴⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 20 June 1972.

¹⁴⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 22 June 1972.

¹⁵⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 23 June 1972.

¹⁵¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 23 June 1972.

fallers themselves have always wanted a uniform pay system," summarizes the union leadership's dismissive attitude towards the fallers' grievance.¹⁵² That left the fallers, who represented only about 1000 of 28,000 members, with no option but to continue the wildcat. As Syd Thompson predicted, "we still have a few problems to solve, among them the 800 fallers who, I suspect, are prepared to outlast John Billings."¹⁵³

With the addition of a few minimal concessions, the core of FIR's final offer remained unchanged when the IWA bargaining committee accepted terms on 4 July. Despite the fallers' objections to the day rate, all their union could offer them at the bargaining table was additional "clarification" to their day-rate terms.¹⁵⁴ The IWA justified acceptance of the day rate by claiming that the majority of fallers actually made less than the day rate at current piece rate standards, a claim that both fallers and industry spokesmen contradicted.¹⁵⁵ Open insubordination, led by Syd Thompson and others, condemned the proposed contract and recommended its rejection to their locals, claiming that there had never been a better time for the union to push for further concessions. Furthermore, Thompson pointed out the absurdity of insisting upon a \$80.52 day rate when the industry advertised piece rate earnings as much higher.¹⁵⁶ With less than half of the union members voting, and a majority of locals rejecting the deal, the contract was narrowly approved by 53 percent.¹⁵⁷ While the loggers were reportedly unhappy with the treatment of the fallers' grievance, the sawmill workers expressed satisfaction with the contract.¹⁵⁸ With regard to the fallers, the union brass offered "no apology for the day

¹⁵² *Vancouver Sun*, 23 June 1972.; *Vancouver Sun*, 4 May 1972.

¹⁵³ *Vancouver Sun*, 27 June 1972.

¹⁵⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 4 July 1972.

¹⁵⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, 4 July 1972.

¹⁵⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 4 July 1972.

¹⁵⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 10 July 1972.

¹⁵⁸ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 16, R.M Bibbs to D.W. Timmis, 10 July 1972.

rate," arguing that "the IWA has always opposed piece rate."¹⁵⁹ While the fallers themselves voted resoundingly against the contract and continued to strike, the rank and file were back to work on 17 July without even dipping into the union's strike funds.¹⁶⁰ The *Vancouver Sun's* George Dobie trumpeted the contract as a victory for the fallers, citing the 6-1/2 hour day as a revolutionary gain in the history of organized labour. Additionally, Dobie estimated that the day-rate would extend a faller's average work year to that of an average rigger, or around 180 days a year. Using 180 days as a baseline, Dobie estimated that the yearly average wage under the day rate would be higher than piece rate wages earned over the course of 120 days, the average for a piece rate faller.¹⁶¹ By alternative arithmetic, the fallers would be receiving less pay daily average pay for more work, and the average daily income would be higher for only the least productive of fallers.

Continuing its campaign against the fallers, the *Vancouver Sun* described the strike as a dispute that "need never have been," and dragged on by a "militant minority" conspiring against the welfare of their fellow workers. Fallers were summarized as an elite cadre "defend[ing] the principle of the greatest good for the smallest number," and of "irresponsible selfishness."¹⁶² Meanwhile, the continued wildcat action by the fallers prompted a strident backlash from the union executive. While a few fallers filtered in after the contract was signed, perhaps somewhere between the 200 according to Jack Moore or forty by the Faller's Society count, a meeting of 500 fallers, buckers and scalers

¹⁵⁹ *Western Canadian Lumber Worker*, July-August 1972.

¹⁶⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 4 July 1972; *Vancouver Sun*, 6 July 1972.

¹⁶¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 11 July 1972.

¹⁶² *Vancouver Sun*, 14 July 1972.

in Parksville voted unanimously to continue their strike.¹⁶³ In a statement to the *Vancouver Sun*, Moore railed against the fallers' continued mutiny as undermining industrial unionism by putting the interests of one trade above all others, ranting against the fallers' "undemocratic" steering committee.¹⁶⁴ The Communist party of Canada, while praising the fallers for resisting "the temptation to break with the IWA," recommended that they go back to work, accept the settlement, "reconsider their position" and "continue their struggle by some other means within the structure of the IWA."¹⁶⁵ Industry reported greater numbers of fallers returning to work, with John Billings putting the number at 300 by 20 July.¹⁶⁶ Billings attributed the fallers' return to the increased wages offered by the new day rate, an estimation hotly denied by fallers' spokesman Mike Davis. "Billings has never stated the truth about what a faller has made in the past, and it doesn't appear he will in the future," Davis stated, claiming further that Billings' estimation of currently working fallers was "completely false."¹⁶⁷

By August 1972, the fallers' strike focused on pressing for contractual renegotiation by setting up flying pickets around mills. On 28 July, the first of these shut down a Vancouver sawmill for the day, as shift workers refused to cross the picket line.¹⁶⁸ While the IWA executive condemned the fallers for creating a "climate of confrontation," their spokesman Chuck Evans responded that "we have only just begun our fight."¹⁶⁹ However, at this point even Syd Thompson, a previous ally of the fallers, encouraged union members to ignore the fallers' pickets, commenting that "everyone has

¹⁶³ *Vancouver Sun*, 18 July 1972.

¹⁶⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 18 July 1972.

¹⁶⁵ *Pacific Tribune*, 21 July 21 1972.

¹⁶⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 20 July 1972.

¹⁶⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 20 July 1972.

¹⁶⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 28 July 1972.

¹⁶⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 28 July 1972.

a right to work.”¹⁷⁰ Regardless of the forces aligned against them, the fallers’ steering committee pledged to continue their “do-or-die fight,” even as more and more fallers returned to work.¹⁷¹ However, time and patience was running out and the wildcat collapsed by 11 August. A few fallers were fired for illegal striking as a warning to the remaining holdouts, as industry was no longer concerned with damaging contractual negotiations with heavy-handed action.¹⁷² At the closing of the strike, Evans stated that the fallers, despite being “totally opposed” to the day rate, had been “starved into submission” not only by FIR but also by their own union. “The rest of the BC labor [sic] movement should hang its head in shame for their lack of support for us,” Evans ruefully concluded.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 29 July 1972.

¹⁷¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 2 August 1972.

¹⁷² *Vancouver Sun*, 5 August 1972; *Vancouver Sun*, 9 August 1972; *Vancouver Sun*, 11 August 1972.

¹⁷³ *Vancouver Sun*, 11 August 1972.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions

“I think that connection [with other types of loggers] probably developed with stronger ties afterwards though. Because we sort of blended into the mix after the strike. There was no incentive to push like we did before.”¹⁷⁴

- Allan Lundgren, faller.

During the 1972 coast master contract negotiations, an alternative proposal was held in the wings by FIR. Concocted by MacMillan-Bloedel's general counsel F.H. Britton, the scheme detailed a contractual acreage-pay scheme that would hive off the highest wage earners to prevent their pay from dissatisfying the “regular employees.”¹⁷⁵ A faller choosing this option would function as an individual owner-operator, owning his own tools and providing his own transportation. Most importantly, however, the faller would be represented by the Faller's Society, which would be recognized by the industry on the same level as the Truck Loggers' Association. The fallers taking this option would also remain represented by their union.¹⁷⁶ While these terms were unlikely to have been accepted by the IWA, committed as they were to opposing piece rates and contracting-out, the option showed a conceptual appreciation for the flexible employment regime under which the industry would eventually operate. The Faller's Society would also draft an alternative proposal in the wake of their defeat, which outlined a plan to, in the words of R.M. Bibbs, “turn over the power in the union to its activists” – the fallers.¹⁷⁷ Under this plan, which would forbid the IWA executive from negotiating without various trade section representatives, including fallers, such terms would have probably been more

¹⁷⁴ Allan Lundgren, personal interview, 5 February 2010.

¹⁷⁵ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, F.H. Britton to R.W. Bonner, 16 June, 1972.

¹⁷⁶ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, F.H. Britton to R.W. Bonner, 16 June, 1972.

¹⁷⁷ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, R.M. Bibbs to R.W. Bonner, 9 January 1973.

open to negotiation. However, even if the draft proposal's principles were in place, the fallers would still lose any fight which hinged on majority rule given their numerically subordinate position within the union.¹⁷⁸

On FIR's "fact finding" mission into the woods of the coast region in November 1972, they encountered the results of the shift to the day rate. The report noted that the fallers still remained the forest's cock-of-the-walk, maintaining an elitist "chip on the shoulder attitude," and were deliberately slowing down production to voice lingering discontent.¹⁷⁹ Despite the fact that the report acknowledged that fallers were doing the work well, it found that they were cutting a predetermined number of trees per day, a rate described as not "an acceptable volume under any circumstances."¹⁸⁰ Reminiscent of Frederick Taylor's description of pieceworker resistance to what he referred to as a "fair day's work,"¹⁸¹ the report's call for bullbuckers to be given managerial powers to get "maximum performance" out of the fallers is deeply Tayloristic.¹⁸² It is, in fact, evidence that the union fallers had lost their craft status with a pen-stroke. But the fallers' subordination was not limited to proposals and company plotting. As faller Allan Lundgren writes,

...the most critical part [of the day rate transition] was the perceived loss of independence. Prior to the strike, fallers in general were an independent lot and even though the majority worked as a contractor to the company, they were in essence a part of that company's crew. Following the strike they became completely immersed into the crew with seniority rights and lost that sense of independence they had before.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, Draft Policy Proposal.

¹⁷⁹ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, Report on Factfinding Survey.

¹⁸⁰ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, Report on Factfinding Survey.

¹⁸¹ As quoted in Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, 67.

¹⁸² UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, Report on Factfinding Survey.

¹⁸³ Allan Lundgren, "1972 Fallers strike," 30 March 2010, personal email to the author (30 March 2010).

Hostility over lost independence was reflected in ongoing tension between the fallers and the companies. As one MacMillan-Bloedel official put it in 1973, "many fallers still resent[ed] the change from piece work payment," and continued to voice their discontent through low productivity and pushing for a shorter work day.¹⁸⁴ Less than one week later, MacMillan-Bloedel president Robert Bonner complained of the fallers' "less than satisfactory attitude" and their "widespread disregard for productivity."¹⁸⁵ The fallers, then, still had continued grievances against their subordinated employment eight months after their strike ended.

Combined with encroaching job controls by the Workman's Compensation Board, worker training centres and loss of tool ownership, the unionized craftworking faller had become a labourer, albeit a skilled one. A useful tool for articulating this change is Gugleimo Carchedi's assessment of "informal" and "real" subordination within the industrial process.¹⁸⁶ Informal subordination describes a state of employment where the products of labour are seized, but the manner of work is not controlled. Real subordination is classical proletarianization, where the worker has lost all control over the methods and products of labour. Carchedi's definition of real subordination is an accurate description of a union faller's labour after the 1972 contract. The terms of that contract heralded an end to the aristocratic status of craftworkers as embedded, yet distinct and privileged by their elite status, within the factory regime. Henceforth, they would be subject to the dictation of camp managers in the pursuit of scientific management.

¹⁸⁴ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, D.A. Dowsley to J.H. Lawson, 23 March 1973.

¹⁸⁵ UBCA, MacMillan-Bloedel Collection, Box 807 File 22, R.W. Bonner to D.W. Timmis, 30 March 1973.

¹⁸⁶ Carchedi, "Reproduction of the Social Classes at the Level of Productive Relations," 362-363.

With the exception of falling, the arrival of steam power in the forest industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century set in motion a process whereby woodworkers in general were subordinated to the factory regime. This process brought the industrial paradigm into conflict with the relatively autonomous fallers at the head of the productive process who could not easily be dislodged. However, with both the IWA executive and FIR stating their intent to dismantle the piecework system, albeit for different reasons, the fallers would face a battle they could not win within the union. After extensive wildcat striking, it became obvious that they could not win outside the union either. The state was a factor; for one, despite the general anti-labour stance of the Social Credit regime, the development of a hands-off policy was indicative of industrial relations throughout the post-war era.¹⁸⁷ In the absence of state interventionism, collective bargaining was subjected to a mechanical system of industrial legalism. However, the labour relations system remained weighted in favour of monopoly capital, as noted by Webber.¹⁸⁸

For those not holding a chainsaw, the paradigm of Fordist-era industrial unionism proved a difficult box to think outside of. Even those who supported the fallers, such as Syd Thompson and the Communist Party of Canada, could not think against the grain of the industrial union ethic of 'one union in wood.' It was embedded into the history of woodworker unionism, the subject of myth and legend amongst the hard-bitten workforce. While the alternative paradigm of craftwork and labour aristocracy was

¹⁸⁷ Paul Phillips frames the Social Credit labour policy as a combination of these two approaches. By opposing labour and staying 'hands-off,' the Bennett government instead crafted a reductionist labour relations system which severely curtailed any union activities outside of the strictly defined boundaries of contract negotiation. This would include everything from sympathy strikes to political campaign donations. For more, see Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in B.C.* (Vancouver: Broadway Printers, 1967), 156-157.

¹⁸⁸ Webber, "The Malaise of Compulsory Conciliation," 88.

discredited, the very act of resistance showed that it still had some teeth left when backed into a corner. However, the Fordist compromise, which had incorporated craftworkers into industrial unionism's monopolistic representation, could only last if the contradictions of the relationship were not tested. These contradictions had long existed in the union, whose structure favoured central control over local agency. While the IWA had emerged to represent the best interest of woodworkers, their failure to defend the fallers' interests in 1972 showed that representation would not extend to all. As resilient defenders of their craftwork tradition, fallers found themselves outside of the negotiation process. The official date of the long postwar boom's breakdown and the explosive shift toward flexible post-Fordist production was still a few years in coming, and the fallers' wildcat strike of 1972 can be thought of as the last act of Fordist subordination in the forests of British Columbia. But for the fallers, it was both the beginning and end of an era.

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