Introduction

R. E. (Lefty) Morgan, His Life and Work

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A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE "Right under your Nose" is unique among working class documents. While it is a study of the railway running trades, the manuscript goes beyond a description of the jobs themselves: it analyses the entire realm of workplace relations as an example of democracy at work. Written in 1963-65, A Practical Example was based on Morgan's belief that people could control their lives in an independent workplace. Lefty Morgan maintained that workers could actually control the pace, conditions, and organization of their own work as well as their lives. To show this was the case, he wrote extensively about the labour process he knew best, from the perspective of a locomotive engineer. In A Practical Example, he examined his experiences as a worker, but also drew on many studies written by and about railway operators, engineers, and

1 This is the original title of the manuscript, hereafter referred to as: A Practical Example.

2 Although the manuscript is undated, it was written mostly between 1963 and 1965 while Morgan was removed from service from the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, having accumulated more than 60 demerits. At this time the company was eliminating sidings as an economy measure, which forced trains to wait for longer periods. Under the collective agreement, time spent waiting on the siding could not be claimed, but Morgan claimed an extra hour, since he was being forced to wait while still on duty. He was assessed 40 demerits for claiming time not allowed. The case took three years to resolve. The Canadian Railway Office of Arbitration reinstated Morgan with an award of $12,721.50 for lost wages. The demerit system is described in note 5 on p. 137. See Canadian Railway Office of Arbitration, Case No. 49, Heard at Montreal, Monday, January 9th, 1967 Concerning Pacific Great Eastern Railway Company and Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (Montreal 1967). In 1966 Morgan wrote several letters requesting information from various railway unions and for permission to quote excerpts from books. Martin Meissner of the University of British Columbia read the manuscript and commented on it in August 1966. Lefty Morgan Papers, letter from Martin Meissner to Mr. Richard Morgan, 23 August 1966.
related trades. In another unfinished manuscript entitled *Enough*, Morgan outlined the workings of a fully democratic society. Also, in his daily life Morgan tirelessly discussed and developed ways of creating a true democracy which would free people from a hierarchical, often dehumanizing, society and its workplaces.

**Biographical Sketch**

We know little of R.E. (Lefty) Morgan’s early life. Born in White River, Ontario on 14 December 1914, he came with his family to British Columbia while still a youth. The nickname Lefty was given to him due to his extreme left-handedness, but is not unfitting politically. He first worked as a cowboy near Kamloops, BC and later became a dispatcher for a trucking firm in Vancouver. The years as a cowboy left a lasting impression, and his home was decorated with many mementoes from these days, including a cowboy hat, protective gear, and paintings of the BC interior. As he moved from driving cattle to dispatching trucks and then operating trains, he became increasingly interested in the organization of work. The ideas expressed in *A Practical Example* were grounded in Morgan’s many years of work (1954-78) as a railway engineer on the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (PGE), later BC Railway.5

Morgan had a quick mind and could see the fallacy of an argument. He loved people and was always ready to pursue his ideas with any person who happened to come along. Often he picked up hitch-hikers with whom he would talk seriously about how society does and should work. If somebody littered a sidewalk he would stop them and ask: “What made you think you owned that particular spot of land?” He would then turn the discussion to property and the inequalities engendered by the idea. His quick mind and ready wit were compelling; those who met him admired him deeply. As the late Morris Carrell put it, “You could trust him with your life.”6

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5See the bibliography for *A Practical Example*, p. 193.
6Lefty Morgan Papers, *Enough*, unpublished manuscript. *Enough* will be discussed further on pp. 45-6. The title meant that people should be able to have enough of whatever they needed.
7A document in his files suggests that he worked on a logging train for the first time in August, 1951 for CN-CP-BC Electric. This was unconfirmed since CP no longer has the staff to do research on personnel inquiries. It is consistent with the fact that he moved from engineman’s helper to engineer on the PGE in less than three years. Lefty Morgan Papers, “Margaret.” The PGE became BC Railway on 1 April 1972.
8Interview with Morris Carrell, 20 July 1989.

Much of his concern for people stemmed from his belief that we have allowed others to make decisions for us. As he wrote in *Enough*:

This is not something which can be tackled without consideration but there is no doubt in my mind that it can be done. Two main things are necessary -- power and determination. Much depends on power, who has it, what they do with it. When combined together in a common purpose we ordinary people have the power to live in almost any sort of world we choose. Power is required if you want your choice to be effective. One of our major problems is that we have loaned our power out. We now have to reclaim it. Without a firm hold on our power, we can accomplish nothing. With it we can create and firmly establish the kind of world most of us want, here and now.7

The source for these ideas lay in his experiences in Vancouver during the Dirty Thirties, on the picket line, as a social activist and as a member of the CCF/NDP.

**The 1930s**

To understand the context in which these manuscripts were written, we must recall the time when he began to work, think, and organize. During the 1930s, Morgan repeatedly found himself in confrontations with the state. Like many single unemployed men, he spent considerable time in the relief camps. Conditions there were better than starving on the streets, but as administration was taken over by the military, the camps became more like holding areas for containing protest. As might be expected, food and wages were inadequate and there were dozens of protests in BC relief camps, resulting in the expulsion and blacklisting of hundreds of activists. The men often refused to work, complained about the food, held sympathetic strikes over the discharge of men who refused to work, and even demanded an 8½ hour day. On 15 February 1934 there was a “large disturbance” at all camps due to “agitation” by the BC Single Unemployed Relief Workers Association. Like many of his friends, Morgan was on more than one occasion blacklisted and ejected from the camps. He later re-entered under an assumed name.8 By late December 1934, many of these men wound up on
the streets of Vancouver, precipitating demands to abolish the blacklist. Shortly after one such expulsion and “Early in April, the single unemployed from the interior relief camps went on ‘strike’ and converged on Vancouver to demand work and wages, the right to vote, the abolition of military control of the camps and other improvements.” Under the guidance of the Worker’s Unity League, the unemployed men organized and staged many strikes, hunger marches, and sit-ins. When the demands of the unemployed were not met in Vancouver or Victoria, they began their famous On-to-Ottawa Trek of 1935. There were other battles to be fought, however, and Morgan did not participate in the Trek.

Morgan and his friends patronized many of Vancouver’s cheap rooms and lunch counters where political debate was the order of the day, according to the late Jack O’Brien, a life-long friend of Morgan. During their time in Vancouver, Morgan, O’Brien and Rod Young (later Member of Parliament) frequently attended rallies and picketed for one cause or another. They were all attracted to the newly formed CCF and were members of the Cooperative Commonwealth Youth. Their participation came to a climax on the Vancouver waterfront.

In an acrimonious dispute involving longshoremen, a company union (the Vancouver District Waterfront Workers Association) had signed an unacceptable agreement. The union members responded by taking control of the union and electing a “communist and left-leaning executive” which then led a strike against “unfair

cargoes.” The company fired all the militant and hired scabs, creating new company unions to replace the worker-controlled one. In the ensuing conflict many non-workers supported the strikers and vice-versa. The company was ready with police support.

During the ensuing Battle of Ballantyne Pier, 60 people were reported to be injured when a crowd of 5,000, “two-thirds of whom” were “not longshoremen” according to the Chief of Police, were ordered to disperse. According to John Stanton, the police attacked on horseback and on foot:

The former swung four-foot, leather-covered clubs weighted with lead, while the police on foot used wooden "billics." Grey tentacles of tear gas spread out in some places. This onslaught quickly broke up the marching column, and individuals or small groups were hunted down and beaten mercilessly. No guns were used. The marchers offered minimal resistance, and in only a few minutes the strike had been seriously weakened. The scabs carried on, and the new company unions were preserved, at least for the time.

On that day Jack O’Brien, Rod Young and Morgan were on the picket line and when the police came "hitting people with their sticks," O’Brien and Young escaped. Morgan remained to be clubbed on the head by police, a wound that required stitches and hospitalization.

14 See Stanton, Never Say Die! 3-5. While there was a split between the scabs and union men, the longshoremen donated one dollar a month per worker to the unemployed workers’ union, and supported tag days when people would stand at a corner with a tin can wearing a banner such as “JOBS MEAN SECURITY.” These generous public donations, sometimes reaching thousands of dollars, supported the efforts of the unemployed workers. See Brown, When Freedom Was Lost. 116. There is evidence that longshore workers refused to join one relief-camp march on the waterfront, and on 18 May longshoremen voted against a sympathy strike in support of relief camp workers. However, the longshoremen’s union was one of few to join the May Day parade which attracted 12,000 people in 1935. National Archives of Canada, McNaughton Papers, MG 30 E133 (Series II) Vol. 57, File 359, (Vol. 2), “Memorandum, Situation in Vancouver, B.C. 19th April, 1935” from Major-General C.G.S. [Chief General Staff].
17 Jack O’Brien interview, 29 July 1989. O’Brien had worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1920s in the Prairies and came to Vancouver in 1931, where he obtained casual work as a railroad switchman. He may have roomed with Morgan.
He was jailed briefly.\textsuperscript{17} An item in a short-lived socialist publication, \textit{Amoeba}, gives insight into Morgan's character in the face of this onslaught:

For some time the membership of the C.C.Y. [Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement] will miss the engaging smile and ready wise-crack of "Lefty," whilst he will be stretched on a bed of pain, the victim of police brutality and the ruthless hand of organized Capital.

Of all the young workers none was more devoted to the cause than he. The camp boys will long remember his "Home on the Range" and "Git along little Doggie" at the Royal Theatre when the youth movement set out to entertain them during their stay in Vancouver. Amongst the first of our members to volunteer for picket duty, he has maintained energetically and faithfully his duties on the midnight or "graveyard shift" of the flying squad. In company with other members, Lefty drove down in Roy's car to the Ballantyne. Leaving the car to get a fuller report of the situation he stood for a moment on the sidewalk, an isolated figure. A squad car took the corner on two wheels drawing up alongside.

"Search him!" came the order.
But Lefty was unarmed.
The city officer in the back seat yelled, "Kill the S ... of a B ... ."
They hit him three times over the head and over the legs, and he fell senseless.

When we visited him in the General Hospital he had eight stitches in his scalp, a fracture is feared. The pillow and his shirt were covered in blood. His Wobbly button dinted by the police club lies on his desk. As he rode in the ambulance he sang the "Internationale" weakly.

Lefty, Comrade and Fellow-worker, member of the I.W.W. [Industrial Workers of the World] delegate to the Provincial Council Y.S.L. [Young Socialist League] and Provincial Secretary to the C.C.Y. In theory and action second to none. May your recovery be swift. We salute you!\textsuperscript{18}

The style of this "appreciation" reflects both the times and the high regard the writer had for Morgan. It also suggests that Morgan was not settled politically, but then these were unsettling times.

In later years Morgan frequently spoke of his admiration for the IWW or Wobblies and at one time he was a member.\textsuperscript{19} Part of his admiration for the IWW was its abhorrence of hierarchy and pursuit of democracy and freedom, in short its anarcho-syndicalism.\textsuperscript{20} He also belonged to the Socialist Party of Canada, most of whose members favoured joining the CCF in 1935.\textsuperscript{21} It is also significant that Morgan was especially interested in workplace struggles, although in his view the unemployed were also workers.

During this strike and throughout the thirties the issue of Communist control of the union was hotly debated. As the late Jack O'Brien put it, "The main fight in the 1930s was against the Communists."\textsuperscript{22} Morgan also saw how Communist control of the unions embittered and divided workers.\textsuperscript{23} Later in life, he expressed

\textsuperscript{17}The \textit{Vancouver Sun}, 19 June 1935 listed the injured. This source cited Morgan's original name, and indicated he was in fair condition after receiving contusions to the head. A news release he wrote in 1961 recalled his very short jail term. Lefty Morgan Papers, "Press Release" to the \textit{Vancouver Sun}, 8 May 1961.

\textsuperscript{18}Anonymous, "LEFTY (An Appreciation)," \textit{Amoeba}, 1, 8 (1935), 4. The YSCL and the CCF were very active in British Columbia at this time. Ivan Avakunovic suggests that the youth movement was disdainful of the older members of the party who were participating in elections, and "explains why some CCYMers preferred to devote their talents to building up trade unions or a broader-based youth organization." See his \textit{Socialism in Canada: A Study of the CCF-NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics} (Toronto 1978), 87.

\textsuperscript{19}Upon learning in 1971 that a friend who looked after the Wobbly library had died, the Morgans went to retrieve what they could. These Wobbly documents and posters were given to the UBC Library, Special Collections Division.

\textsuperscript{20}Anarcho-syndicalism goes back to the early days of socialist thinking and reached its height in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The principle idea is that a socialist society would be based on self-governing collectives organized through trade unions as a substitute for all forms of state organization. Working within existing unions and labour syndicates, anarcho-syndicalists believe that unions or syndicates should have an educational role and create self-managed institutions in preparation for the revolution. Working class defeats of the 1920s led to the decline of anarcho-syndicalism as a serious alternative to other socialist and communist thinking. Peter Marshall, \textit{Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism} (London 1992), 8-9; Raymond Williams, \textit{Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society} (London 1976), 37-8; Tom Bottomore, et al., eds., \textit{A Dictionary of Marxist Thought} (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 19, 477.

\textsuperscript{21}Anonymous, "Socialist Party of Canada 'Commits hari-kiri,'" \textit{B.C. Workers' News}, 1, 20 (31 May 1935). In a referendum to merge with the CCF, 417 voted in favour and 182 were opposed, and so the required two-thirds majority was won. There were 44 branches of the SP of C in BC, of which 29 participated in the referendum. Of those, 19 were for the merger and 10 were against.

\textsuperscript{22}Interview, 29 July 1989.

\textsuperscript{23}The issue of Communist-controlled unions was hotly debated during the Vancouver Trades Council meeting in 1935. Anonymous, "Trades Council Debate," \textit{Labour Statesman} (July 1935). In his book about his experiences as a labour lawyer, John Stanton suggested that Communist control was not a factor in the defeat of the longshoremen's strike, \textit{Never Say Die!}, 9-10.
concern for the welfare of all workers, and frequently spoke out against the authoritarian aspect of the Communist Party.

During the 1930s Morgan frequented the White Lunch restaurant at Pender and Granville in downtown Vancouver, where he joined the lively debates on the future of capitalism. Using government vouchers, unemployed workers could get meals at the White Lunch, often their only nourishment for the day.\(^{24}\)

It was more than a mere restaurant, it was an institution .... One could buy a 5¢ coffee and baby it for as long as one wished, reading or writing. No one bothered you .... I first saw [Morgan] as he stood engaged in an animated discussion with an assorted group of various ages, seated around a big, white-marbled table. The discussion swirled around the I.W.W., its history and its goals, strategy and tactics.\(^{25}\)

Many of his friends opposed the tactics of the Communist parties and their strategy of controlling unions or manipulating the unemployed workers. They found anarcho-syndicalism more to their liking. Similarly, Morgan was very much against the Communists and he would tear down their posters. Once, while doing so, a friend said, "Lefty, you’ve got to hear Doc Roberts!"\(^{26}\) Perhaps it was at the

John Smith, however, referred to another split between the unionized workers and the unemployed, "John Smith Interview," UBC Library, Special Collections, Rolf Knight Papers Box 8, File 3, p.10.

\(^{24}\)Vouchers were $2.00 for food and $1.05 for rent. The White Lunch offered toast and coffee for 10 cents, and for lunch, costing 15 cents, a choice between ham and chips with soup and coffee, or fish and chips with soup and coffee. Thus, one could have 13 meals each week. The Wonder Lunch offered a poached egg for 10 cents but was not popular among those interested in politics. Jack O'Brien recalled that this diet was so poor that he was rejected for military service due to his physical condition. Interview, 29 July 1989, Interview with John Smith, 1 August 1989.

\(^{25}\)This quotation is from the typescript of a speech by Myron Kuzych honouring Lefty Morgan when an engine was installed in a boat donated to Nicaragua by the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, 15 April 1989. Myron Kuzych, had come recently from the Ukraine and was quite interested in North American trade unions and in socialism/communism, having "witnessed the Bolshevik Insurrection from its very inception." Some time later Lefty arrived at Kuzych’s door, and they became life-long friends. Interview with Myron Kuzych, 7 August 1989.

\(^{26}\)Interview with Margaret Morgan, 29 May 1990. The term Communist in this case refers to the Communist parties of the day, and for many years Morgan did not wish to abandon communism as a form of society if it meant real control by the people or workers’ control. As a theory or way of thinking, communism was not condemned; but if communism stood for authoritarian regimentation, it was anathema to Morgan. In this text we use "Communist" to refer to the parties and "communist" to refer to theory or way of thinking.

White Lunch that Morgan first met Doc Roberts, a dynamic speaker who crossed the province addressing "the bewildered victims of capitalism."\(^{27}\) In Tappen, a small interior town, more than 300 people attended one of Roberts’ speeches and he became the talk of the town the following day. A study group even presented him with a gold watch for "teaching socialism."\(^{28}\) Doc Roberts frequently took part in discussions at the White Lunch, and Morgan, impressed by Roberts’ convincing arguments against capitalism, became an ardent supporter of the CCF.

Many jobless people believed capitalism had to be replaced since it had failed to meet the needs of working people. It was at this time that Morgan became interested in socialism, labour history, and economics. Not only did he discuss political and social issues, he began to write about them as well. Indeed, his first published work appeared when he was only 20 years old and a CCC member.\(^{29}\) A second article Morgan wrote in *Amoeba* shows Roberts’ influence:

We are told that the function of a Socialist in society is to fertilize the minds of the masses. The worker may have several reactions to the present economic conditions. Apathetic which lead[s] to despair, Anarchist which lead[s] to jail, Fascist which lead[s] to retrogression mentally and morally or Scientific Socialist founded on the dialectic nature of all things, to real understanding ....

\(^{27}\)Some of Frank Roberts’ lectures were published in *Amoeba*. See Frank Roberts, "Dialectical Materialism," *Amoeba*, 1, 12 (December 1935), 9. mimeographs of a series of Roberts’ lectures on dialectics were in Morgan’s papers. One is headed: Frank Roberts, “Uniform Study Course’: First Series ‘Dialectics’.” The first page identifies an executive committee representing various organizations: Mrs. R.P. Steeves (CCF Club), Mrs. A.L. Corker (SP of C), R. Young (Young Economic Students), W. Scott (WEL), W. Ofer (WEL), Norman Cooper (YSL), W. Hanna (YSL), A.M. Stephens (Chair). The Socialist Party of Canada (SP of C) was a major supporter, and the meetings were organized in February 1934 through the party’s headquarters on 60 Cordova Street. Some copies of the lectures bear the SP of C stamp. See UBC Library, Special Collections, Rod Young Collection, Box 3, File 3.


Fellow-workers, let us adopt our first sentence [above] as a slogan. Let us apply the flaming match of understanding to the dynamite of growing discontent.30

Morgan's call to workers was more than rhetorical. By the end of the 1930s he had become a member of the CCF Stanley Park Club,31 which had attracted many if not most of the Vancouver CCF's most radical element. The clubs were relatively autonomous and varied widely in political views. The Stanley Park Club was the most troublesome for the provincial executive, as various club members openly defied provincial CCF leaders.32 Morgan debated politics and at times lectured at the Stanley Park Club and elsewhere around Vancouver. Morgan, O'Brien and Young were the principal CCF workers for central Vancouver.33

Morgan's opposition to the Communist organizations stemmed from his unbending conviction about the right to make decisions about one's own affairs. This attitude pertained to government, bureaucracy, unions or wherever managers made decisions for others. So when he was conscripted into the military, the idea of somebody else telling him what to do was abhorrent. A pacifist, he could not tolerate the idea of workers killing other workers. He refused to work and eat with others, anxiously taking his food into a corner. If he was play-acting, he put on a good show. Perhaps he realized that he was incapable of submitting to another person's command. In any case, his peculiar behaviour resulted in his discharge within ten days. The army was no place for him.34

30 Lefty, "Logic in Action," Amoeba, 1 (1935). 3. These ideas appear to come from Roberts' lectures on dialectics. Books recommended by Roberts were Engels' Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science [Anti Dühring] (Chicago 1967), and Socialism — Utopian and Scientific (New York 1935); Joseph Dietzenz's The Positive Outcome of Philosophy (Chicago 1906), and Philosophical Essays (Chicago 1906); and Fred Casey's Thinking: An Introduction to its History and Science (Chicago 1926). Lefty Morgan Papers, Frank Roberts, "Uniform Study Course: First Series 'Dialectics,'" 3. All of these lectures of Roberts and the recommended books were still in Morgan's library after his death, indicating that Roberts' influence was long-lasting.

31 There are no membership lists for this period, but in 1961 he wrote a news release indicating he had been a member of the Stanley Park Club for 24 years, i.e., since 1937.


34 His discharge papers indicate that he had a nervous condition and fibrositis in the right hip. Lefty Morgan Papers, Canada Pension Commission certificate, 12 March 1945.

Political Activism in Later Years: The CCF/NDP

Politically, Morgan described himself in a 1961 press release as having been a member of the Stanley Park Club for 24 years and provincial secretary of the CCF and an associate editor of Amoeba, circa 1935. He also mentioned his participation in the Labor Party of Canada (1958-60) as member and officer, and his role as associate editor of and contributor to Press, official organ of the Labor Party of Canada. Press continued after the party's dissolution under the banner "Socialist Association for Publication of Press." In fact, Morgan was one of a handful of Press workers, a lithographed bulletin which openly challenged the CCF/NDP. In the press release he emphasized that he was "at no time connected in any way with Stalinist i.e. communist party" nor the "4th [Trotskyist] International, differing on role of 'party' in socialist movement."35

In the late 1940s Morgan worked for various transport companies as a dispatcher, but he still had time for political work. Much of his activity was on the sidelines. He usually took on jobs as secretary and more rarely as a chair or president. In 1951, he asked to be transferred to the CCF Burrard Club, but he returned a short time later to the Stanley Park Club, where he was listed on the executive as "organizer." He chaired the Vancouver Centre Riding Association in 1953.36 However, his involvement in a steady if irregular job on the railroad precluded further roles at the centre of CCF club activity.

For most of his life, Morgan admired the Wobblies and their organization's principles. He opposed hierarchy and nationalism and he embraced pacifism, but in later years, at least, he refused to be labelled. One foundation of his ideas was the Regina Manifesto, particularly the final clause that "No C.C.F. Government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full program of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Co-operative Commonwealth."37

36 UBC Library, Special Collections, Rod Young Collection, Box 3, File 4, and Angus Macinnis Memorial Collection, Box 7, Files 5 and 10. Lefty Morgan Papers, "Press Release," for the Vancouver Sun, 8 May 1961.
In the early 1950s, this socialist clause became an embarrassment to the Party's provincial and federal leadership. In response to bureaucratization of the party and its interests in elections rather than principles, many supporters drifted away from the CCF. Others were bound to uphold the principles of socialist policy, and so in August 1950 a conference was held in Vancouver to organize the left wing of the CCF in British Columbia. While Morgan is not identified among the 70 persons attending, his close associates were there. Jack O'Brien spoke about there being a 'moral' obligation for Left Wingers to stand together," while Rod Young proposed a resolution to "disaffiliate from the CCF." The resolution was defeated and a Socialist Caucus was formed within the CCF instead. About this time a mysterious Committee of Box 16 was organized "by a group of people who are concerned about the current problems of the movement." Little is known of the Committee's activities, but it is clear that the ideas of the left wing of the party had sources in the socialist working class parties which formed the BC CCF in the 1930s. According to the late Ruth Bullock,

Box 16 and different little journals that were put out were trying just to keep some sort of a network together, some contact with left-wingers in one place or another ... [and] went as far as Lloydminster ... and Alberta .... And it was to keep the idea of the importance of class and to try to combat middle class ideas within what we felt should be the worker's political party.

Along with one letter addressed to "Fellow Citizens" was "... a copy of a pamphlet which has been produced by the labour of a small committee of people interested in presenting material dealing with current affairs from an international socialist position." It was signed simply "Box 16" owing to "... the wave of persecution of unpopular

38 As Lipset put it, "The CCF began compromising its radical doctrine the day after the Regina Manifesto was issued in 1933." Agrarian Socialism (Berkeley 1971), 357.
39 UBC Library, Special Collections, Angus MacLinnis Memorial Collection, Box 7, "Minutes of Left Wing Conference." According to John Smith, Lefty was on the outskirts of this movement. Interview 1 August 1989.
40 UBC Library, Special Collections, Rod Young Collection, Box 3, File 1. UBC Library, Special Collections, Angus MacLinnis Memorial Collection, Box 10.

points of view by certain bureaucrats in the trade union and certain executive officers in the political parties ... ".

When Rod Young came under attack in 1954 for remarks he made about communism, Morgan and the left wing strongly supported Young. Morgan appears to have been more at the sidelines of the subsequent debate about Young, but he did recognize the increasing autocratic tendencies within the provincial party. Throughout the 1950s, the Stanley Park Club's activities were questioned by the provincial executive, in one instance about a speech by John Stanton to the monthly meeting of the club, Open Forum, and in another instance about an article written by Malcolm Bruce, a well known Communist, in Press.

At the national level, the CCF began a process of re-writing the Regina Manifesto. Beginning in 1950 a committee was organized to examine the question and there was debate for several years which culminated in the Winnipeg Declaration in 1956. The Winnipeg Declaration ends with: "The CCF will not rest content until every person in this land and all other lands is able to enjoy equality and freedom, a sense of human dignity, and an opportunity to live a rich and meaningful life as a citizen of a free and peaceful world." While Morgan would not object to such a statement, the focus on eradicating capitalism was clearly put aside. Increasingly unhappy with the gradual abandonment of the Regina Manifesto, Morgan and Jim McKenzie organized the Labour Party of Canada in 1958. 

43 See UBC Library, Special Collections, Rod Young Collection, Box 3, File 4, "Extract of the Official Record of the B.C. Provincial Convention C.C.F. 1954 Containing the Speech Delivered by Rodney Young and for which he was subsequently Compelled to Resign from the C.C.F." The UBC Library, Special Collections contains extensive documentation on attempts to expel Rod Young from the CCF in both the Angus MacLinnis Memorial Collection, Box 10, and the Rod Young Collection, Box 3. See Young, Anatomy of a Party, 282-4 for a short description of the Rod Young Affair, and Elaine Bernard, "The Rod Young Affair in the British Columbia Co-operative Commonwealth Federation," MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1979.
44 Young suggests that the CCF's attention to democracy was eroded by the ruling oligarchy within the party. This executive control was bitterly opposed by the BC delegates to the 1950 national convention. The Anatomy of a Party, 170-1.
46 The Winnipeg Declaration eliminated the offending paragraphs calling for the eradication of capitalism. On the problems of the Regina Manifesto, see
The first annual report of the Labor Party contained a list of 21 members including Morgan and the Secretary-Treasurer, Jim McKenzie. The main activity of the Labor Party was publishing Press. Volume 1, Number 1, an issue of about 20 pages was published 5 February 1957 with a run of 100, prompting a response from the League for Socialist Action’s Workers Vanguard.\(^4\) By May Press had a run of 500 copies and a new machine was purchased. Press was edited and written under various pseudonyms by McKenzie, Lefty and Margaret Morgan, Rod Young, Bill Jukes, CCF/NDP party members and others. Press was intended as a vehicle to provide people an opportunity to express themselves and over the years there were many writers. Editorial or organizational responsibility shifted from one issue to the next, but articles were received and expected from all members in September 1957. McKenzie lamented in the annual report: "But they relapsed into the old familiar groove, and our last issue has only three members writing."\(^4\) In part, the reason for pseudonyms was to avoid the appearance of a narrow, small group, but there was some concern that they might get into difficulties with the CCF/NDP or risk losing their jobs.\(^5\) Among the contributors was Jack Scott, who had become disillusioned with the Communist Party by that time, and had met Morgan and McKenzie.\(^6\)

By the early 1960s Morgan took up other struggles, such as the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. At the time, the CCF candidate for the national leadership, T. C. Douglas, had condemned Kennedy’s support of the Bay of Pigs invasion, but made it clear that he was “not defending the Castro regime.”\(^7\) While leaders of the CCF/NDP appeared to distance themselves from Cuba, Morgan gave cautious support in a talk he gave to a crowd of over 100 at the Stanley Park Club Open Forum. Notes from his address in May 1961 singled out Castro’s emphasis on human values. Morgan maintained that Castro could not remain leader by telling people what to do:

In the unfolding of the relations between the supporters of the revolt and the leadership, can be seen the only kind of faith that makes sense or reason. Faith must be reciprocal! There must be a continuous flow of faith in each direction, from the leader to the follower and from the follower to the leader, and the quantity of the flow in each direction must be an equation. Faith based on anything less than this reciprocal flow is blind and therefore unworthy of the human spirit. If blind faith exists, the follower descends to the level of a slave mentality and the leader falls victim to his own delusions.

He expressed a fear that failure on the part of Canadians to support Castro would result in the “deformation that was Stalinism, a vicious and tyrannical police state that should be avoided at all costs.” Morgan favoured anarcho-syndicalism and its emphasis on human values and freedom.\(^8\)

It is not surprising that Cuba was the focus of Morgan’s attention. Daily articles in the Vancouver Sun ran much of 1960-62. During the week following Morgan’s talk to the Stanley Park Club, the Vancouver Sun carried no fewer than 16 articles on Cuba and various letters as well.\(^9\) For Morgan, Cuba could have represented the type of society he would have like to see.

Morgan supported Cuba and the activities of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. During the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee marched in front of the American Embassy.\(^10\) Lefty Morgan Papers, “Press Release” to the Vancouver Sun, 8 May 1961. The ideas set down by Morgan for the speech were echoed some years later by Colin Ward, in his Anarchy in Action: “There is an order imposed by terror, … an order enforced by bureaucracy [the policeman in the corridor], and there is an order which evolves spontaneously from the fact that we are gregarious animals capable of shaping our destiny. When the first two are absent, the third, an infinitely more human and humane form of order, has an opportunity to emerge,” Ward, cited by George Woodcock in his review of Anarchy in Action, Our Generation, 10, 4 (1975), 83.

\(^5\) Examples in the Vancouver Sun from U.S. wire services include headlines such as “Travel Agencies Besieged As Mass Exodus Hits Cuba,” (10 May 1961, 1) “U.S. Studies Threat of Cuba Rocket Base,” (11 May 1961, 2) and “Castro Operating ‘Vast Red Network’” (12 May 1961, 1). The two articles supplied by Canadian services were more cautiously optimistic: “Cuba Doesn’t Fit Usual Red Picture” (8 May 1961, 7) and “Economic Blockage ‘Nasty Business’” (11 May 1961, 22). As might be expected, the Canadian perspective was less likely to appear on the front page.

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\(^4\) D. Randall, “Ex-CCF MP Attempts to Organize New Socialist Party on West Coast,” The Workers Vanguard, 2, 3 (February 1957), 4.


\(^8\) Douglas Raps U.S. on Cuba,” Vancouver Sun, 8 May 1961.
Consulate. Demonstrators carried placards reading "No more Koreans," "Hands Off Cuba," and "Try Kennedy for War Crimes." One letter to the Editor of the Sun complained that the Committee was "infiltrated with many well-known Communists who seem dedicated to a 'Cuba does everything right, U.S. everything wrong' campaign." The Fair Play for Cuba Committee was formed in part by the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, which saw Cuba as an example of an anti-colonial permanent revolution. Other demonstrations were held October 24 by the Voice of Women and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament outside the Vancouver Courthouse and on October 25 an estimated 5,000 students attended the Student Christian Movement noon rally at UBC to hear five professors attack the U.S. blockade of Cuba and U.S. threats to world peace. The missile crisis, as Norman Epstein told the rally, left people "threatened with being blown off the map but we have no say in the decision to do so." Denying such fundamental rights was anathema to Morgan.

Morgan spread the word every day with a professionally painted sign atop his Volkswagen Beetle:

QUESTION KRUSHCHEV'S MOTIVES
HANDS OFF CUBA!

QUESTION KENNEDY'S MOTIVES

Other signs included: "No! Nuclear Arms for Canada, Russia or Elsewhere — Committee of 100" and "The Sons of Freedom are Both Christians and Humans!" He frequently parked his car and signs on railway (PGE) property. One sign in the election year 1962 said: "No nuclear arms for Canada, Russia or elsewhere, vote NDP." It prompted disciplinary action from the railway, which claimed that "No unauthorized signs or advertising [were] allowed on Company Property." Mr. Goad, the Superintendent of Motive Power at Squamish, charged Morgan with insubordination on 2 April 1963. At a disciplinary hearing Morgan argued:

The announcement made by Mr. Goad was, to say the least considered by myself to be quite amazing in as much as it is common knowledge that in their very nature all cars carry advertising in one or more places and therefore I failed to see unless instructions were forthcoming to mask or in some manner obliterate this advertising how such company policy could logically be complied with.

Morgan requested "... instructions in terms of what shall and shall not be deemed to be advertising." In any case, the car could not be started and so he was not being purposefully disobedient.

Morgan had tremendous faith in the power of words. Whereas television was a medium whose message was based in part on appearance, he believed writing could reflect the true meaning of ideas. Morgan wanted his ideas to reach a broader audience, so he turned his attention to writing. It was at this time that A Practical Example was written. Through the years he gave away a number of copies of the manuscript at union meetings.

While still writing for Press, Morgan returned to the CCF in 1960 and was secretary of the Deep Cove CCF Club in North Vancouver where he resided. As a Club officer, he attended the founding convention of the NDP in Ottawa in 1961, where a new policy statement emphasizing planning was adopted. In the following year he attended the provincial NDP convention and was even more disillusioned. In a long handwritten report on the provincial convention Morgan stated:

In reporting the convention proceedings I can only say that I found our party to be in a very sick condition, if one views this party as a vehicle to achieve certain ends. If the end to be achieved is the creation of a party that will attract people who are looking for place in a scheme of life that will give meaning and purpose to the life of the individual person then the party is on its death-bed ... On the other hand, if the

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54 Vancouver Sun, 24 October 1962, 25.
party is to be one in which the individual member is regarded as the simple provider of willing hands at election times and a constant source of revenue at all times then there is perhaps some future for this machine of political forces.61

After describing the resolutions which had been discussed at the convention, Morgan concluded:

In conclusion ... there is no hope of returning to the degree of fairness of debate and willingness to face up to controversial issues and make clear decisions therein as was done to a far greater extent in the old C.C.F., until we are rid of the procedural methods introduced from the trade union movement at the founding convention of the NDP at Ottawa. So long as these rules of procedure last there is far too great a possibility of death in [committee], convincing for defeat by lobby, and cutting the heart out of contentious resolutions, watering them down to unctuous and pious statements with [which] anyone including the Liberal Party could agree.62

It was clear to Morgan that the NDP did not want any radical elements to disrupt the peace of the party, either. They would be excluded:

A high point in unfair and unjust conduct was reached in the case of considering the application of Rod Young for membership. Mr. Berger, a lawyer by profession[,] ruled in his own favor to insist that the case for Young be presented prior to the case against him by the executive. This procedure is tantamount to forcing a lawyer to defend a client who is not yet charged. This is a flagrant abuse of even the most elementary justice.63

Morgan ended his report with:

It is with regret that I have had to tender such an analysis of our party in convention .... I am sorry not to be able to report a more healthy condition. We must all now redouble our efforts to straighten out these tendencies.

That is, of course, unless you like it as it is ....

To us right — to them left.64

Morgan felt the party had betrayed its socialist principles.65 A few years later, in a speech on a local radio show, he blamed “Douglas, Lewis, Coldwell and Knowles, among others ... [who believed] that as long as this disturbing call for the eradication of capitalism remained a declared goal for the party, power would never be obtained on a wide scale.” He felt that the original CCF policy had attracted people of two opposing views: those who wished to “dull the barbs of an iniquitous social system” and “those who wish to put an end to that system, barbs and all.”66

Morgan’s desire for a truly democratic and humanist approach to politics led him to read a wide variety of political literature. Rather than fraternizing with his fellow workers for the sake of a good time, Morgan read voraciously while off duty. One book in particular impressed Morgan: Facing Reality, by Grace Lee, Pierre Chaulieu, and C.R. Johnson (C.L.R. James, a well-known Trinidadian Marxist).67 Not content to just read, Morgan sought out these people. So, on the trip east to the NDP Convention in 1961, Morgan returned via Detroit where he visited Grace Lee and her husband Jimmy Boggs, engaging in non-stop political discussion for ten days. Through Lee and Boggs, Morgan met Raya Dunayevskaya over supper.68 Dunayevskaya (Freddie Forest) had in 1945 allied with C. L. R. James to form the Johnson-Forest tendency within the American Trotskyist movement, although by the mid-1950s both had split with the Trotskyists. Morgan thus became acquainted with Dunayevskaya and her Marxist-humanist movement and newspaper, News and Letters, begun in 1955. Morgan subscribed to the newspaper for many years and contributed letters.69 One letter was typical:

Rightly or otherwise, I am very pleased with the political developments visible and audible through the normal news media. To see the

63 Lefty Morgan Papers, “62 Convention Report.”
64 Lefty Morgan Papers, “62 Convention Report.”
65 It is not clear when Morgan finally withdrew from the NDP. Even in 1965 he wrote to the provincial executive stating that the Deep Cove NDP Club was defunct. Lefty Morgan Papers, “Press Release” to the Vancouver Sun, 8 May 1961; letter from BC-NDP to Richard E. Morgan, 8 June 1965.
68 Margaret Morgan interview, 30 January 1989.
apparently great cracks spreading in the framework of the great
colossus of "free" capitalism, which is the U.S.A., is a joy.

Railroad Worker
Canada

In 1965 Dunayevskaya gave a talk at UBC and during her stay met
with Morgan again. Two years later Morgan returned from Montréal
via Detroit to again meet with Lee, Boggs and Dunayevskaya. Not
long after, Lee and Boggs visited Kathleen Gough, then professor of
anthropology at Simon Fraser University, and they all had lunch at
the Morgans' Dunayevskaya, Lee and Boggs thus continued their
friendship with Morgan. Morgan visited C.L.R. James in London,
probably en route to a conference on workers' control in Paris in
1977. Another strong influence was Erich Fromm, a Marxist-
humanist whose influence can be seen in A Practical Example.

Morgan's disillusionment with the CCF/NDP dovetailed with the
direction of Marxism-humanism. Fromm's emphasis on alienation
resulting from authority in a capitalist society complemented
Dunayevskaya's "philosophic breakthrough" of the unity of practice
and the idea, particularly the "movement from practice to theory as

70 Most letters were anonymously attributed and identify the writers' back-
grounds, such as "steel worker" or "auto worker." News and Letters, 13, 5
(1968), 5.

71 No regular personal correspondence between Dunayevskaya and Morgan
was located. Dunayevskaya frequently wrote broadcast letters to "Dear
Friends" or "Dear Colleagues," apparently reserving personal letters for a
select few such as Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Grace Lee, or C. L. R.
James. See the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Vol. 14, 9209ff. Raya
Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom ..., from 1776 until Today (New York
1958). The Boggs' Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century (New
York 1974) was in Morgan's library, along with several books by
Dunayevskaya, some of which are stamped with the address of News &
Letters.

72 Shortly after her visit, Dunayevskaya wrote a letter to Erich Fromm. "Have
I written you that during my recent lecture tour in British Columbia I found
an 'adherent' of yours in Vancouver — a very unusual man named Lefty
Morgan, a railroad worker who is presently ... at work on a book on the
conditions of labor which lead to spontaneous actions, workers' control
of production, self-development quite other than those the managers of
production planned as they worked out those conditions of labour? Lefty
quotes from your works, especially The Sane Society, and wanted to know
whether he could get your permission. I told him that I felt sure you would
grant such permission. Have you heard from him?" Lefty Morgan Papers,
letter from Raya Dunayevskaya to [Erich] Fromm], 23 May 1965; copy in
The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Vol. 12, 10005. See below pp. 105-6,
147.

well as the movement from theory to practice." For an organic
intellectual such as Morgan, Marxism-humanism had many of the
answers. As his involvement with the NDP waned, his attention
focused on practical ways to ensure the unions did not subvert the
wishes of workers. He began to write at length about democracy in
the workplace and his hope for a humanistic democracy.

Practicing Workers' Control

When Morgan got a job as a dispatcher at Ryan's Cartage Ltd.
in 1938, he was able to put into practice some of his ideas. According
to Stewart Cooper, a co-worker, "His willingness to co-operate and
his devotion to duty under severe pressure are a matter of personal
knowledge." Cooper wrote:

During the entire period[,] I knew that Mr. Morgan and Mr. Ryan [the
company owner] spent the greater part of their spare time in promot-
ing ideas that supported the creation of a new society. Also, whenever
the opportunity presented itself during working time, they expounded
their ideas. They helped to form a local of the Teamsters' Union for
the men on the job. It was apparent that Morgan and Ryan were
convinced that there could at times be a coincidence of employer and
employee interests. They believed men have common interests
without regard to their relative economic relationships.

After a few months as company owner Ryan felt he could not justify
having employees. So one afternoon he called in Cooper, Morgan,
and two others and announced "Well, boys, you are now co-owners.
This experience provided Morgan with early evidence that workers
could jointly manage their own labour process. Some time later,
Cooper and the others bought out Morgan's share.

By this time Morgan had developed a technique for dispatching
trucks, which was copied by several firms, including Merchants

73 Raya Dunayevskaya, "Introductory Note by Raya Dunayevskaya." In
74 Antonio Gramsci developed the term organic intellectual to describe an
individual whose ideas spring from experience. In short, he realized the
dialectic between practice, particularly in the workplace, and ideas. Antonio
Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci (London
1971), 6, 360. See Carl Boggs, Gramsci's Marxism (London 1976), 101-5,
118.
75 Lefty Morgan Papers, "Testimonial of Stewart A. Cooper," 6 April 1964, 1.
76 Lefty Morgan Papers, "Testimonial of Stewart A. Cooper," 6 April 1964, 1.
Cartage, until at least the mid-1960s. The system apparently involved the colour-coding of dispatch zones and statuses. Few people were better at coordinating pick-up and delivery than Morgan. After quitting Ryan's in 1942, he worked for several cartage and warehouse firms, where he used his exceptional skills as a dispatcher. By 1954, he was working for the PGE as a trainman. His love was the head end and he quickly requested engine service. As he rose up the seniority ladder, he worked as a fireman and finally as an engineman — the job he held until he retired in 1978.

Over the years he was engaged in numerous union struggles, holding a number of minor offices. Morgan supported attempts to break away from the traditional Brotherhoods, which he thought did not represent the interests of the workers. His own case of dismissal was not taken up for over a year by the Brotherhood and he argued his own successful defence between 1964 and 1967. Finally, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (B of LE) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen (B of LF&E) were replaced by the Canadian Union of Transport Employees (CUTE) on 24 May 1974.

In addition to being Secretary General and Vice President of Local #1, Morgan drafted the by-laws for CUTE Local No. 1, and part of the CUTE constitution. Some of these constitutional provisions are a lasting monument to Morgan’s concern for workers. CUTE's central purpose encompasses such aims as:

a) To regulate relations between employees and employers ...

b) To promote the material and intellectual welfare of the member ...

c) To bring about improvement in the working conditions of the member ...

d) To educate and enlighten the member ...

e) To organize workers into the National Union.

f) To provide a democratic form of organization ... encouraging equal and free voice and a vote to all members regardless of race, colour, sex, creed or political opinion.

g) To promote the rights of all workers, freedom to belong to labour organizations which are operated in the sole interest of those who work for wages, those retired from that category, and those who are generally socially disadvantaged and ... are not influenced or dominated by any element not in the best interest of the above-mentioned categories of persons.

These provisions were adapted from the Constitution of the Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied Workers (CAIMAW). CAIMAW includes an additional clause "to bring about fair wage standards" and instead of provision (g), the CAIMAW constitution mentions only “Canadian workers.”

According to Kevin Rhodes, provision (g) shows Morgan’s influence since it includes wage workers, the retired, and the disadvantaged.

While Morgan strongly supported unions, he felt that they were subverted by the negotiation process and the requirements of a capitalist economy — in some instances to the extent that the executive had simply become a company tool. This was noted by Morgan and others before academic writers took up the issue of control. Workers' control of the workplace meant fighting the managers as well as the unions, issues which were taken up in Canadian Dimension and Our Generation some time after Morgan wrote A Practical Example. Unions were at times neglectful of their

Memo from R.E. Morgan to Canadian Union of Transportation Employees, 6 July 1974. A copy of the by-laws which make up this memo was kindly provided by Kevin Rhodes.
historical role and ignored the needs of their members. Morgan was often at loggerheads with his own union. When the company attempted to dismiss him, he had first to fight with the Brotherhood to have them take up the case. As a result, his own dismissal and eventual re-instatement took three years to complete. Few workers were willing to confront the union and so it is not surprising that they often turned to Morgan for help. He frequently took up the cause of employees who were disciplined, writing briefs and documents supporting their re-instatement. He was chairperson of the BC Branch of the Canadian Railways Employees’ Pension Association from 1971 until 1987, and he fought several pension cases for workers. Morgan’s activities on behalf of workers over a lengthy period were widely appreciated.

The Railroads

Morgan’s typewriter was rarely silent. It is necessary at this point to put these writings in historical perspective. A Practical Example “Right under your Nose” came out of his experience as an engineer in the late 1950s and early 1960s. There are few detailed descriptions of train crew operations elsewhere, which makes the document valuable for that reason alone. However, the document goes well beyond a mere description of railroad operations. Morgan’s point is to show how the labour process on the railroad represents workers’ control.

A Practical Example is only loosely tied to time and place. The manuscript describes a model or an ideal type, one which was pertinent over a broad temporal and geographical spectrum of railroads. Although Morgan chose to use examples from the U.S.

control see André Gorz, Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal (Boston 1967); James Jacobs, review of Strategy for Labor, in Our Generation, 5, 3 (1967), 118-24; John Case, “Workers Control: Toward a North American Movement.” Our Generation, 6, 3 (1972), 3-12; Gerry Hunnius, G. David Garson and John Case, eds., Workers' Control: A Reader on Labour and Social Change (New York 1973); Alexander Matejko, “Industrial Democracy: A socio-technical approach,” Our Generation, 9, 1 (1973), 24-41. While Morgan read Canadian Dimension, he was particularly influenced by Black Rose and the Our Generation Press in Montréal. He corresponded with Dimitrios Roussopoulos, a major figure at Black Rose and Our Generation. For an example of Black Rose’s publications on workers’ control, see Gerry Hunnius’s Participatory Democracy for Canada: Workers’ Control and Community Control (Montréal 1971), which included a list of pamphlets on workers’ control available from Our Generation Press.

about management, the descriptions of workers’ control came from his own experience on the PGE between 1954 and 1964. Morgan was trying to show what was common to the running trades throughout North America and over time. To a large extent, of course, the standardization and regimentation of railways which began in the 19th century created this commonality.66 The rule book, as noted in the manuscript, was one important standard developed by the Association of American Railroads. Other organizations such as the American Association of Railroad Superintendents, the American Railroad Engineering Association, and the Brotherhoods all contributed to railroad standardization, especially in the running trades.67

If work was so regulated due to the nature of operating trains (the need to coordinate the movement of goods over long distances to varying locations, through different lines and with important safety considerations), then why, of all places, was the railway an example of labour autonomy? One explanation might be that the railroaders became strongly identified as members of a craft. From an early period railroaders looked upon their choice as a career, a life commitment. They were among the first to develop unions in the 19th century and it was not without cause that they called themselves brotherhoods — the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen was formed in 1873 for the purposes of life insurance and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen was a benevolent


67Several organizations are cited in footnotes to the text, the most important of which are the American Association of Railroad Superintendents. For the development of work rules negotiated by the railway Brotherhoods see Reed C. Richardson, The Locomotive Engineer 1863-1963: A Century of Railway Labor Relations and Work Rules (Ann Arbor, Michigan 1967). See also the Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the American Railway Engineering Association, which began publication in 1900. Rules in Canada were similar to those in the United States. The fifth edition of a standard primer on railway operations included the Canadian Pacific for comparison. See Peter Jossen, Rights of Trains (New York 1957), ix.

68Both quite soon took on the more normal tasks of unions. See Walter Licht, Working for the Railroad: The Organization of Work in the Nineteenth Century, (New Jersey 1983) 147, 243, 267. The four main unions (Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT), Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen (B of LF&E), the Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen (ORCE) and the Sthichmen’s Union of North America (SUNA), combined to form the United Transportation Union in 1969. Gary M. Fink, ed., Labor Unions (Westport, Conn. 1977), 402-3.
Early issues of the *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers’ Monthly Journal* were concerned with the dangers of the job and the need for life insurance. Because of their attachment to the railroad and perhaps because of the dangers, they identified railroading as a craft. The rules were not created just to control labour; the rules were guidelines to be interpreted by the crew who worked as a unit. Railroaders frequently suffered oppressive conditions of heat and cold while on the road, creating work conditions not unlike miners in Nova Scotia. As Ian McKay has suggested, “The coal miners [of Nova Scotia] were cruelly oppressed and worked in an appalling environment, but they had the freedom to create their own traditions, and these were strengthened by the collective experience of death.”

Mine managers realized that they had limited authority due to the conditions of the workplace and further recognized that employees had a special interest in their workplace rules, particularly with regard to safety. Like the miners, railroaders had a sense of dignity in their work and were not amenable to Taylorism.

Railroad workers belong to a select group which in actuality is as much a social as a working group. It is not unusual for railroading to be passed down from generation to generation. In the railway community there are several divisions and a status hierarchy separates these workers. Workers who repair tracks (maintenance-of-way gangs) or those who repair the trains and cars are quite separate from those who are associated with the running trades. At the time of Morgan’s writing the running trades were further divided into the tail end crew (conductor, switchman) and the head end (engineman, brakeman, fireman). The running trades work changes depending on whether the crew does yard work or road work, but all workers act together as a crew. Authority in the crew is principally divided between the conductor and the engineman, but all members of the crew are responsible for operating the trains. Coordinating the scheduling and operations of the trains are the dispatchers and yardmasters. Upper management is frequently selected from running trades crews and so is quite knowledgeable about train operations.

Twice a year workers make secret bids on jobs. Some workers prefer the stable work of the yard, perhaps close or far from home, while others prefer road work. Bids are opened in the presence of the union and management and assigned according to seniority numbers. The uncertainty of seasonal demands, personal holidays, and cancelled trains may lead to bumping, which then affects all other workers who are bumped down the line. In addition to the regular jobs, there is an extra or spareboard, for jobs where there are no assigned crews, or where crew members of an assignment have to be replaced due to “booking off sick,” moving to another assignment, taking extra work on another assignment or “booking rest.” Generally it is workers with the least seniority who make up the spareboard and when there is a lot of extra work or booking off, it can be quite lucrative. Regular workers may also seek extra assignments that the spareboard cannot cover. If a worker has asked for extra work and so is on standby, the company may call two hours before a train is due to be moved. Spouses may be called upon to prepare a meal and lunch at a moment’s notice. As Margaret Morgan suggested,wives cannot expect their husbands to attend dinner or other engagements and might say: “I’ll come but I don’t know if Lefty can come.” Instances of train delays were common and workers could be away from home for days, leading to a very disrupted home life. Whatever job one has, there is constant shifting in the running trades.

Yardmasters assign tasks to crews, who then assemble trains for yard work or for moving them out of the yard to a distant location within certain time limits. Regardless of one’s role, railway work requires the coordination of complex tasks that may involve yardmasters, dispatchers, train crews, switchmen, and even main-

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91 The sociologist W. Fred Cottrell wrote a classic description of the railroad, including the community, social status and language of the railway workers. W. Fred Cottrell, *The Railroad* (Dubuque, Iowa 1971). Other articles include John Spier’s “The Railroad Switchman,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 5, 1 (Fall 1959), 40-62, and Luis S. Kemnitzer’s “Language Learning and Socialization on the Railroad,” *Urban Life and Culture*, 1 (1973), 163-86. Much of the following description is based on interviews with railroaders in British Columbia who were asked to reflect on the period of time of Morgan’s manuscript.


93 If one’s seniority number were high enough one might bid as follows: Job 1 for passenger trains, Job 2 for a day freight, Job 3 for a night freight, Job 4 for a day yard, Job 5 for night yard, and expect to be successful on one of the bids. If one’s seniority were low, one might bid for “helping” on a night freight or yard crew, i.e., as fireman/brakeman.

94 Much of the above is based on an interview with Margaret Morgan, 7 August 1989.
tenance-of-way crews. Undoubtedly machine-shop operations exhibit a different pattern of labour cooperation. To Morgan, the railway is only one example of how, in almost all situations, labour could be in control of the workplace because the manager had no role to perform. While academics have written about the nature of work on the railroad they have largely ignored the political implications of what they are describing. Morgan could not divorce the practice and the idea, and so his manuscript tends to be misunderstood.95

Many changes in railway technology have affected the organization of labour which is described in A Practical Example. Diesel-electric engines, introduced in switching operations in the 1930s, were in regular service by the mid-1950s, after which firemen were made redundant, except on passenger trains.96 In terms of tracking, the Automatic Block Signal System was widely used by the 1950s, whereby block signals are controlled by the presence of a train on the track or position of switches.97 Also, the Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) system, used on only 52 miles of CN and CP track in 1958, was installed on the first mainline in that year.98 CTC became standard during the 1960s, limiting the ability of a train crew to alter the progress of a train. More recent changes which diminish the flexibility of the crew are computerized dispatching and in-cab signalling. With Automatic Train Control (ATC) the locomotive automatically responds to reduced speed requirements, estimates stopping distances and controls the speed of trains to maintain a safe braking distance. Tail end crews have been replaced with detection devices for hot wheel bearings, dragging equipment and shifted loads. Still, the engineer-less train remains for the future.99

Writing on Workers' Control

Morgan did not see the labour process as one in which capital unequivocally opposed labour. There was no question that workers should use their skills to the best of their abilities. If there was something wrong with work, it was not inherent in work but rather in the structure of the labour process. The workplace required cooperation to ensure that work was done with maximum efficiency, subject to natural conditions and safety considerations. Work in the abstract sense is accomplished with cooperation. However, under capitalism workers had to be supervised and disciplined, but managers could not make people work without their consent.

Since Morgan wrote A Practical Example, many others have tried to analyze the workplace, focusing on changes in labour-management relations.100 Rather than writing in the traditions of worker resistance or class conflict, Morgan's approach was to discover how work, in reality, was self-realized and oriented towards "getting the job done." Morgan recognized conflict, but tried to see how workers could meet each other's needs and organize themselves through cooperation, a fundamental social need. As he concludes in A Practical Example:

The actual management of the final phases of production is performed by the railroaders themselves. The amount of control exercised over the selection of permanent staff has been fully described. The only logical conclusion is that the running trades themselves must properly be classed as part of management. [emphasis in original].101

If running-trades workers are managers of production then "There is no foundation to support the theory that men and management

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95A book by the anthropologist Frederick C. Gamst, The Hoghead (New York 1980), gives considerable detail about the running trades from the point of view of an engineer. Gamst, once an engineer, studied engineers for many years and published extensively on the running trades. At one time he corresponded with Morgan about A Practical Example, and suggested that "the theme of 'democracy' in the introduction should either be tightened and made more explicitly useful or else deleted." Lefty Morgan Papers, letter from R. E. Morgan to Frederick C. Gamst, 11 February 1981, letter from Frederick C. Gamst to R. E. Morgan, 1 June 1981.

96See pp. 77-8 of A Practical Example. PGE's last steam engine was in standby service in 1959 and was taken out of service in 1962. Anonymous, "Railway News," Canadian Railway Historical Association News Reports, 102 (July-August 1959), 81; anonymous, "Railway News," Canadian Railway Historical Association News Reports, 136 (September 1962), 146. For changes which resulted from dieselization see Maury Klein, "Replacement Technology: The Diesel as a Case Study," Railroad History, 162 (Spring 1990), 109-20.

97A block is a section of track governed by signals, usually coloured lights.

must clash at all times." Work is thus an expression of what it means to be human.

However, institutions and organizations could easily subvert the labour process. Morgan often questioned union officials about their ideas. For example, in a letter to G. H. Harris, President of the Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen (ORCB), Morgan cited a passage in the constitution of the B of LE which states that "The interests of the employer and employee being co-ordinate, the aim of the Organization will be co-operation and the cultivation of amicable relations with the employer..." Morgan also drew attention to a parallel passage in the B of LF&E constitution: "... the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen has been instituted... having as one of its aims the desire to cultivate a spirit of harmony between employer and employee." Morgan asked Harris whether the ORCB had ever had such a clause in its constitution. Harris replied he was unaware of such a clause, but the union had always "strived for amicable relations." For Morgan, these clauses and attitudes showed that the unions had become agents of the company, and he had nothing but contempt for such alliances because he felt that the needs of the workers were not adequately protected.

In keeping with Braverman's perspective, if there were conflicts between employers and employees, it was because the employer had to impose rules on employees. Braverman suggests that markets must remain the "prime area of uncertainty" and the organization of the corporation flows directly from this fact. Marketing becomes secondary only to production. The market economy spurred by competition was the probable cause of labour-capital conflict. This calls to mind Michael Burawoy's more recent view that "conflict is endemic to the organization of work." According to Morgan, it was capitalism that had subverted the labour process. As he wrote in *A Practical Example*: "Being 'human' is a difficult thing to define, but in my opinion, it embraces more than simply what is good for business. It is not a case of being anti-employer, but rather a case of being pro-individual human being." Just as Morgan had regarded the agitation against Rod Young as evidence of the subversion of socialist democratic principles, he held that certain unions were acting against the interests of their members. The labour process was the one arena where control could reach its fullest expression, especially in the running trades.

In another paper, Morgan asked whether the work relationships of the running trades in North America qualify as an operating example of industrial democracy, co-determination, workers' control or self-management? He answered that co-determination is the most appropriate idea, and listed 23 different criteria for evaluating the degree of democracy in the workplace, ranging from "An almost total absence of work-related alienation" to "a very restrained tendency to withdraw labour en masse." Understanding the workplace, in particular its organization, was of utmost importance to social change and improvement.

Two questions remain to be addressed here: what does workplace autonomy, or workers' control mean? A second question is: if there is workplace autonomy, can it lead to any wider social impact and how can that be accomplished? In studying coal miners in the 1920s David Frank offered three meanings of workers' control:

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108 A Practical Example, p.71.

This past weekend I read your manuscript on railroad workers and I would like permission to make reference to it in my forthcoming book on industrial democracy. Specifically, I would like to refer to it as an unpublished manuscript which I hope will soon be published and which I strongly recommend to my readers because I believe it shows remarkable insights (quoted in Democracy and the Workplace, 154). During the NDP government of the early 1970s in British Columbia, Wilson was asked to try to democratize BC Rail. During this time he had "many long conversations with Lefty." Letter from H. B. Wilson to G.R. Pool, 6 November 1992, 1. For another study of this time period see Gerry Hurniutis, G. David Garson and John Case, eds., *Workers' Control: A Reader on Labor and Social Change* (New York 1973).
(1) organic control: common attitudes and practices of the coal miners' daily work life favoured the growth of a limited but significant tradition of workplace authority; (2) tactical control: at key moments in the strikes of the 1920s, the coal miners exploited the unusual physical conditions of their workplace in order to strengthen their effectiveness in confrontations with their employer; (3) strategic control: the militancy of the coal miners in the 1920s also included strong sympathies for ideals of industrial democracy, public ownership, and other alternatives to capitalist domination of the coal industry.  

While it is clear that A Practical Example is concerned with the first meaning, Morgan's writings and life work clearly suggest that the other two were priorities in his mind, and that they flowed from the workplace, regardless of its type.

Some writers have suggested that workers need to find satisfaction on the job and so improperly identify their control over the craft with workers' control. Others suggest that worker resistance is due to alienation and leads to job actions where nominal, if temporary, control takes place. Management, the boss, and the foreman may also replace the workers, not only during a strike, but also as an object of managing production, i.e., managers try to undercut the development of skill. From the early 1900s, scientific management focussed on time and incentives to labour as well as other methods of making skilled workers ancillary. As Charles Sabel suggests, "Craftsmen learn as apprentices that management tries to profit from eliminating their prerogatives. When such challenges do come they are resisted as an affront to the craftsmen's ethos, an insult to their dignity, an attack on their well-being and the freedom they need to work." Craft workers are more likely to be self-disciplined and defiantly egalitarian, but is it realistic to believe that one is in control? Montgomery suggests that control is not "a condition or state of affairs" but rather a "struggle, a chronic battle in industrial life." Montgomery's position skirts the issue of how real control can be accomplished. Also, management would like workers to think they are in control since that leads to labour peace. Did Morgan succumb to the desires of management, or at least misinterpret the role of skilled labour?

To answer this question it may be useful to discuss the nature of labour in capitalist modes of production versus pre-capitalist labour, and so evaluate the limits on the worker's freedom. Burawoy argues that there are five points of contrast. First, capitalist workers are separated from the means of production in time and place and the entire product of labour is appropriated by the capitalist. Second, capitalist workers cannot live off what they produce. Third, capitalist workers do not set the means of production in motion by themselves but are subordinate to the managers. Fourth, capitalist workers agree to sell labour power over a set period or for a set rate and do not coordinate or control production. Fifth, the relationship between worker and capitalist is based on their economic interdependence. While Morgan would most certainly have agreed with Burawoy on most points, the ability of capital to wrest control away from workers was far from complete. Perhaps Burawoy overstated the case as a consequence of the industries he chose to examine. In many industries control is difficult to achieve and pockets of worker autonomy remain. As Richard Price noted, there is a "mutual and dialectical relationship ... between resistance and subordination and the intensity of this relationship ... may depend upon the historical conditions under which the labour process was transformed." Further, there is no completely autonomous labour process and therefore we need to integrate particular labour processes "into the totality of labour history."

On the railroad, managers had only some opportunities to oversee the workers and so have controlled the labour process via a set of rules. The rules developed early in the 19th century in response to the need to coordinate the operations of different railways, where workers might switch companies more often than today. Once out of the yard and even within some large yards, the managers do not directly supervise the workers. On this one "freedom" engineers have long recognized their power and responsibility. As Warren S. Stone, Grand Chief Engineer, B of L E said in 1912:

111"Contested Terrain: Workers' Control in the Cape Breton Coal Mines in the 1920s," in Heron and Storey, eds., On the Job, 102.
112David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America (Cambridge 1979), 9ff.
116Montgomery, Workers' Control in America, 10.
The element of superintendence must necessarily be a consideration .... When a passenger or freight train leaves a terminal it is completely under the control of the engineer and the conductor. There is no superintendent or other officer of the company in immediate touch with that train to direct its movements or the duties of the employees thereon. They may, of course, be reached by wire and given orders as to manner of procedure, but whatever movements are made by that train until it reaches its terminal are directly and immediately under the control of those employees. 119

All other criteria of the capitalist labour process imply control by capital. More important, capital controls the labour process through legal means and extends itself into the community of workers, most obviously in the company town but also into communities built up in railroad operations.

So if locomotive engineers controlled only a small aspect of the labour process, why does Morgan maintain that it is an example of industrial democracy? Has the craft tradition been romanticized and job control falsely elevated to workers' control, as Monds suggests? 120 Does the same criticism which Monds applies to Montgomery and Hinton, apply to Morgan? These questions, pertinent to labour process theory in the past few years may be answered by reading Morgan's contribution, but we need to also see the wider context of his ideas.

In A Practical Example, Morgan may present a idealized picture of the running trades. If so, this is because he sought every possible avenue which might lead society toward a fully humanized democracy. When others assumed that conflict was pre-eminent in human relations, Morgan immediately questioned them. If anything can characterize his ideas, it was his conviction that society should strive to become "a free association of free people." 121 He felt that scrupulous adherence to democratic principles and practice was the only route to true social evolution. In Enough, considerable time is spent on how to maintain discipline in a humanist democracy. Morgan wrote:

119Warren S. Stone, Brief In the Matter of the Arbitration between the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers ... and the Railroad Officials .... (Cleveland 1912), 19-20.
121Myron Kuzych speech, 15 April 1989.

When in groupings which revolve around "humanist" principles, it has been found that the fringe of people surrounding the core are hard to discipline. People who band together on a program of broad social liberties are people who supply their own brand of discipline. In general, they are self-disciplined. 122

He wanted to see a world based on cooperation and free of the need for money. He believed that each person should have a say in the social and economic affairs of the world. For Morgan, the defense of individual freedom and democracy was fundamental. Democratic decision-making, whether in the workplace or elsewhere, was essential to social peace and economic well being. Work was the most important touchstone of discovering this freedom, as he writes in A Practical Example: "All the various things that a man does, from art to railroading, are only parts of his total existence, both as a part of the mass and as an individual." 123

In Enough, Morgan suggests that people should live according to their needs in a society organized without money. Consumer goods would be produced only to meet the requirements of the people — nobody would produce or consume more than needed. If A Practical Example examines only the work on railroads, it is applied in Enough to wider social issues. Far from having a 'workerist' illusion, Morgan proposed a profound vision of a workers' democracy. On work he wrote:

The question could occur to you: "If men do not really have to be driven to work, in what way do those who do the driving earn their pay?" If it can be shown to your satisfaction that there is another way, a better way, rather than driving men to work, you could ask yourself: "Why not absorb a great number of these supervisors into the actual working body and thereby cut down on our hours of work?"

For now I shall just mention six of the reasons why I think they would "work that way." One: they would overcome the obstacles which stood between them and such satisfaction as could be taken from doing a good day's work without being criticized for doing so. Two: they would be independent and working for themselves as much as it is possible to do so (if for instance they worked in a factory) within the framework of a highly industrialized society. At the same time they would be working to serve the needs of everyone else for if we are to maintain our living standards, this is the only way it can be done. (The function which the "small businessman" of today could serve is described in a later chapter.) Three: they would no longer have to put up with unnecessary "wants." Four: those among them who would

122Lefty Morgan, Enough.
123A Practical Example, p. 77.
accept the responsibility of co-ordination and supervision and were at the same time qualified people, would likely have already been elected or would be slated for office. Five: those among them who wanted power for the sake of being powerful would be waiting. And I see no reason why they shouldn’t continue to wait! Six: they would control their own work pace, production quotas and working conditions [emphasis in original].

Beyond the workplace he wrote about how wealth is produced and why distinctions of labour, capital and ownership could be rethought:

Little wealth can be produced without tools. In the productive process, tools take the center of the stage. The more intricate they are, the more man is fascinated by them. Control of those tools has, many times influenced the course of history .... Only labour applied to raw material through manufacture makes possible the machine that fashions objects without assistance from human hands. This is an inescapable, fundamental, never-to-be-forgotten fact. Tools of any sort from stone axe to computer are labour appearing as capital.

For the same reason that the surplus crop of the ancient farmer belonged to him, surpluses created in modern industry are considered owned by the owners of the industries. However, the argument that a surplus, over and above the needs of research, development, and all the other expenses of a business should fall into the hands of private persons, will not wash. It stands to reason that all existing wealth is the result of the labour of men who are mostly unknown to each other. The total wealth present at any one time is there not through the conscious co-operation of men. Each part of that wealth is made by men to serve their individual purposes for, in producing the wealth, wages were received which permitted them to live.

The focus on cooperation originates in the workplace.

A concern for work pervades all of Morgan’s social thinking. This is likely due to the fact that he never forgot the dirty thirties. Remember that work as a massive social problem re-surfaced in the 1930s when many were unable to provide for themselves and their families. Many people felt that a new type of society had to be built.

While World War II and the post-war prosperity eliminated work as a survival problem, Morgan continued to be concerned about work and in the wider social issues of the day. In short, A Practical Example, while focussing on the labour process in the running trades, has a wider relevance — the control by those whose lives are affected most and cooperate to get the job done in the wider society. For Morgan, concrete solutions derived from the workplace but the main aim was the development of democratic institutions. As Noam Chomsky, with whom Morgan probably would have agreed, has put it:

In general, I think that if a movement for social change does develop, it will involve many strata of the population with very different outlooks and interests, very different needs, but I hope, needs that can be related and made compatible.

As an organic intellectual, Morgan had a remarkable vision and the gift to put his experiences into action. It is to be hoped that his work will be widely shared.

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124 Lefty Morgan Papers, Enough.
125 Lefty Morgan Papers, Enough.
126 Rinehart, The Tyranny of Work, 3-4.
127 Noam Chomsky, Radical Priorities, (Montreal 1990), 205.