## **CHAPTER 2**

1896-1939
Nationalisms and
Canadian Autonomy

# PART 8

# Labour movement

# Why did the first labour unions emerge in Québec and Canada?

- At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a major increase (个) in the working-class population was caused by:
  - 1. rapid industrialization
  - 2. urbanization
- The creation of unions helped workers to stand up for their rights.



# Working conditions (early 20<sup>th</sup> c.)



#### **Difficult working conditions:**

- Low salaries (working 10h/day, 6 days/week)
- Abuse by foremen
- Lack of job security (no retirement plan, no insurance)
- Child labour
- Unsanitary and unsafe work sites.

#### Unions tried to find solutions to these problems.

For example, by pushing the Government of Québec to create a free and compulsory education system.

## Unionization

#### 1. American unions

- ran affiliate unions throughout Canada.
- the language barrier stopped them from establishing a presence in Québec.



## Unionization

#### 2. Catholic unions

- tried to:
  - improve conditions for workers
  - limit American influence
  - prevent union dues from being used by non-Catholics.
- Canadian Catholic Confederation of Labour (CCCL) created in 1921.
- represented ¼ of unionized workers in Canada.

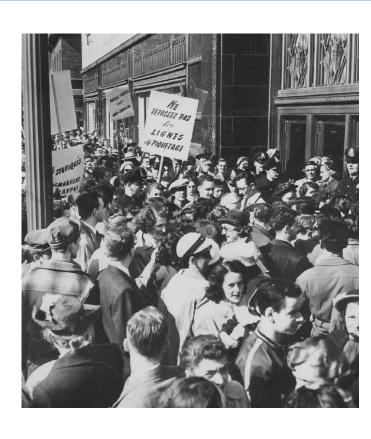


## Strikes

- Definition: a refusal to work organized by a body of employees as a form of protest, typically in an attempt to gain concessions from their employer.
- High tensions between employers and workers resulted in a large number of workers' strikes.



## **Strikes**



#### Employers had the upper hand:

- They could lock out or fire their employees at will.
- They could call in strikebreakers or scabs (people paid to replace striking workers), rendering the strike action ineffective.
- They could call in the police or the army to intervene.
- Sometimes, the government would take their side.
- Strikes often ended in violence.

### **Strikes**

# Winnipeg General Strike and "Bloody Saturday"

- On May 15, 1919.
- About 30,000 Winnipeg workers went on general strike for better wages and working conditions (display of solidarity).
- The federal government supported the employers. It arrested union leaders (Fred Dixon, J.S. Woodsworth).
- One month later, soldiers occupied the streets, injuring several and killing two people.
- Following this violent repression, workers ended the strike.





## Labour legislation

#### In 1900, the Canadian government:

- created the Department of Labour to legislate labour relations.
- passed a law that gave workers the right to strike following an unsatisfactory conciliation process.

#### In 1944, the Québec government passed the Labour Relations Act:

- to force employers to negotiate in good faith if 60% or more of their workers were in favour of unionizing.
- to avoid delays in wartime weapons production (WW2).