

“Those who do nothing  
have no share in the  
honour coming to Canada.  
We need conscription, not  
only of bodies but of wealth.”

— JOSEPH E. ATKINSON (1917)

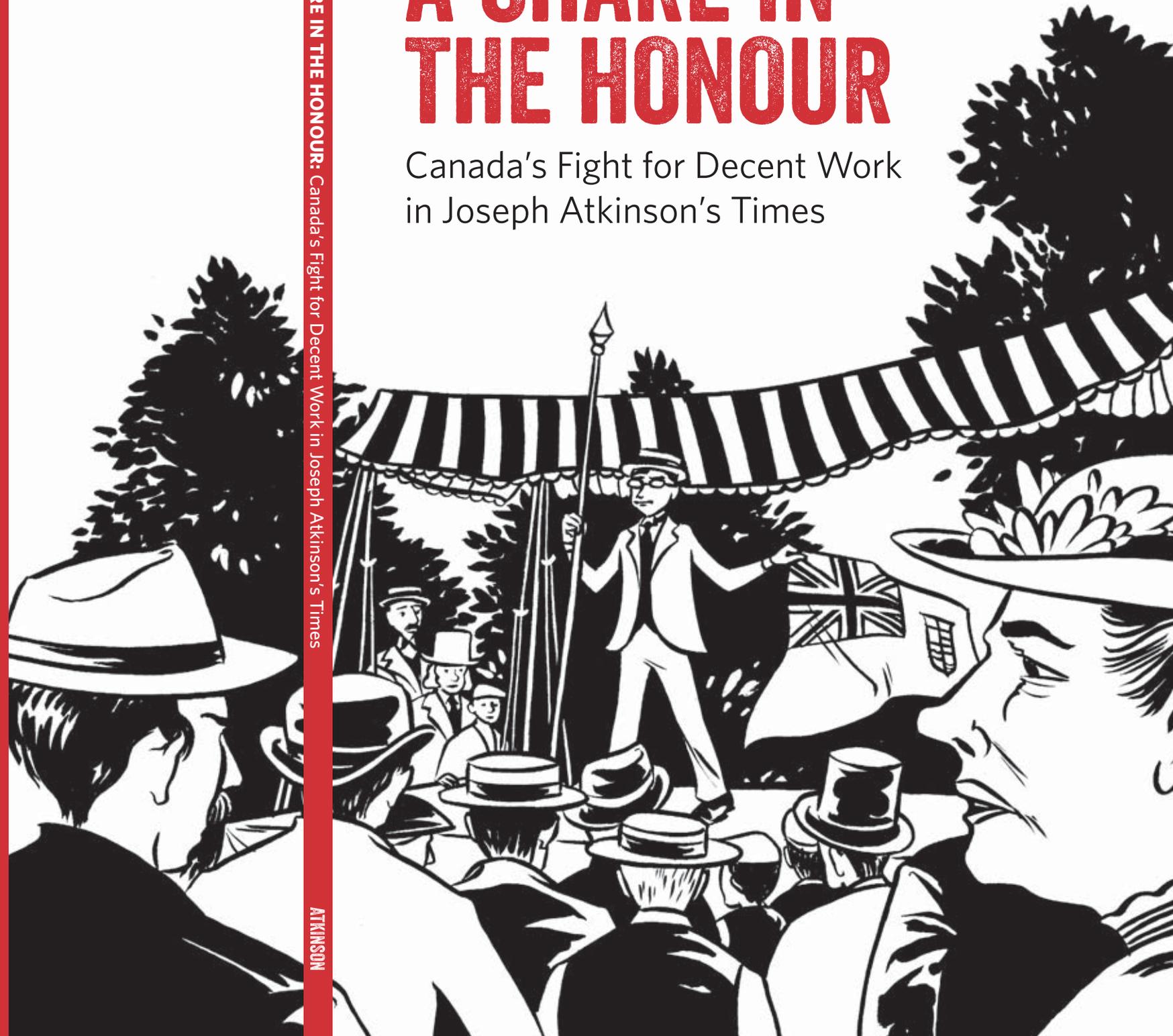
*A Share in the Honour: Canada's Fight for Decent Work in Joseph Atkinson's Times* is a story about catching a vision of what's possible and what must be done for future generations to have decent lives. It reminds us that too often pain comes before progress. It spans the lifetime of a principled 20th century journalist who built “a paper for the people” to shine a light on injustice and to be a light on the road to a better society. But mostly, it's a cautionary and hopeful tale for our times – an invitation to roll up our sleeves for the next round in the fight for decent work, to challenge the unfair distribution of work and wealth in our 21st century world, and to accept a share of the honour coming to Canada if we win.

**ATKINSON**  
FOUNDATION

A SHARE IN THE HONOUR: Canada's Fight for Decent Work in Joseph Atkinson's Times

# A SHARE IN THE HONOUR

Canada's Fight for Decent Work  
in Joseph Atkinson's Times



ATKINSON

The Atkinson Foundation strengthens movements  
for decent work and equitable economic development.  
Learn more about our agenda, community and progress  
at [www.atkinsonfoundation.ca](http://www.atkinsonfoundation.ca).



To the people who fight  
for decent work,  
social and economic justice,  
and humanity above all.

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Atkinson Foundation  
1 Yonge Street, Suite 702  
Toronto ON M5E 1E5  
Canada

[www.atkinsonfoundation.ca](http://www.atkinsonfoundation.ca)

# A SHARE IN THE HONOUR

Canada's Fight for Decent Work  
in Joseph Atkinson's Times



Six months before Joseph Atkinson turned 75, he won the biggest fight of his life. The bill to create an unemployment insurance program passed first reading in the House of Commons after receiving all-party support in principle. The decision was “thirty years a-coming,” wrote Atkinson in his editorial in the *Toronto Star* on that day in 1940. It completed a list of social measures that represented “much hope and striving on the part of many individuals and groups,” he said.

Anyone else might have been ready to put down their pen and to savour this moment, secure in the knowledge that they had done their share and had earned their retirement – but not Atkinson. No, he knew the route between the introduction of legislation and Royal Assent would be circuitous and lead to decades of implementation challenges. There was also the unfinished business of health insurance. A national consensus was years away while a second world war posed an immediate threat to the lives and livelihoods of working people. There was no shortage of work to do but he was suddenly short on time. On the edge of 75, Atkinson was likely thinking less about politics and more about persistence and posterity when he established a foundation in 1942.

Now that we’re 75, we too have heard a call to renewal. From the start, Atkinson looked to the Rockefeller Foundation to help him figure out the business of philanthropy. When we had questions about the value of anniversaries, we did too. Anniversaries are “a good moment to recommit to what should never change,” explained Rockefeller’s President Judith Rodin during their centennial in 2012. “Imbue your commemoration with the understanding that looking back can be more than mere nostalgia for the past. It can inform a whole body of work for the future.”

In commissioning this graphic novella, we were seeking this kind of relationship with history. We’ve come out of this process stronger, better somehow. More confident in what never changes and radically open to what must. More curious about the movement for decent work that began long before Joseph Atkinson was born and will continue long after our turn in the arena is over.

Reading this book helped us see the similarities and differences between his times and ours more clearly as well as the depth of our privilege and the limits of our knowledge. We were distressed by who’s

missing from the historical record, whose voice is silent, who had the most and least powerful roles, and who got the credit or took the blame. But we were also reassured that this present moment is more about listening and learning to inform action than fixing and setting others straight.

At 75, this exercise has been about strengthening our muscles for the next round in the fight for decent work. Asking if we need to redefine employment insurance as a means to pool risk within a changing labour force. Getting behind the Fight for \$15 and Fairness to modernize Ontario's employment standards and labour laws. Testing promising new tools for equitable economic development like community benefits and anchor institution strategies. Calling for big investments in early childhood education, pharmacare, pensions, and affordable housing. Stepping into coverage deficits during transitional times for journalism and our democratic institutions.

While no one can predict the future or change the past, everyone can learn from reflecting on both. The gift of this anniversary season has been the opportunity to do this. If this book also inspires you to reflect on your contribution to the decent work movement, it will have served its purpose. We look forward to hearing what you take away from the experience and how you plow it back into growing a country everyone can be proud of.

COLETTE MURPHY

Executive Director  
Atkinson Foundation  
October 2017

1865 Joseph Atkinson is born to John and Hannah, the youngest of their eight children.

1869 Atkinson's father dies. His mother moves her family to Newcastle where she runs a boarding house.

1872 The Toronto Printers Strike takes place as part of the Nine Hour Day Movement to standardize shorter workdays and to win the right to organize workers into unions.

The *Trade Unions Act* is passed in Parliament legalizing labour unions.

1879 Hannah dies. At 14, Atkinson withdraws from school to work in a woolen mill.

1884 Atkinson becomes the sole employee of the *Port Hope Times* owned by J.B. Trayes.

1887 Jimmy Simpson becomes an activist to stop the running of streetcars on Sundays.

1888 Atkinson meets columnist and reporter Elmina Elliott while working at the *Toronto Globe*.

1891 A mine explodes in Springhill, Nova Scotia.

1892 Atkinson marries Elmina Elliott. (April)

Striking Toronto printers and their apprentices launch *The Evening Star*. (November)

1894 Labour Day is declared a federal public holiday.

*The Evening Star* raises money from readers for a bread fund but has trouble staying afloat.

1896 Frederic Nicholls buys the paper to support industry interests. Circulation falls and many of the founding printers quit.

1899 Atkinson is offered the editor's job at the *Montreal Star* but turns it down.

Atkinson becomes the Editor of *The Evening Star*. (December)

1900 *The Evening Star* changes its name to *The Toronto Daily Star*.

Parliament passes the *Conciliation Act* establishing the right to strike and the federal Department of Labour.

1909 Atkinson sends Simpson to Cape Breton to cover the coal miners' strike.





1912 Atkinson introduces the “Swat the Fly Contest” to educate the public about the health risk posed by flies – one of many campaigns the *Star* mounted during his years as its publisher.

1914 The *Ontario Workmen's Compensation Act* is adopted.

1917 Atkinson returns to his hometown of Newcastle to pay his respects to soldiers conscripted to fight in the First World War. He calls for the conscription of wealth to go along with the conscription of manpower.

Sir John Eaton accuses Atkinson of being a Bolshevik for supporting a wealth tax. He pulls his department store's ads from the *Star*. A year later, having lost sales, he relents.

1919 30,000 workers participate in the Winnipeg General Strike to fight for better wages and working conditions – the largest single labour action in Canada's history.



1930s During the Great Depression, Atkinson runs “Work Wanted” ads for free in the *Star*.

1937 Atkinson helps negotiate a settlement when Oshawa GM workers go on strike and Ontario Premier Mitch Hepburn threatens to use force to end it.

1940 Prime Minister Mackenzie King introduces the first compulsory national unemployment insurance system. It comes into effect in 1941.

1942 Atkinson sets up a charitable foundation in his name to promote social and economic justice in keeping with the Atkinson Principles.

1948 Atkinson dies. He bequeaths the *Star* to the foundation so that its profits can be directed toward the causes that defined his life.

1949 The *Charitable Gifts Act* passes preventing Ontario-based charities from owning more than 10% of a business and thwarting Atkinson's wishes.

1958 The *Star* is sold to five families who form a company to operate the paper according to the Atkinson Principles. The proceeds from the sale are transferred to the foundation.

2009 The *Charitable Gifts Act* is repealed and replaced by Section 10 of Ontario's *Good Government Act*.



**H**istory is a shape-shifter. Challenges revisit us in unfamiliar guises. Here are some scenes from Canada in 2017.

At a university in Toronto, a liberal arts professor ends his lecture to sophomore students, reminds them when their essays are due, and heads out of the ivy-draped college. He takes the streetcar west to Parkdale and reports for his shift as a night manager at a fast food restaurant. Like most of his PhD colleagues, he has been classified as a sessional instructor and paid on a course-by-course basis. Without the restaurant gig, he would not make his rent.

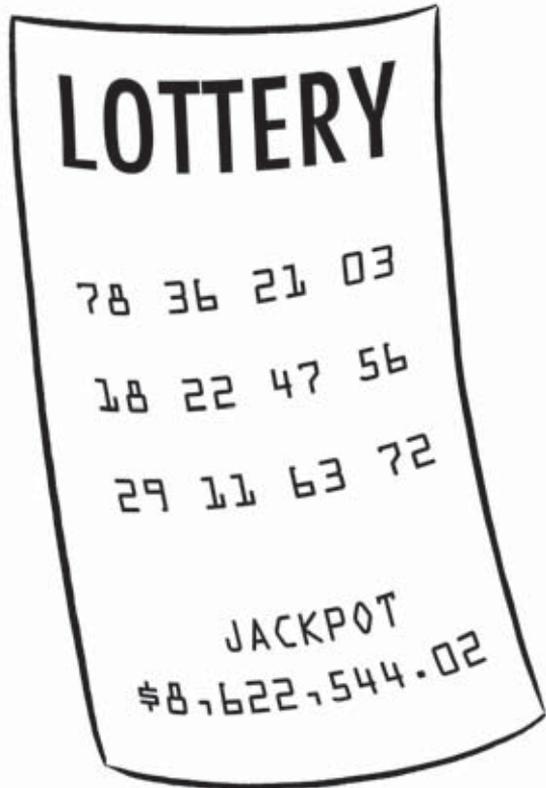
A student in his course also exits the college and heads uptown to Yorkville. She has a part-time job in a clothing chain to cover tuition and living expenses. But her managers have new software to track sales flows and reduce labour inefficiencies by scheduling employees on a week-to-week basis. Sometimes, they give her only four hours at minimum wage. Unable to earn enough to survive, the student – like 10 per cent of Canadian students – has started working as a Sugar Baby. She makes ends meet by keeping older men company.

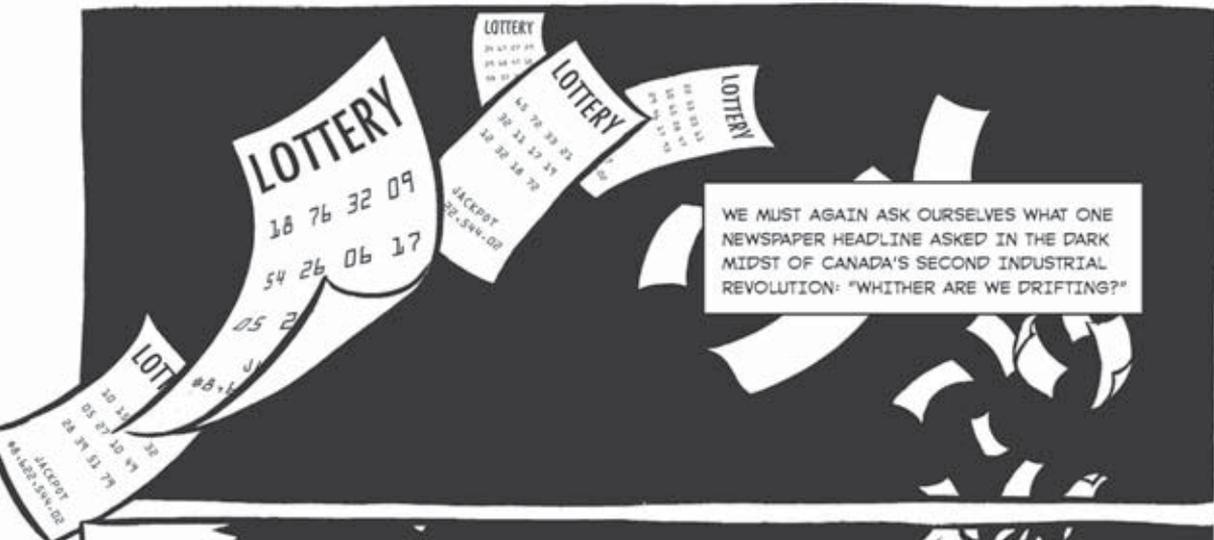
A cleaner arrives at the school for a night shift as the professor and student leave. It wasn't that long ago that he was the one studying for exams and delivering lectures at the university in his homeland. Forced to seek political asylum, he was told Canada welcomed highly educated refugees and immigrants. While the door opened for his family, it closed quickly upon his arrival. He had to choose between his own dream and his dream for his children. Regularly, he takes extra shifts to compensate for low wages and an irregular part-time schedule but can't imagine ever making enough to secure his family's future.

A journalist covers the story of the university professor, his student and the man who cleans their college. She is freelancing because jobs in her field are disappearing. She is asked by editors of blogging sites to write this story for free. She has tried to retrain for a high demand job, but such programs are offered only to those on employment insurance. As a freelancer, she doesn't qualify for EI – Canada's only decent work program. And so, she cracks open her Registered Retirement Savings Plan. She sinks a little further into credit card debt.

All four of these people used to be quiet about their predicament because they didn't know what to say. They never imagined that people with university degrees could become the working poor. They're becoming

more vocal about their reality and getting organized to fight for decent work while an increasing number of people turn to food banks, move in with family or friends, empty savings accounts, and buy lottery tickets.





WE MUST AGAIN ASK OURSELVES WHAT ONE NEWSPAPER HEADLINE ASKED IN THE DARK MIDST OF CANADA'S SECOND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: "WHITHER ARE WE DRIFTING?"



IN 1917, NEWSPAPERMAN AND SOCIAL REFORMER JOSEPH ATKINSON WAS THINKING A LOT ABOUT THIS QUESTION IN THE LIGHT OF HIS TIMES.



ATKINSON HAD RETURNED TO HIS HOME TOWN OF NEWCASTLE TO PAY HIS RESPECTS TO THE LOCAL SOLDIERS CONSCRIPTED INTO THE FIRST WORLD WAR. HE CALLED FOR AN INCOME TAX TO SUPPORT VETERANS AND WIDOWS.

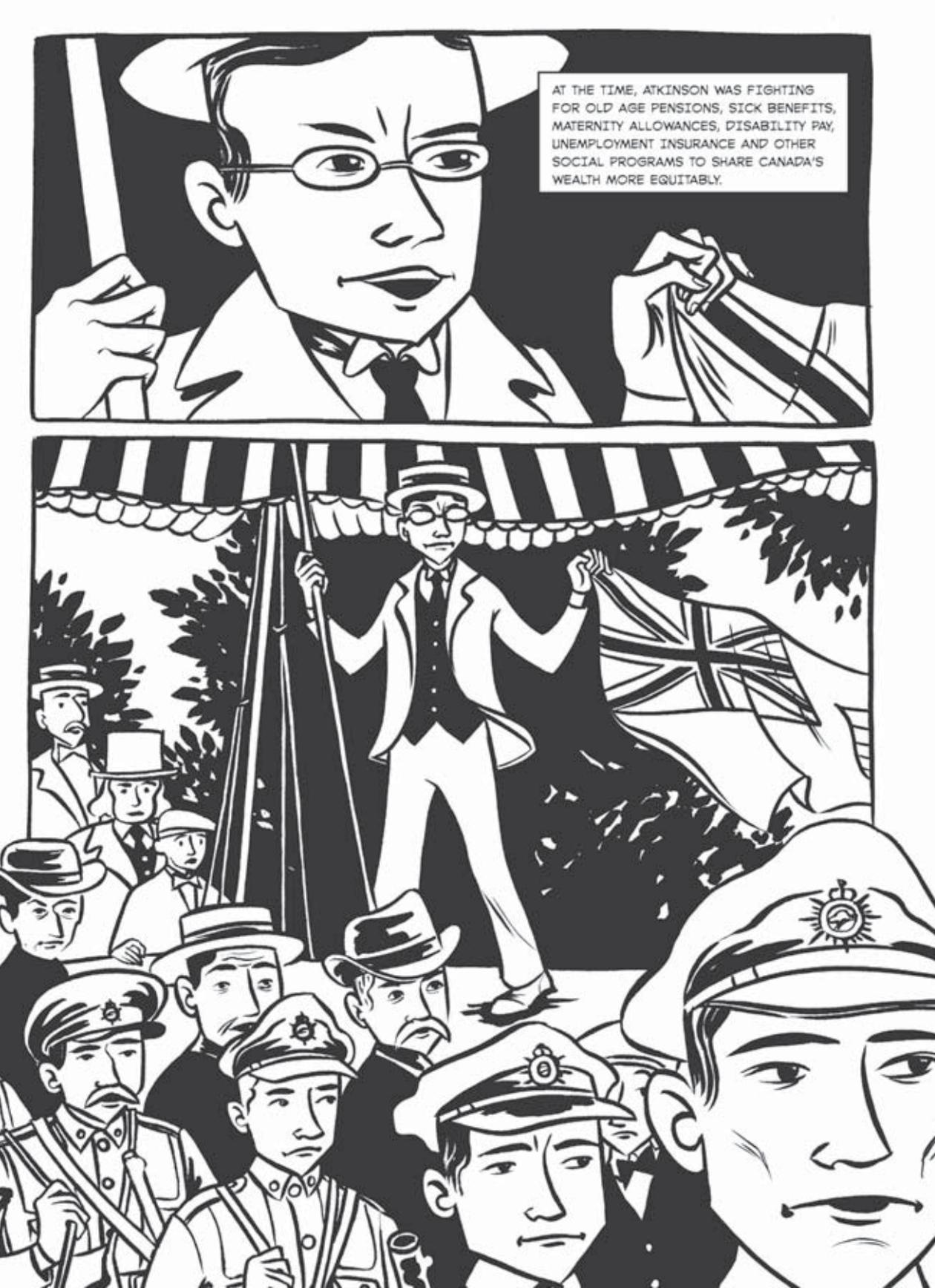
THOSE WHO DO NOTHING HAVE NO SHARE IN THE HONOUR COMING TO CANADA. WE NEED CONSCRIPTION, NOT ONLY OF BODIES BUT OF WEALTH.

BOO

BOO

CLAP

CLAP



AT THE TIME, ATKINSON WAS FIGHTING FOR OLD AGE PENSIONS, SICK BENEFITS, MATERNITY ALLOWANCES, DISABILITY PAY, UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AND OTHER SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO SHARE CANADA'S WEALTH MORE EQUITABLY.



CANADA'S YOUNG MEN, HOWEVER PROUD, WERE BEING ASKED TO SAIL WITH LITTLE SUPPORT THROUGH ROUGH, UNCHARTED SEAS.



ATKINSON WASN'T BORN TO THIS WORLDVIEW. FEW WERE IN 19TH CENTURY CANADA. HE RESPONDED TO THE GALE FORCE OF INDUSTRIALIZATION BY ENVISIONING A MORE HUMANE NATION.

JOSEPH ATKINSON WAS BORN IN 1865 IN WHAT WAS THEN UPPER CANADA.

LIKE 86 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION THAT YEAR, HIS FAMILY LIVED IN A RURAL COMMUNITY.



THEY PLOUGHED THEIR OWN FARMS AND RAN THEIR OWN SHOPS, BARTERING WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURS AND HELPING EACH OTHER MAKE ENDS MEET.



THEY HAD NO IDEA WHAT WAS COMING.





WHEN JOSEPH WAS AN INFANT,  
HIS FATHER JOHN WAS KILLED  
BY AN ONRUSHING TRAIN.

JOHN'S WIDOW, HANNAH, RAN A BOARDING HOUSE IN NEWCASTLE WHERE SHE RAISED JOE AND HIS SEVEN SIBLINGS.

1869

A SHAME WE CAN'T EAT OUR MEALS AT THE IRON FOUNDRY. IT'S SO HOT INSIDE WE COULD FRY BREAD ON THE SHOP FLOOR.

HAVEN'T EATEN SINCE DAWN.

ALL DAY LONG WE WORK IN THE FIRES OF HELL JUST TO KEEP FROM STARVING AND WE STARVE ANYWAY.



1872

INDUSTRIAL LABOUR SERVED THE INTERESTS OF BRITISH EMPIRE. FEW CONSIDERED ITS IMPACT ON WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

THERE ARE MARCHES IN THE CITIES, THEY SAY. THEY'RE DEMANDING A NINE-HOUR DAY.

AND WHO'S LISTENING? THE BOSSES JUST LAUGH.

AIN'T THAT SO. THEY'LL TOSS THE LOT OF THEM IN JAIL.



WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HANNAH ATKINSON TOLD HER CHILDREN ABOUT THIS NEW AND BRUTAL WORK. THERE SEEMED NO OTHER WAY TO SURVIVE.



1879

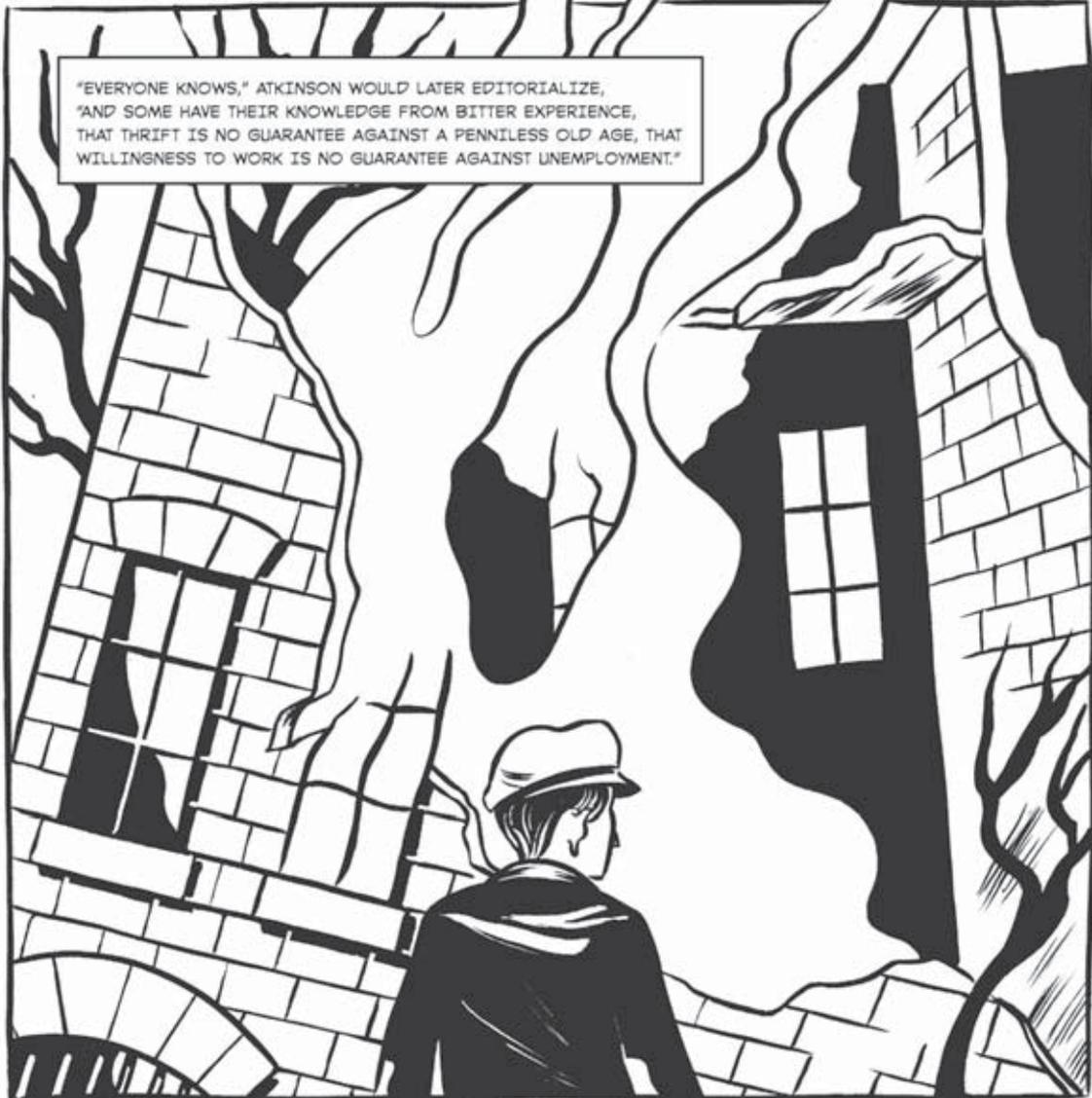
WHEN HANNAH DIED, HER 14-YEAR OLD SON WITHDREW FROM SCHOOL TO WORK IN A WOOLEN MILL.



THE MILLS, LIKE THE FOUNDRIES, WERE RIFE WITH RISK. NEEDLES WENT THROUGH FINGERS. ARMS WERE SWEEPED INTO MACHINES. THE PROSPECT OF A FIRE WAS EVER-PRESENT.



WITHIN A YEAR, THE MILL BURNED DOWN. ATKINSON WITNESSED WORKERS FORCED INTO DESTITUTION.



"EVERYONE KNOWS," ATKINSON WOULD LATER EDITORIALIZE, "AND SOME HAVE THEIR KNOWLEDGE FROM BITTER EXPERIENCE, THAT THRIFT IS NO GUARANTEE AGAINST A PENNILESS OLD AGE, THAT WILLINGNESS TO WORK IS NO GUARANTEE AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT."

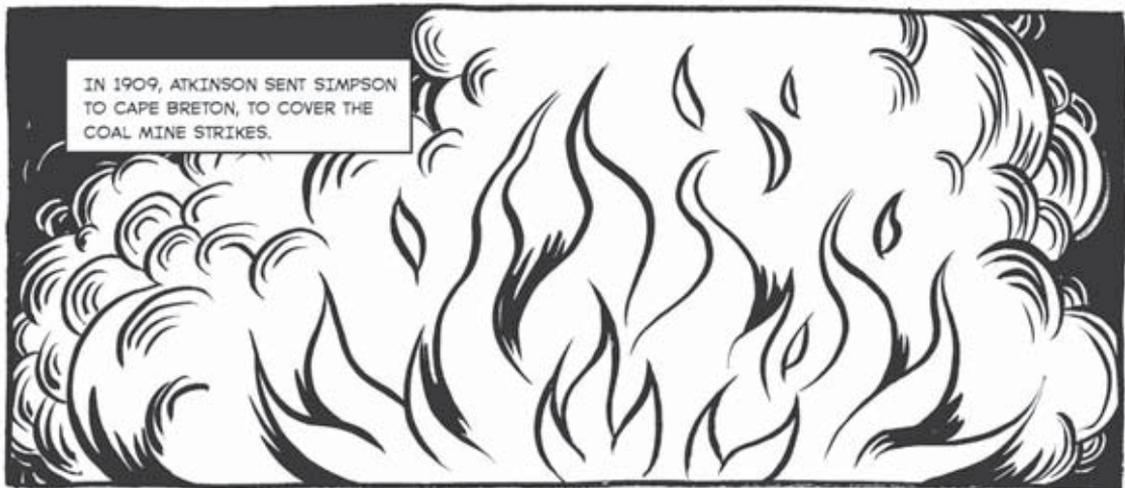


IN ATKINSON'S YOUTH THIS WAS A RADICAL IDEA THAT REFRAMED WHAT MOST PEOPLE BELIEVED TO BE TRUE.

THE SHOCK OF THIS NEW LANDSCAPE IS CAPTURED IN THE TALES OF THOSE WHO WOULD WORK WITH ATKINSON, SUCH AS JIMMY SIMPSON -- A FUTURE MAYOR, LABOUR LEADER AND STAR REPORTER.

THE HANDSOME AND GREGARIOUS SIMPSON HAD IMMIGRATED TO TORONTO FROM LANCASHIRE AT THE AGE OF 14.







IN THE BITTER WINTER OF FEBRUARY 1891,  
A MINE EXPLOSION IN SPRINGHILL, NOVA  
SCOTIA SCATTERED ADOLESCENT WORKERS  
LIKE SHRAPNEL.

17 BOYS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 DIED  
ALONGSIDE 102 MEN. THE MINING COMPANY  
WAS NEVER HELD TO ACCOUNT. IN THIS NEW  
AND CONFUSING AGE OF INDUSTRY, TERMS  
OF EMPLOYMENT WENT UNQUESTIONED.



WE TOLD YOU  
THIS JOB WAS  
DANGEROUS!

GRAVELY INJURED CHILDREN WERE SCOLDED  
FOR BEING RECKLESS AS IF LACKING THE  
CHARACTER TO BE COMPETENT WORKERS.

IN THE AFTERMATH, A YOUNG  
SURVIVOR GAVE VOICE TO HIS  
AWAKENING TO A NEW WORLDVIEW.



CONSIDER ALL  
THE WRECKED HOPES  
AND ACHING HEARTS  
OF YOUTHFUL  
MANHOOD.

WE ARE  
SUFFERING FROM  
EFFECTS THAT ARE  
THE RESULTS OF OUR  
IGNORANCE OF  
POLITICAL  
ECONOMY.



WORKERS' ANGER AND FEAR WERE  
ARTICULATED BY ARTISTS AND POETS  
LIKE CAPE BRETON'S DONALD FRASER.

WHEN THE MINES  
CLOSED DOWN THAT  
WINTER...

...HE HAD  
NOTHING LEFT  
TO EAT...

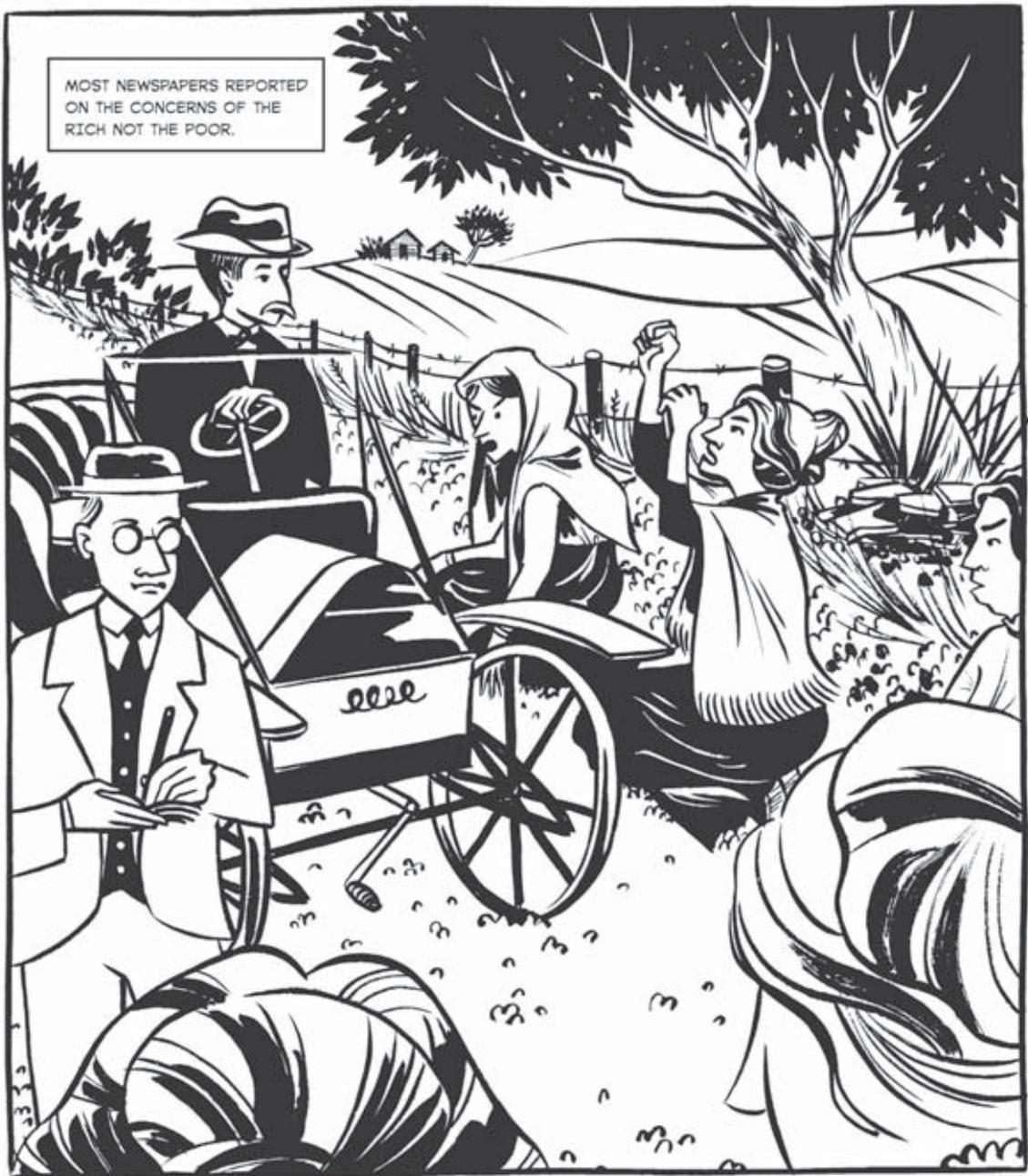


...AND HE STARVED,  
HE STARVED,  
I TELL YOU...

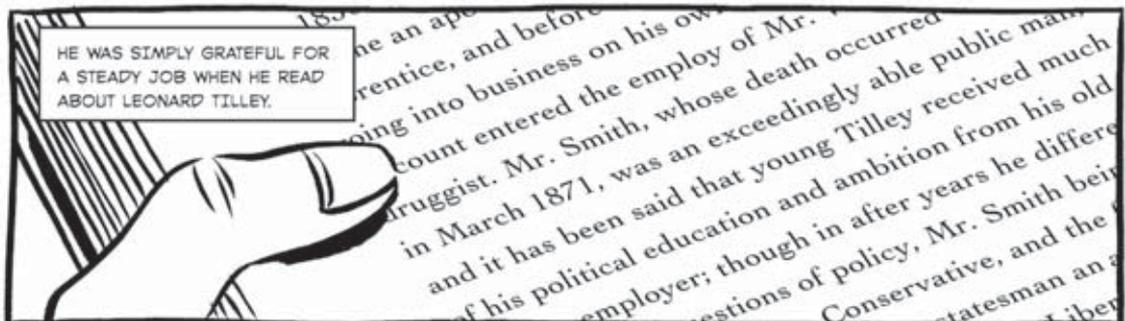
...ON YOUR  
DIRTY, DAMNED  
STREET...

BY THE TIME JIMMY SIMPSON ARRIVED TO REPORT ON THE STRIKES OF 1909 AND 1910 FOR THE STAR, THE WIVES OF THE MINERS WERE KNEELING IN THE ROADS, FURIOUSLY CALLING UPON GOD TO BURY STRIKEBREAKERS IN RUBBLE.

MOST NEWSPAPERS REPORTED  
ON THE CONCERNS OF THE  
RICH NOT THE POOR.



BUT THE STAR WAS DIFFERENT. JOSEPH  
ATKINSON HAD CAUGHT A VISION OF WHAT  
WAS POSSIBLE AND WHAT MUST BE DONE.



TORONTO, ONTARIO. 1888.

IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DO MORE THAN SURVIVE, JOSEPH LEARNED. HE SOON BEGAN TO RISE THROUGH THE RANKS OF JOURNALISM AND DISCOVERED HE HAD A GREAT DEAL TO SAY.





ELMINA ELLA SUSANNAH ELLIOTT WAS BORN IN 1867 — THE YEAR CANADA ENDED ITS COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITAIN. SHE GREW UP IN MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE CIRCUMSTANCES THAN HER HUSBAND.

THEIR CHILDREN, JOSEPH AND RUTH, WOULD BE AMONG THE FIRST OF THEIR GENERATION TO HAVE A MOTHER WHO WAS A JOURNALIST AND AN AWARD-WINNING POET.



ELMINA ATKINSON BELONGS TO A TIME OF EARLY FEMINISM IN CANADIAN MEDIA WHEN WOMEN JOINED MALE COLLEAGUES IN EXPOSING INJUSTICE.



I UNDERSTAND YOU NEED A NEW MAID.

THIS WAY, MISS.

SHE WENT UNDERCOVER, POSING AS A DOMESTIC SERVANT IN SEARCH OF WORK, AND AS AN ELDERLY IMPOVERISHED WOMAN SEEKING AID FROM THE WEALTHIER CHURCHES.



LIKewise, JOURNALIST ALICE FREEMAN OF THE TORONTO EMPIRE SOUGHT ASYLUM IN A WOMEN'S SHELTER TO REPORT ON CONDITIONS.



FREELANCER ALICE AMELIA CHOWN DOCUMENTED CHILD LABOUR PRACTICES, WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND STRIKES.



IN KINGSTON, JOURNALIST AGNES MAULE MACHAR PENNED THE FIRST CANADIAN NOVEL FEATURING A LABOUR UNIONIST AS HERO.

IF THERE IS A WRONG TO BE REDRESSED, OR A WARNING WORD UTTERED, I THINK THAT WE SHOULD ALWAYS BE READY WITH OUR PEN.



OUT WEST, FRANCIS MARION BEYNON EDITED WINNIPEG'S INFLUENTIAL PRO-LABOUR PUBLICATION, THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE.

ELMINA AND JOSEPH STRENGTHENED EACH OTHER'S CONVICTIONS.



IN 1899, ATKINSON WAS OFFERED THE TOP EDITING JOB AT THE CONSERVATIVE MONTREAL STAR.

THEY WANT ME TO TURN MY BACK ON WORKING PEOPLE.



NOTHING GOOD COMES FROM THAT ANYMORE. LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENED AT THE EVENING STAR!



THE EVENING STAR HAD BEEN FOUNDED BY STRIKING TORONTO NEWS PRINTERS AND THEIR APPRENTICES IN 1892.



OCTOBER, 1892.

MACHINES WERE REPLACING SKILLFUL HUMAN CRAFT AND DEPRESSING WAGES IN MANY INDUSTRIES.



WE NEED A SECURE WAGE. WE'VE MOUTHS TO FEED!

FACE FACTS, HORATIO. THE TYPOGRAPH CAN DO THE WORK OF THREE MEN!



IF THEY DON'T GUARANTEE OUR PAY WE WILL STRIKE!

THERE ARE PLENTY OF IDLE MEN SEEKING WORK.

IN RESPONSE, ABOUT TWO DOZEN OF THEM, INCLUDING FUTURE MAYORS JIMMY SIMPSON AND HORATIO HOCKEN, LAUNCHED THEIR OWN STARTUP.



# THE EVENING STAR.

A PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE

THE EVENING STAR, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1892.

ONE CENT.

FOR PROHIBITION.

A FLYER FOR BUFFALO

OVER THE OCEAN.

REVISION COURT PROGRAM

WORLD OF SPORT

## THE OWNERS OF THE NEWS SEEMED EAGER FOR A FIGHT AND THEY ARE HAVING IT.

The announcement that the News had thrown its men out was heard with astonishment in labor circles. The workingmen had supported the paper for years, through good report and bad report, and by the influence it wielded through them it became prominent and profitable to its owners. But through the difference that would have amounted to but \$18 a week added to the pay sheet, its faithful employees were turned out of doors. The Star has opened up positions for them. Among them are some of the ablest workmen in town and they are all men who stand well in the city.



\* THE PRESS IS TELLING OUR STORY!



IN 1894, THEY RAISED MONEY FROM READERS FOR A BREAD FUND, BUT KEEPING THE PAPER ITSELF AFLOAT IN A DEPRESSION WASN'T EASY.

FREE  
HOT LUNCH.



STAUNCH TORY FREDERIC NICHOLLS BOUGHT THE PAPER IN 1896 TO SUPPORT INDUSTRY INTERESTS. CIRCULATION FELL AND MANY OF THE FOUNDING PRINTERS QUIT IN DISGUST.





GOOD TO SEE YOU, SENATOR.

AND HERE'S OUR YOUNG NEWSPAPERMAN.

TORONTO LIBERALS DECIDED TO BUY THE FLOUNDERING EVENING STAR TO SUPPORT SIR WILFRID LAURIER. ATKINSON AGREED TO BECOME ITS EDITOR WITH TWO STIPULATIONS.



FIRST, I ACCEPT YOUR OFFER OF \$5,000 AS AN ANNUAL SALARY BUT I WANT \$3,000 IN CASH AND \$2,000 IN SHARES.

SECOND, I WILL DO IT ONLY IF IT ACTS SOLELY IN ITS OWN INTEREST AS A NEWSPAPER ENTERPRISE.

A NEWSPAPER IS A GOOD ALLY BUT BECOMES USELESS

AS THE SUBSERVIENT ORGAN OF ANY PARTY.



WHO WOULD DECIDE WHAT IS IN THE PAPER'S INTEREST?

I WOULD.



DECEMBER 13, 1899  
— ATKINSON TAKES  
THE STAR'S HELM.

AS PEOPLE MOVED IN GREAT NUMBERS INTO CITIES, THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS HAD DISCOVERED BY THE 1890S THAT INTENSE PARTISANSHIP COST POTENTIAL READERS.

ATKINSON KNEW A FREE PRESS HAD A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN A DEMOCRACY THAN A PARTISAN PAPER.

MR. MARSH,  
PERHAPS YOU CAN TRY  
YOUR HAND AT SPORTS  
WRITING.

MR. SIMPSON,  
I'D LIKE YOU TO  
BRING THE WORKING  
MAN'S VIEWPOINT  
TO CITY HALL.

HE SENSED AN OPPORTUNITY  
TO CREATE SOMETHING  
COMPLETELY NEW.

ATKINSON ENGAGED THE GROWING CITY THROUGH REPORTING, DIALOGUE AND PARTNERSHIP.



HE SENT HIS SMALL CADRE OF REPORTERS INTO THE CITY SLUMS NEAR HIS OFFICE...



**BAM!**  
**BAM!**



...AND DISPATCHED FREELANCERS TO COVER CANADIAN SOLDIERS CONSCRIPTED INTO THE BOER WAR.

FUTURE PRIME MINISTER MACKENZIE KING FREELANCED FROM LONDON BEFORE BECOMING CANADA'S FIRST DEPUTY MINISTER OF LABOUR IN 1900.

FEW IN THE CONVENTIONAL PRESS REPORTED ON THE COMMON PERSON'S EXPERIENCE OF WAR OR WORK.



HE MOUNTED PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS LIKE THE FLY-SWATTING CONTEST IN THE SUMMER OF 1912.



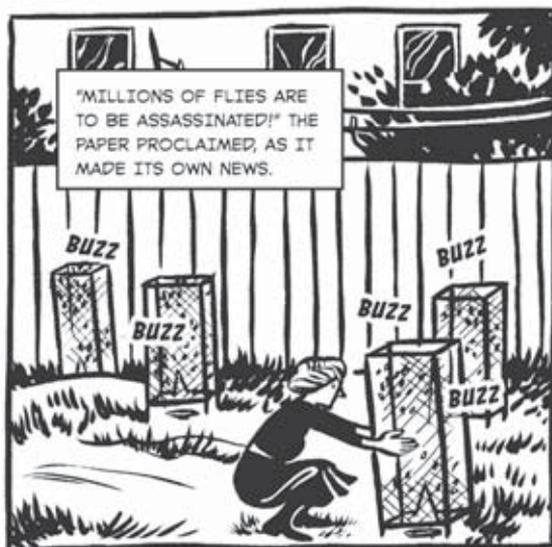
PRIZE MONEY OF 25 DOLLARS -- AROUND 650 DOLLARS TODAY -- WENT TO THE BOY OR GIRL WHO COULD KILL THE MOST FLIES.



"REMEMBER THAT THE FLY IS A CARRIER OF DIRT AND DISEASE."



"MILLIONS OF FLIES ARE TO BE ASSASSINATED!" THE PAPER PROCLAIMED, AS IT MADE ITS OWN NEWS.



I SHALL SPEND THIS ON MUSIC LESSONS!

A GAUGE OF THE PAPER'S INFLUENCE WAS THAT ENTERPRISING TORONTO CHILDREN PROMPTLY CAUGHT OVER THREE MILLION FLIES.





BY 1917, ATKINSON HAD BECOME A POWERFUL FIGURE, BOTH THROUGH THE SUCCESS OF HIS NEWSPAPER AND HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH MACKENZIE KING. IT WAS IN THESE YEARS THAT HIS ADVOCACY FOR DECENT WORK AND OTHER SOCIAL REFORMS INTENSIFIED.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION SENT SHOCK WAVES ACROSS THE WORLD, INSPIRING WORKERS AND TERRIFYING INDUSTRIALISTS. PROTESTS SWEEPED ACROSS CANADA, CULMINATING IN THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE.

PEACEFUL MARCHERS WERE, AT FIRST, PROTECTED BY A SYMPATHETIC POLICE FORCE. BUT CITY LEADERS FIRED THE POLICE EN MASSE AND REPLACED THEM WITH SPECIAL CONSTABLES WHO ATTACKED THE PROTESTORS AND PROVOKED A RIOT.





THERE WERE CRACKDOWNS ACROSS CANADA. IMMIGRANTS SUSPECTED OF COMMUNIST SYMPATHIES WERE DISMISSED AND DEPORTED AS "RADICAL ALIENS"...



... SOMETIMES VANISHING WITHOUT A TRACE AFTER BEING TAKEN FROM THEIR HOMES.



GROUPS THAT MET TO DISCUSS NEW IDEAS IN PUBLIC SPACES COULD BE CLUBBED AND DISPERSED.

THREATENING MESSAGES APPEARED IN THE CITY.



### The Frozen Breath of Bolshevism

If Bolshevism comes to Canada it will do there what it has done in Russia and what it seeks to do in Germany.

*Liberty* will be destroyed, because Bolshevism means that one class shall rule over all other classes.

*Property* will be confiscated without payment to its own house, your household belongings if you do not own a savings in the bank, your Victory Bonds - you will lose all

*Food* will be put beyond the reach of all except those who can seize it

BOOKS BY AUTHORS AS DIVERSE AS MARX, PLATO AND MARK TWAIN WERE BANNED.

WE'RE SOCIALISTS!

WE'RE TRADE UNIONISTS!

YOU'RE BOLSHEVISTS!

YOU'RE ANARCHISTS!

YOU'RE CRIMINALS AND COMMUNISTS!

WITH SO MANY LABELS FLYING AROUND, IT WAS HARD TO COMMUNICATE THAT FAIR WORKING CONDITIONS WERE REASONABLE, NOT RADICAL.



AS AN OBSERVER OF THE TURMOIL, ATKINSON CALLED FOR PRACTICAL LABOUR REFORMS THAT COULD FEND OFF A WORKERS' REVOLT MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN THE FRANTIC POLICING OF IDEAS.

OF ALL THE CAUSES OF POVERTY THE GREATEST IS LOW WAGES!

THESE ARE THE FACTS!

WHY IS HE RABBLE-ROUSING?

AND BLAMING US FOR THE LOT OF THE POOR?

WEALTHY BACKERS AND RIVAL PAPERS WERE TAKEN ABACK BY HIS POSITION.

OTHERS MOCKED HIM FOR HIS HIGH PRINCIPLES BY CALLING HIM "HOLY JOE".

THEIR CARTOONISTS DEPICTED HIM AS AN EVIL, HUNCHED-OVER MAN.



JOE, IT'S JOHN EATON. I NO LONGER WISH TO ADVERTISE. WE WILL NOT BE CONNECTED TO YOUR RADICAL IDEAS!

4 THE EVENING STAR, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1922

**EATON'S DAILY STORE NEWS**  
EXCEPTIONAL DEALS OF GREAT VALUE

\$10.00 Women's Comfort Shoes

82c. Ruf Toy C

A YEAR LATER, HAVING LOST SALES, THE EATON FAMILY BROUGHT THEIR ADS BACK TO THE STAR.

KNOWING HIS ADVERTISERS NEEDED HIM AS MUCH AS HE NEEDED THEM, ATKINSON DIDN'T HESITATE NOW TO AMPLIFY VOICES ADVOCATING FOR A BETTER WAY.



EVER-WIDENING CIRCLES OF SOCIETY  
WERE WITNESSING THE CRUELITIES OF  
INDUSTRIALIZATION...



...AND HAVING TO SUMMON A RESPONSE.

ATKINSON HIRED EDITORS AND COLUMNISTS LIKE MARGARET GOULD, A JEWISH IMMIGRANT AND ORGANIZER IN TORONTO'S GARMENT INDUSTRY, AND SALEM BLAND, A CONTROVERSIAL CHRISTIAN PREACHER TO SUPPORT THE GROWING MOVEMENT.



WHY SHOULD IT BE CONSIDERED MORE RELIGIOUS TO ATTACK THE SALOON THAN THE SWEAT SHOP?

IF THE RICH ARE NOT WILLING TO GIVE MORE OF THEIR WEALTH TO HELP THE COUNTRY, THEY ARE NOT WORTHY TO LIVE IN IT.

YOU CAN NEVER MAKE UP TO CHILDREN FOR WHAT THEY HAVE LOST IN CHILDHOOD.

WHEN A THIRD OF THE COUNTRY WAS THROWN OUT OF EMPLOYMENT DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION OF THE 1930S, THE NEXT GREAT FIGHT FOR DECENT WORK AND LIVES BEGAN.

FARMERS AND FACTORY WORKERS RODE BOX CARS TO OTTAWA DEMANDING GOVERNMENT HELP.

IT WAS NO LONGER GIVEN THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD SERVE EMPIRE AT THE EXPENSE OF LABOUR. CANADA WAS ON THE RISE.

# GET A MAN A JOB!

**WANTED**

A DECENT JOB.  
Family Man.  
Age 44

**WANTED**

A decent job by a decent man. Age 37.  
Family. Paying on home. College trained.

**JOB WANTED.** Dec  
Paying on home. Co

Age 39.

ATKINSON BEGAN TO RUN "WORK WANTED" ADS FOR FREE IN THE STAR.



OUR WORK IS HELL. NO REST PERIODS!

WE'RE AFRAID TO COMPLAIN FOR FEAR OF BEING LAID OFF PERMANENTLY!

WE'RE ONLY WORKING SIX MONTHS A YEAR. SO-CALLED LABOUR EFFICIENCIES ARE ONLY IN THE COMPANY'S INTEREST.

WHEN OSHAWA'S GM WORKERS WENT ON STRIKE, ONTARIO PREMIER MITCH HEPBURN THREATENED TO CALL IN A PRIVATE ARMY.

HARSH BULLY TACTICS NO LONGER HAD CREDIBILITY. ONTARIO'S MINISTER OF LABOUR RESIGNED TO PROTEST HIS OWN PREMIER'S ACTIONS.



ATKINSON WORKED HARD TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT.

MR. PRIME MINISTER, WE MUST HAVE MEASURES TO MAKE WORKING PEOPLE MORE SECURE.

I KNOW, BUT GM WILL PROSPER IF WORKERS ARE TREATED FAIRLY. WE CAN FIND A COMPROMISE.

IF YOUR UNION IS SEEN AS LOCAL, NOT INTERNATIONAL, THINGS WILL GO BETTER WITH GM.

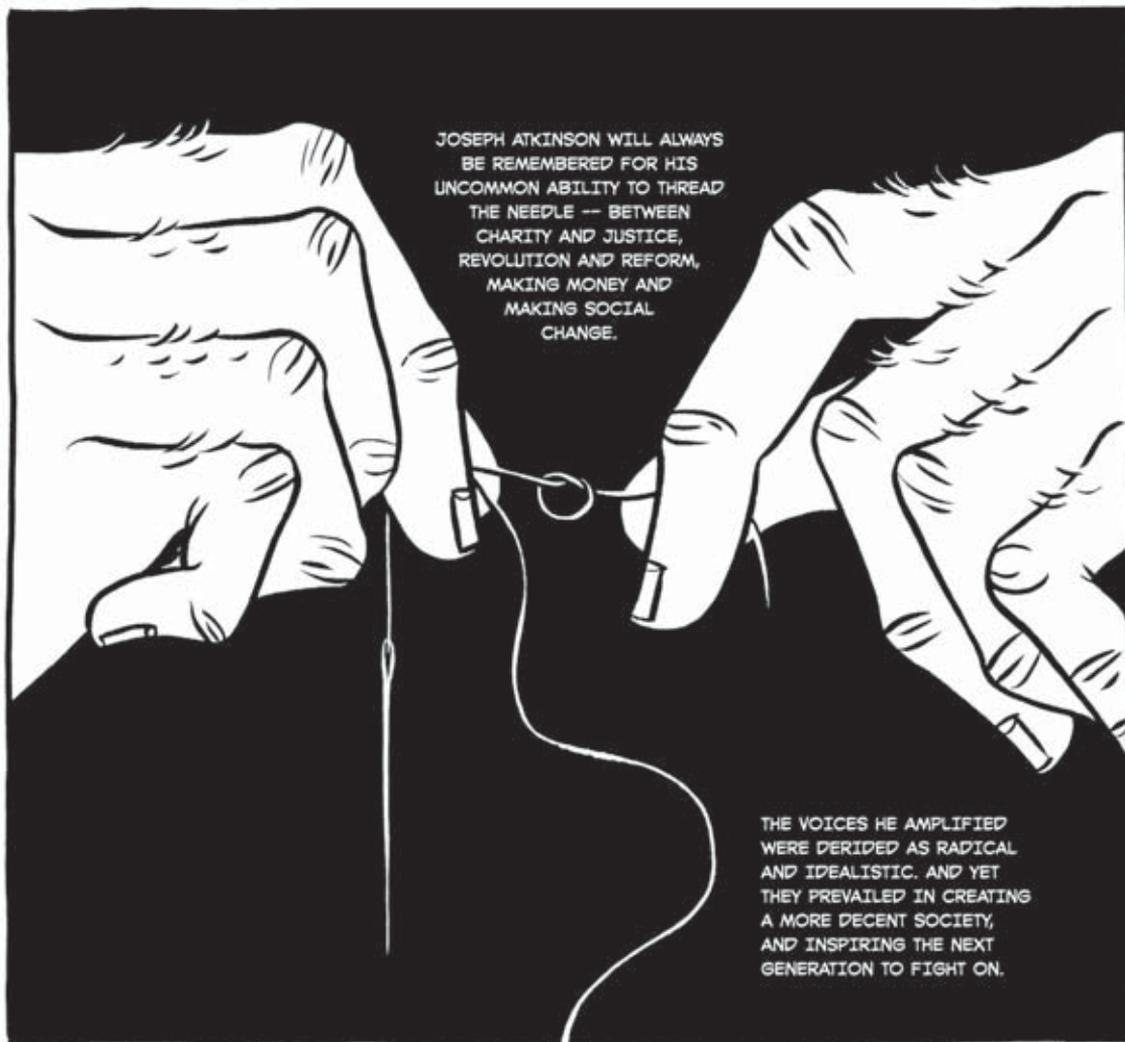




PRIME MINISTER MACKENZIE KING INTRODUCED UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE IN 1940 -- FOUR DECADES AFTER JOSEPH ATKINSON AND OTHER SOCIAL REFORMERS STARTED ADVOCATING FOR IT.

YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS HEARD YOU. CANADA NOW HAS PENSIONS FOR VETERANS AND THE ELDERLY, A WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION PROCESS, AND LABOUR STANDARDS.

BY THE TIME OF JOSEPH ATKINSON'S DEATH IN 1948, THE COUNTRY WAS WELL ON ITS WAY TO OVERCOMING THE WORST CONSEQUENCES OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.



JOSEPH ATKINSON WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED FOR HIS UNCOMMON ABILITY TO THREAD THE NEEDLE -- BETWEEN CHARITY AND JUSTICE, REVOLUTION AND REFORM, MAKING MONEY AND MAKING SOCIAL CHANGE.

THE VOICES HE AMPLIFIED WERE DERIDED AS RADICAL AND IDEALISTIC. AND YET THEY PREVAILED IN CREATING A MORE DECENT SOCIETY, AND INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION TO FIGHT ON.

**B**efore Joseph Atkinson died, he willed the Toronto Star to the charitable foundation he established in 1942. His aim was to “return the paper to the people” by directing a percentage of its profits to the ongoing fight for social and economic justice.

The provincial Progressive Conservatives were in power at that time. Rumours swirled through Tory circles that the paper was going to be “fixed.” Sure enough, in 1949, Queen’s Park passed the *Charitable Gifts Act* to prevent Ontario-based charities, including the Atkinson Foundation, from owning more than 10% of a business unlike their counterparts in other provinces. This rule was changed in 2009 to reflect more modern attitudes toward social finance and social enterprises.

The provincial government won the fight over the ownership of the *Star* sixty years earlier, but not the battle over the Atkinson legacy. Five families bought the paper for \$25.5 million and continued to uphold its editorial policy – now known as the Atkinson Principles:

- A strong, united and independent Canada
- Social justice
- Individual and civil liberties
- Community and civic engagement
- The rights of working people
- The necessary role of government

The foundation received the proceeds of the sale and its board adopted the Atkinson Principles as its own. To this day, these principles guide the foundation’s grant-making, advocacy and investment decisions.

The value of the foundation’s endowment broke \$83 million in 2017. The interest generated by investments now flows back into the communities where 21st century advocates fight for decent work with the same zeal, determination and confidence as Joseph Atkinson, Elmina Elliott and other 20th century social reformers. Together, we are not only making change. We are standing firm in the rip currents of history – unyielding to any force that threatens to pull communities apart.

From where we stand, we can’t predict the future of work although we can make a few bets. The emergence of the digital economy will continue to disrupt lives and livelihoods. New technologies are already eroding job quality, wages and benefits, and the fundamentals of workplace democracy. Many workers are discouraged about prospects for

retraining and worried that there will be more job losses than net gains from automation. There is little evidence that returns on technological breakthroughs will be shared equitably even though innovators depend on public investment to get them to market.

We're challenged to raise the stakes – to build the power required to change this reality. As in the past, it's time to organize people and assemble a strong set of policy options to steer the country toward its vision of decent work and to live out our shared values. These options must deliver to everyone fair wages and working conditions, appropriate housing, a renewed employment insurance program, a national pharmacare program, a significant investment in early childhood education, and pensions for income security at the end of our working lives.

Ingenious public policies will give Canada the best of both worlds: all the benefits that come from progress and work that comes with dignity and a reliable income. This is what we want for the university professor, the student, the cleaner, the journalist and everyone whose lives are now precariously perched in the “gig economy”. But also for those who have never known the security attached to a unionized trade or professional degree – migrant workers, domestic workers and all those who have been members of “temp nation” long before their story was told on the front pages of the *Toronto Star*.

In these first decades of a new century, the movement for decent work is stronger than ever. It includes organized labour and many workers who have never thought of themselves as activists before. Journalists, lawyers, economists, academics, business owners, migrant workers, caregivers, students, faith-based leaders, health care practitioners, community advocates, early childhood educators, and philanthropists like the Atkinson Foundation are getting organized in record numbers to use their economic and democratic power to create better public policies – and to make history once again.

These activists are the ones who type the fiery op-eds and speak from the stage at rallies now. They're calling each of us to become a shareholder in the public good rather than a stakeholder in pursuit of a private interest. They're carefully threading the needle between caring for people and caring for the planet.

Those of us who decide to do nothing – well, Canada will be poorer for this choice. Whoever is ready to do their share, however, will be long remembered for their courage with respect and gratitude.



## Acknowledgements

Canada's 20th century social reformers could not be honoured in this 21st century way without a team of exceptionally committed and insightful creative professionals. Graphic novelist and illustrator Willow Dawson collaborated with journalist Patricia Pearson and historian Jon Weier to create this graphic novella. Designer Kelsey Blackwell took it through the design and production process. The Atkinson Foundation's Pat Thompson and Ausma Malik worked together – from conception to completion – to make sure these powerful stories reach a new generation of decent work activists. They engaged a thoughtful group of community organizers, communicators and educators who were among the book's first readers and contributed several ideas to the final version. This project stands on the historical platform built in 1963 by Ross Harkness, the author of *J. E. Atkinson of the Star*, and Michael Pieri who chronicled Joseph Atkinson's "social crusades" in 2005 and 2008. This was the first time the foundation has told stories about complex people, events and times in this format. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone who believed it was possible and then worked tirelessly to prove it was.