

POPULISM IN ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN:

A comparative analysis of Social Credit  
and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation

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## Summary

The thesis compares the political development of Social Credit in Alberta and the CCF in Saskatchewan. Data was collected to assess each party against the main features of populism, a political movement which is a product of the impact of capitalism on the small producer and in which opposition is directed against an external group, the virtue of the common people is emphasized, control over political institutions is advocated by some form of direct relationship between leader and people, and the ideology is reformist rather than revolutionary. All these characteristics were found in the Social Credit and CCF movements although the former was authoritarian in organizational structure, the latter more democratic. The CCF in Saskatchewan was considered to be socialist only for its first two years, after which the need to appeal to a rural, land-owning electorate led the party in a conservative direction. Both parties are seen as popular responses to experiences of deprivation during the depression of the thirties. The greater severity of destitution in Saskatchewan produced a hopeless apathy which accounts for the later emergence of the CCF as a popular party. Social Credit and CCF populism is interpreted as the radical side of the oscillating political attachments of a disunited petite bourgeoisie. Even within the agrarian sector of the class, radical and conservative



orientations persisted side by side, the balance swinging during periods of depression towards the radical pole. The authoritarian Social Credit League developed out of the failure of an earlier democratic populism to solve the problems of depression in Alberta. Saskatchewan had always been controlled by parties identified with eastern capitalism. For this reason the two types of populism were able to develop in neighbouring provinces at the same time. Recent industrialization has led to a decline of the rural petite bourgeoisie and of populist politics.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

"In order to understand men's conduct and experience we must reconstruct the historical social structures in which they play roles and acquire selves."

(H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills)

#### 1.1. The Research Problem

In this century the prairie provinces of western Canada have been the homeground of radical political organizations which have controlled the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan. It is the task of this thesis to explain the political development of Social Credit and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in these provinces.

The growth of populism in the middle west of the United States during the latter years of the nineteenth century is well known to students of political sociology. This has been described as the radicalism of small entrepreneurs in reaction against their perceived exploitation by large scale capitalism. This populism was concerned to use the power of the state to reform the capitalist system in order to provide appropriate rewards to the common people who produced the wealth and whose way of living was considered morally superior. Later I shall have occasion to refer in greater detail to American populism, in particular to the Nonpartisan League of North Dakota. Less well known, although there is a

substantial literature of individual studies, are the radical political developments in western Canada during this century; this despite the fact that the Social Credit League formed the government of the province of Alberta from 1935 to 1971, while in Saskatchewan the CCF provided the official opposition in the legislative assembly from 1934 to 1944, after which it governed the province for twenty years. It has been customary to interpret the CCF as an agrarian socialist party and the Social Credit League as a form of right wing reactionary populism.<sup>1</sup> In the 1968 edition of "Agrarian Socialism" Martin Lipset concluded that, "There has not yet been an adequate explanation, or even a detailed descriptive account of the factors involved that resulted in such different reactions from two quite similar social units."<sup>2</sup> Since then two studies have at least taken a comparative perspective to the development of prairie politics, but these studies contribute little to the problem which Lipset set out. In "Democracy and Discontent", a slim volume of secondary analysis, Walter Young reconstructs the history of the Progressives of the nineteen twenties, the CCF (which is treated as a national movement) and Social Credit in Alberta. However, each political development is treated in isolation, no attempt being made to present

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<sup>1</sup>There have been some exceptions, but these are the dominant interpretations since S.M. Lipset wrote his "Agrarian Socialism" in 1950. Future reference will be to the revised enlarged edition, New York, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. xxii.

an explicit comparison.<sup>3</sup> David Smith's brief paper has the merit of being the only explicit attempt to compare the political development of Alberta and Saskatchewan.<sup>4</sup> However, his contribution amounts to stating that Canada's federal system of government made separate development possible:

"...the federal structure permitted new movements to seek power locally without concern for national success. It also permitted such different movements as the C.C.F. and Social Credit to exist and flourish side by side."<sup>5</sup>

While this is true, it does not by itself account for the separate political development of these provinces. Thus the state of research on the topic remains as Lipset described it in 1968.

In the course of the research I hope to demonstrate that differences in party labelling have tended to obscure major similarities between Social Credit and the Saskatchewan section of the CCF. It is a major thesis of the research that, until industrialization wrought changes in the social structure of Alberta and Saskatchewan, both the Social Credit League and the Saskatchewan CCF were political organisations firmly in the tradition of North American populism. It will be recognized that there were differences - differences

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<sup>3</sup>Walter D. Young, "Democracy and Discontent", Toronto, 1969.

<sup>4</sup>David E. Smith, "A Comparison of Prairie Political Developments in Saskatchewan and Alberta", Journal of Canadian Studies, vol. 4, 1969, pp. 17-26.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 24.



primarily in the details of the reform programmes and in the organizational structure of the political parties. Two further themes of major importance in the research are the problems of accounting for (1) the separate expressions of populism in the two provinces and (2) why populism should develop and decline in western Canada. The secondary problem of accounting for the separate development of Social Credit and the CCF as populism in two areas of similar social structure is less daunting than the original formulation by Lipset, which created conceptual difficulties because of a misinterpretation of the extent of socialist influence in Saskatchewan. Such questions of terminology are of more than passing importance because they influence what we define as a problem.

Several other problems of definition should be cleared up before proceeding with the main analysis. In the study I shall frequently refer to the political organizations of the CCF and Social Credit as parties, although Zakuta (and to a lesser degree Walter Young) has claimed that the CCF of the thirties was a movement rather than a party; it is also usual to refer to the Social Credit movement.<sup>6</sup> It is suggested that members and leaders of a movement experience greater commitment to a cause than is true of members of political parties.

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<sup>6</sup> Leo Zakuta, "A Protest Movement Becalmed", Toronto, 1964; Walter D. Young, "The Anatomy of a Party: the National CCF", Toronto, 1969; John A. Irving, "The Social Credit Movement in Alberta", Toronto, 1959.



Both CCF and Social Credit leaders often maintained that they were part of a people's movement rather than a political party; the implication is that movements are morally superior.

However, the social scientist is not obliged to describe actors by using the same categories which they themselves use. Sometimes, particularly with the CCF it can be very misleading. The concept of social movement receives a variety of definitions in the literature. Some definitions are so general that they include political parties and so make impossible the distinction which Young and Zakuta draw between party and movement. For example, Gusfield defines a social movement as "socially shared activities and beliefs directed toward the demand for change in some aspect of the social order."<sup>7</sup> This can include all political parties which are not committed to the status quo. Other definitions are a little more restrictive. Heberle states that the basic criterion of a social movement is that it aims to bring about fundamental changes in the social order, especially in the basic institutions of property and labour relationships. A sense of solidarity and group identity is required but there is no formal organization and no set territory. In the term there is often a connotation of total personal commitment and diffuse support.<sup>8</sup> The criterion that there should be no formal

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<sup>7</sup>J.R. Gusfield, "Protest, Reform and Revolt", New York, 1970, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>R. Heberle, "Social Movements", New York, 1951, p. 3.

organization and no set territory excludes Social Credit and the CCF, since from their founding conventions they had both characteristics.

A political party is a voluntary formal organization with a formal membership, the extension of which defines the boundaries of the organization. It must have a public programme or policy about issues of government. Implicit in the programme must be an intention to participate directly in the formal institutions of government; either existing institutions may be accepted, or the intention may be to construct a new mechanism of government. Thus revolutionary and conservative parties are accommodated by the definition. This is quite close to Neumann's definition, although he requires that parties be in competition, and so makes the concept of the one-party state meaningless. A party is:

"...the articulate organization of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent views."<sup>9</sup>

Pressure groups are excluded from my definition because, although they have membership boundaries and a policy (usually a special interest), they do not operate as part of the formal organization of government.

In all periods of their histories, Social Credit and the Saskatchewan CCF conformed to the definition of a political party presented here. Because they were

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<sup>9</sup>Sigmund Neumann, "Modern Political Parties", Chicago, 1956, p. 396.

concerned with reforming society, they may also be called social movements in the broad sense of the term, and I shall occasionally refer to them in this way. However, it is misleading to oppose the two categories to the effect that the history of the CCF is analysed as a transition from movement to party, because this diverts attention from the pragmatic orientation of the CCF as a political party in the thirties.

### 1.2. The Concept of Populism

The concept of populism is central to the work and requires some explication at this point. Unfortunately it has proved to be among the most elusive concepts in contemporary political sociology. It has been applied to the politics of such disparate groups as North American cash crop farmers, the narodniki of nineteenth century Russia, rural and urban movements during this century in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In 1967 a seminar was held at the London School of Economics in order to arrive at a definition of populism. Participants were to consider whether there is any value in a general concept covering all cases which have been labelled as populist, or whether these cases are distinctly separate to the extent that the general concept should be abandoned. The published papers and comments from this conference provide the most important single source for the analysis of the concept of

populism.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately the end product was a conceptual fog of conflicting ideas. Participants often disagreed about the essential characteristics of the populist movements which they discussed, and were unable at the end of the conference to produce an agreed definition of populism. Those proposed varied from ones which were so general in their emphasis on popular participation as to be equivalent to many definitions of democracy, to those which tended to emphasize the characteristics of the particular movement which the speaker had studied in depth. In part the failure to agree on a definition reflects the difficulty of trying to include in one concept a large number of political movements which developed separately on different continents and without influence on each other. Worsley correctly points out that, except for some nineteenth century American farmers who called themselves populists, the attribute of populism has been conferred by observers on disparate political movements, the members of which do not think of themselves as part of a wider category.

"It may well be, then, that to speak of populism as a genus is to assume what needs to be demonstrated: that movements with very different features, separate in time, space, and culture, do possess certain crucial attributes which justify our subsuming them consciously and analytically under the same rubric, 'populist', despite variations in

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<sup>10</sup> See Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, eds., "Populism", London, 1969; and for a report of the discussion, Government and Opposition, vol. 3, 1958, pp. 137-79.

their other circumstances."<sup>11</sup>

If we are to develop an adequate category of populism it is essential to follow Worsley's procedure of actually investigating what the "examples" throughout the world have in common. However, when we attempt to do this, similarities are found only at a highly abstracted or general level. Attempts to be more specific seem doomed. As an informative example, we may take the paper by Peter Wiles, to whom populism is:

"...any creed or movement based on the following major premiss: virtue resides in the simple people, who are the overwhelming majority, and in their collective traditions. I hold that this premiss causes a political syndrome of surprising constancy, albeit with now more, now fewer, socialist overtones."<sup>12</sup>

Wiles' syndrome contains a list of 24 characteristics of populism, and he recognizes that no single case will have all of these. While this is to be expected in all ideal type constructions, it is less acceptable that, for most hypotheses in the detailed list, we can find examples of political movements which have been classified as populist and which contradict Wiles' assertions. This he himself appears to recognize. It will labour the point if we go through every item in the syndrome, but a few examples may be given. There is little evidence that populism is "moralistic rather than programmatic"; it tends to be

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<sup>11</sup>Peter Worsley, "The Concept of Populism", in Ionescu and Gellner, op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>12</sup>Peter Wiles, "A Syndrome, Not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism", in Ionescu and Gellner, op. cit., p. 166.

both. Not all populist leadership tends to be in "mystical contact with the masses" - there was nothing "mystical" about George Williams of Saskatchewan's CCF or A.C. Townley of the Nonpartisan League. Populist movements are not always "loosely organized and ill disciplined"; they may have closely knit authoritarian structures such as I shall demonstrate for Social Credit. Elsewhere, Worsley has pointed out that Russian and American populism differed in respects such as the social base of mass membership, the origin of the leadership, and the preferred system of land tenure.<sup>13</sup> The point is that statements which attempt to be specific about the form of organization and ideology of populism must constantly be qualified by exceptions. This does not mean that the category of populism must be abandoned, as long as we recognize that it is a highly general category, which must be qualified in much the same way that categories such as socialism, communism and capitalism must be qualified when we look at specific examples. It is still valuable to know what disparate events and situations have in common.

I shall now attempt to establish several very general populist characteristics. At the end of his review of populism in Russia, North America and the "Third World", Worsley concluded that populism was a "dimension of political culture in general" which referred:

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<sup>13</sup>Worsley, op. cit., p. 243.



"...not only to 'direct' relationships between people and leadership (which must, inevitably, in any complex, large-scale society, be predominantly sheer mystification or symbolism), but, more widely, to popular participation in general (including spurious 'pseudo' participation)."14

However, I believe that this is a more general definition than is either necessary or useful; it casts the term almost as a synonym for democracy. It is more useful to restrict the category of populism, in so far as it refers to participation, to Shils' earlier specification of a particular kind of political participation. Thus I would agree with Shils that, at the most general level, populism involves lauding the virtue of the common people and advocating the supremacy of the will of the people over all opposition; and the belief that a direct relationship between the mass of the people and the political leadership is desirable.<sup>15</sup> The movements which are generally accepted as populist all developed as a response to the impact of the capitalist organization of production on small producers. Populist anger is directed against some outside group which is defined as exploitative. And populist ideology is reformist rather than revolutionary; some writers refer to populism as having a Janus quality.<sup>16</sup> Innovation is

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>15</sup>Edward Shils, "The Torment of Secrecy", London, 1956, pp. 98-104.

<sup>16</sup>E.g., Angus Stewart, "The Social Roots", in Ionescu and Gellner, op. cit., pp. 186-91; A. Walicki, "The Controversy over Capitalism: studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists", London, 1969, p. 22.

accepted provided the intent of the innovation is to modify the existing order by making it more bearable for the common, "simple", people. Occasionally, such innovation (e.g., the setting up of state owned grain elevators in some parts of North America) has taken on a socialist facade, but in populism there is never any commitment to fundamental changes in property relations. Populist ideology reflects a desire to shore up what exists, or even to revert to some imagined golden age.

It will be clear to the reader that this general populist type allows for considerable variation in its components; it may further be biased by my greater familiarity with North American than other populist movements. There is no specification of what special virtue the common people are supposed to have, or how the general will is to become known. There is no specification of how a direct relationship between leadership and mass is to be achieved. It is possible for the relationship to be an authoritarian one, in which the leader, who claims to represent the general will and to have special powers to bring it into effect, is accorded legitimacy and allowed personal control of decision-making provided that he speaks directly to the people. This I shall call authoritarian populism. On the other hand, leadership may be subject to election from the mass, and thereafter to grass roots control exercised through a decentralized organization. The techniques of the initiative, referendum, and recall have been frequently



advocated in this form of "direct democracy", which I shall label democratic populism.

Because populism often involves a critique of the idea of party and other intermediate associations between leadership and the mass, theorists such as Kornhauser and Lipset have seen populism as a threat to democracy.<sup>17</sup> However, they define democracy in such a way as to be equivalent to the institutions of western parliamentary systems. Now populism involves a critique of some of these institutions in that they are seen to stifle and repress the wishes of the mass of the people, yet in so far as one important aspect of democracy is the control by people of their own lives, then populism can be compatible with democracy. However, in its most authoritarian developments, populism can lead to the loss of civil rights, not only of minority out groups, but also of the original mass base of the movement, in so far as the authoritarian leadership can retain power independently of the wishes of the mass. The point is well made by Worsley:

"Populism is certainly compatible with democracy, though this is often denied. In so far as it ignores the need for institutions and pluralism; in so far as it dislikes factionalism; in so far as it distorts social mechanisms which seem to it specialized and bureaucratic, it appears to undervalue the importance, and even the rights, of minorities, and to depart from 'rule of law'. But there is always a tension in our conception of a

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<sup>17</sup>William Kornhauser, "The Politics of Mass Society", London, 1959; S.M. Lipset, "Political Man", London, 1959.

just society between the rights of minorities and the rights of the majority. In so far as populism plumps for the rights of majorities to make sure - by 'intervening' - that they are not ignored (as they commonly are) populism is profoundly compatible with democracy."<sup>18</sup>

Focussing on the leadership, there is no requirement that the populist leader must be, himself, one of the people whose interests he claims to serve. Populist ideology has often been elaborated and brought to the people by intellectuals. Russian populism is the most obvious example, and North American populism the most obvious exception, in that populism there has usually lacked an intellectual spokesman. It has been stated that the ideology is reformist, but this leaves a wide scope for variation in the kind of reforms to be proposed. Populism is a reaction to the impact of capitalism, but the precise nature of the reaction may well be conditioned by the stage in the development of capitalism within the society where populism develops. Finally, populism is directed against an out group (and is prone to conspiracy theories), but this leaves the out group undefined. Among the most common contenders have been colonial capitalist states, monopoly industry and finance, industrial labour unions, Jews and other ethnic and religious minorities.

Populism could be made a more specific category if it were limited to only some of the historical events which have been called populist, but populism for all

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<sup>18</sup>Worsley, op. cit., p. 247.

its imprecision is now so well established in social science vocabulary that no amount of polemic will achieve this limitation. A similar result can be effected by leaving the general category and constructing sub types of populism, based on variations within its components. One such source of variation is the relationship between leadership and the mass of the movement. Differences in organizational control and legitimacy can produce what I have called authoritarian and democratic populism. Another basis of distinction might be the stage of capitalist development. North American populism has been conditioned by the way that large scale capitalist organizations controlled and exploited the small producers in frontier areas; the nationalism of "Third world" populism is a product of the colonial stage of European capitalism. Future reference in the thesis will be restricted to populism as it has appeared in North America. It is beyond the scope of this research to do a full scale comparative analysis of populism and to distinguish all possible sub types. In the following chapters I shall try to show that both Social Credit and the CCF are best described as variants of populism, the former being authoritarian and the latter democratic populism. More than this I shall try to explain the differences between them and to relate western Canada's populism to the social structure. To achieve this task it is necessary to have information on the historical origins of Social Credit and the CCF, on their policies,

support, leadership and organization. Therefore, in chapters two and three I provide a historical account of the development of the prairie frontier region and the response of the farming population to impact of eastern capitalism until the depression of the thirties, the period when both our parties were founded. Chapter four includes a discussion of models for the rise of third parties, in relation to which the impact of the depression on social life in Alberta and Saskatchewan is described. The history of policy and support for both parties until the present is contained in chapters five to seven, after which leadership, legitimation and party organization are discussed. Finally, having presented all the available data which bears on the research problem, each party is assessed in chapter nine in relation to the concept of populism which I have introduced. An explanation is offered for the separate development of Social Credit and the CCF in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the history of the populist movements is linked to other aspects of the social structure.

### 1.3. Research on Class and Politics in Western Canada

Central to the investigation is the relationship between the class position of the farmer and his political involvement. Therefore, as a preliminary to the research, I shall review several attempts to interpret the politics of the prairies in terms of social stratification. Of these the best known is Lipset's

analysis of Saskatchewan.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately his work is unclear because he wavers between nominalist and realist conceptions of class without acknowledging any difference. In the chapter of "Agrarian Socialism" where he deals with the emergence of agrarian class consciousness, Lipset bases his writing on a concept of economic class whereby the class categories are defined by their relation to the market, and he suggests that class consciousness develops through the organized group action of farmers. Such an approach to stratification is realist in the sense that, "It considers social class as a real ensemble defined at one and the same time by material facts and by the collective consciousness which individuals form of it."<sup>20</sup> It is more in the European tradition than in the North American approach to stratification. However, in his class analysis of the social base of CCF support Lipset does not maintain his earlier usage in the same volume. Silverstein adopts the later Lipset approach for his analysis of post war voting behaviour.<sup>21</sup> In the analysis of support we are returned to typical "American" status group categories, as described by Aron:

"Individuals are differentiated from each other by multiple criteria and social status or

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<sup>19</sup>Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>R. Aron, "Two Definitions of Class", translated and reprinted in A. Beteille, "Social Inequality", London, 1969, p. 76.

<sup>21</sup>Sanford Silverstein, "Occupational Class and Voting Behaviour" in Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", op. cit., pp. 435-79.

class is only one among several discriminations determined essentially by psychological phenomena. Each is in the class which is imposed by the idea which others have of the position he occupies. Each has a status which is defined by the esteem of others."<sup>22</sup>

The categories are descriptive of aggregates of individuals and do not carry the implication that the groups so defined are acting units. Thus when students such as Lipset and Silverstein analyse political support, the population is divided into such categories as middle class and working class (where is the upper class?), or manual and non-manual, with an additional category for farmers, who appear to be difficult to fit into anything else. No theoretical justification is given for the system of categorization.

The status categories are based on occupations, which are grouped, then ranked in a hierarchy. However, the position of the farmer in the hierarchy is not clear from Lipset's analysis. Furthermore, as Lipset concedes,<sup>23</sup> the hierarchical position of a person (as defined by occupational status) varies according to the structure of the community of which he is part. For example, a butcher may head the hierarchy in a small prairie village, but not in a large urban area. The ecological analysis of voting by Lipset and others does not allow for such differences in status according to who is doing the perceiving. Although students of

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<sup>22</sup>Aron, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>23</sup>Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", op. cit., p. 200.



stratification have shown that there is considerable consistency across industrialized societies in the ranking of occupations, this should not blind us to local variations. In some communities certain occupations may be ranked differently from the national average. The degree of visibility of the occupation is probably very important. Furthermore, even when all agree that an occupation, such as that of doctor, is of high status, this does not mean that any individual doctor will be accorded high status. His status will be in jeopardy if he does not conform to the expectations which most people have of the role of doctor. Status depends on the viewer and to farmers the occupation of farming would be very high on the status scale. Lipset and Silverstein seem to have ignored this.

The test of any system of categorizing is how much it helps us to explain a problem. To provide an example, Lipset correctly records that there are important differences in political alignment in Saskatchewan between small village business men and farmers. I would argue that these differences are better understood through an analysis of the class positions of these groups and the interaction between them than by using status groupings, particularly since it is impossible to decide from whose point of view the statuses should be assigned. The small village business man is usually a service provider, artisan or retailer. Each is a small entrepreneur who employs

little labour and lives by providing goods or services at a profit. They are committed to capitalism because, as individuals, they aspire to personal advancement through the making of profit from their businesses. Perhaps the retail merchant is the most interesting. He is not a producer but he perpetuates capitalism because in order to survive he must dispose of the products of capitalist enterprise and at a price which is large enough for him to retain a surplus as profit. The alternative of being a wage earning distributor of goods conflicts with his image of self independence. He is further encouraged to perpetuate the status quo because his living is threatened by agrarian co-operatives. During hard times the village middleman is defined by the farmer as a non-productive parasite upon the farmers' labour. Consumers' co-operatives were established by farmers in order to by-pass the village petite bourgeoisie and so take away their base of exploitation.<sup>24</sup> In this context we would expect the villagers to be susceptible to appeals from the Liberals and Conservatives to support the old parties, thus saving the west from "socialism".

However, the very dependence of the village middlemen on the trade with farmers has made them good fodder for reformist groups during depressions, provided that the perpetuation of private enterprise is assured. The

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<sup>24</sup>For a history of consumer co-operatives see J.F.C. Wright, "Prairie Progress", Saskatoon, 1956.



largest purchasing group for the goods and services of the village business man is the farmer and his family. When the price system operates to reduce the purchasing power of the farmer, then the village business man will also suffer. Platforms which propose monetary reform in order to restore purchasing power to the consumer will make a strong impact on this class. In this regard it is important to remember that, although Social Credit (a movement for monetary reform) came to power in Alberta with massive agrarian support, the initial enthusiasm and the secondary leadership came from the petite bourgeoisie of the villages and towns (see chapter 5 below). Also, in 1935, the Reconstruction Party seems to have derived most of its support from small business men who had previously been Conservatives.<sup>25</sup> The CCF found it difficult to win much support from this group because of the CCF's outspoken backing for co-operatives, which contributed to the fear of socialism among the business community.

E.J. Tyler has also tried to analyse the prairie farmers as a social class.<sup>26</sup> Tyler defines a social class as:

"a group, classification or category of people who exhibited, individually and as a group,

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<sup>25</sup>J.R.H. Wilbur, "H.H. Stevens and the Reconstruction Party", Canadian Historical Review, vol. 45, 1964, pp. 1-28.

<sup>26</sup>E.J. Tyler, "The Farmer as a Social Class in the Prairie Region", in M. Tremblay and W.J. Anderson, "Rural Canada in Transition", Ottawa, 1966, pp. 228-322.

distinctive and distinguishable behavioral similarities ascribable to their adherence, either implicit or explicit, to a particular pattern or set of norms."<sup>27</sup>

Thus the class is defined by concerted action and belief. His classes have potential as acting units but there is no reference in this concept to economic relations, which I will now argue is essential to an understanding of western political history.

The most outstanding attempt to analyse the class basis of prairie politics is to be found in C.B. MacPherson's "Democracy in Alberta". This work is basic to the present study. MacPherson considers that the relationship of persons to the productive process - in particular, "how much freedom they retain over the disposal of their own labour, and how much control they exercise over the disposal of others' labour" - provides the most useful way of categorizing people in order to understand political action.<sup>28</sup> Members of a class are liable to develop similar assumptions and outlook, as a result of their common life experience. MacPherson recognizes that this does not mean that all members of a class, so defined, will always be conscious of their class identity and act in terms of it. The petite

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>28</sup> C.B. MacPherson, "Democracy in Alberta", Toronto, 1953, p. 225. A similar interpretation of the class position of the farmer is provided in a recent paper by James McCrorie, "Change and Paradox in Agrarian Social Movements: the Case of Saskatchewan", in R.J. Ossenberrg, ed., "Canadian Society: Pluralism, Change and Conflict", Scarborough, Ont., 1971, pp. 36-51.

bourgeoisie has seldom done so.<sup>29</sup> It is precisely the ambiguity of the class position of this class which allows MacPherson to account for the oscillation of the petite bourgeoisie between conservative and radical politics.

The petite bourgeoisie, as I use the term, refers to the class of small scale entrepreneurs, self employed and employing little or no labour from outside the family. In the present time, as the scale of organized production constantly increases, they form the transitional, marginal remnants of a past era. (I do not intend any pejorative implication when using the adjective petit bourgeois.) The various sections of the class are united only in their insecurity and their belief that they are independent producers, a way of life which should be preserved. The belief in independence, although it is an important determinant of their action, is an illusion because the petite bourgeoisie are subordinate to large scale, labour utilizing capitalism, which controls the price system. The small producer is independent in that he may still retain the capacity to decide for himself when and how to use his own labour.

"From this illusive consciousness, and from their perennial insecurity arises the oscillation between conservatism and radicalism which is characteristic of the petite-bourgeoisie... they are repeatedly driven by insecurity to find a solid base somewhere. So they veer

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<sup>29</sup>See also the debate between MacPherson and Lipset in Canadian Forum, vol. 34, 1954-55, in which Lipset appears to misunderstand MacPherson's position.

between attachment to one class and to the other; or rather, different sections of the whole class veer at different rates of speed and it may be in different directions at different times, depending on changes in their own position and on changes in the political outlook and action of the other classes."<sup>30</sup>

While I agree with MacPherson that the petite bourgeoisie is usually divided as a class and does, from time to time, adopt radical postures (or at least sections do), this radicalism is never revolutionary. It must be reformist in character, never challenging the system of private property relations, except where "unfair" profit taking is thought to take place. Monopolies are fair game for attack. Although insecure, and severely damaged by price depressions which they cannot control, the petite bourgeoisie, as producers of commodities, remain committed to the capitalist system of property ownership. However, at times, the impact of large scale capitalism is such that certain sections of the class become fertile ground for the generation and support of populist reform movements, which promise to erase the ills of the existing system. Social Credit and the CCF are understandable as political movements of the petite bourgeoisie of Alberta and Saskatchewan in response to the pressures created by eastern capitalism, which challenge local ideals of independence and threaten, for the farmer, his ownership of the land.

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<sup>30</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., p. 226.

1.4. Farmers and the Changing Class Structure,  
1921-1961

This section may be treated by the reader as an appendix; it is intended to demonstrate the continuing petit bourgeois character of prairie agriculture and the changing position of the class in relation to other classes over time, in so far as this is possible from demographic data. (All tables referred to are in appendix A.) In 1953, C.B. MacPherson wrote:

"The typical prairie producer has been from the beginning an independent operator of an individual or family enterprise; he has not been reduced to the status of a wage-earner dependent on employment. The extent to which this independence has been maintained is shown in the analysis of the class composition of the Alberta economy...."<sup>31</sup>

MacPherson then analysed the class composition up to 1946, the date of the last census for which results were available to him. This section will extend his work in two ways. In the first place, it will be extended in time to 1961, in order to bring the data more up to date. This will enable me to demonstrate that the quotation above no longer stands because the processes of industrialization and urbanization have reduced the predominance of the petit bourgeois producer. The typical producer is now a wage earner. Secondly, a comparative dimension will be added, since the thesis is concerned with comparing the political development of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Although several writers have

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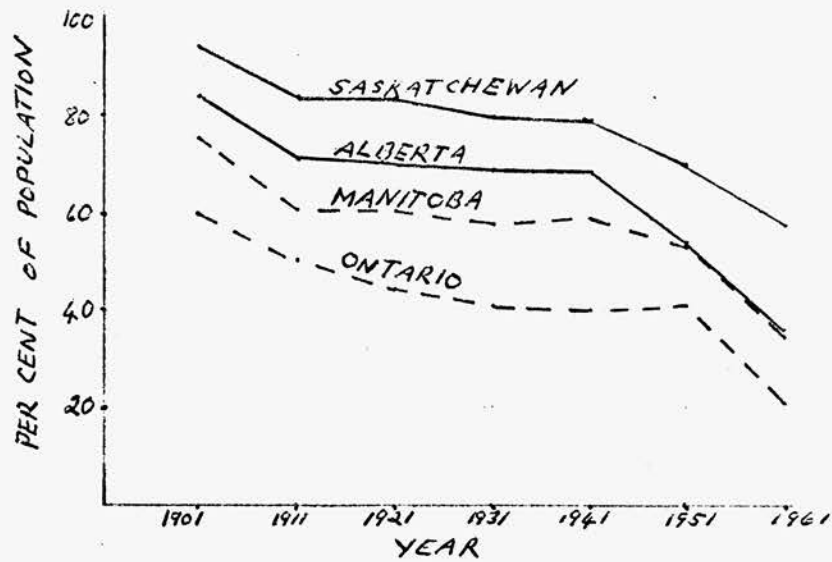
<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

stressed the similarities of social structure between the provinces, it would be extraordinary if no differences were to occur, but the assessment of the significance of these differences is a difficult question. To facilitate this, similar data has been collected for Manitoba (because it completes the prairie region) and Ontario (the long settled metropolis).

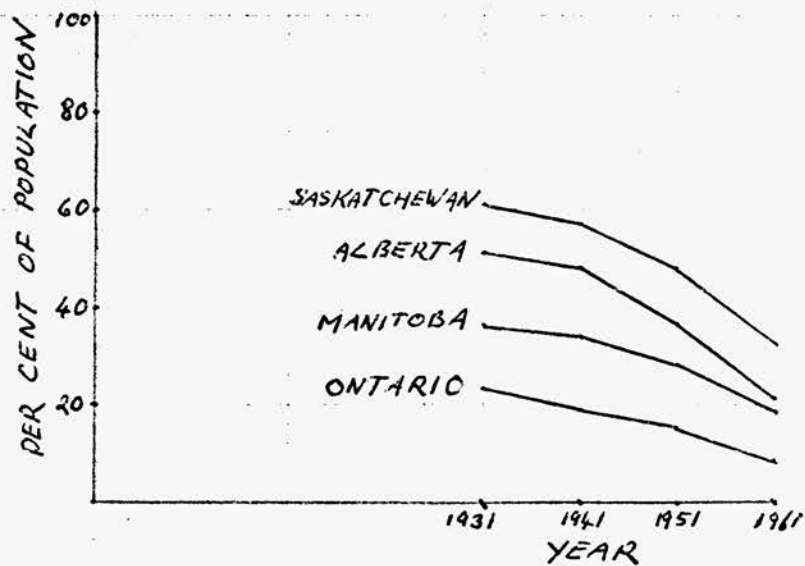
All prairie provinces experienced a rapid growth in population during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Then Saskatchewan's population actually fell from 922,000 in 1931 to a low of 832,000 in 1951. It has since recovered to 925,000 in 1961. During the time when Saskatchewan was losing people, the populations of Alberta and Manitoba continued to expand, Alberta showing the highest rate of growth. The changes in total population have been accompanied by a decline of rural areas relative to urban ones, as rural people have moved into the cities. There has generally been a rapid acceleration of this trend since 1941 (graph 1). The decline of the rural farm population has been following this trend in each of the provinces surveyed, with Saskatchewan remaining the most rural, Ontario the most urban, and Alberta having caught up with Manitoba in urbanization. Only about 20 per cent of the people of the latter two provinces now live on farms. Although Alberta was settled later than Saskatchewan, it has had a higher proportion of urban residents since 1901. Manitoba has been dominated by



7. 1. a) Percentage of the population living in rural areas.



b) percentage of the population living on farms.



Source: calculated from data in Appendix A, Table 1.

the Winnipeg metropolitan area, which now includes more than half the people of the province. The structure of agriculture in the west has also changed as witnessed by the decline of the rural farm population in absolute numbers despite an increase in the acreage of improved land. Now the main task is to assess the importance of changes in the strength of independent producers as a class in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Using census data up to the 1946 Census of the Prairie Provinces MacPherson was able to show that the dominant class in Alberta was the class of small independent commodity producers (*petite bourgeoisie*).<sup>32</sup> Using longer term data it is possible to demonstrate that this is no longer true for Alberta; that Saskatchewan, throughout the time period covered, has been more dominated than Alberta by the farming *petite bourgeoisie*, although by 1961 this dominance had also been severely eroded in Saskatchewan; that Ontario exhibited a very different structure of agriculture from either and was urbanized much sooner; and that Manitoba has generally occupied an intermediate position between Alberta and Ontario.

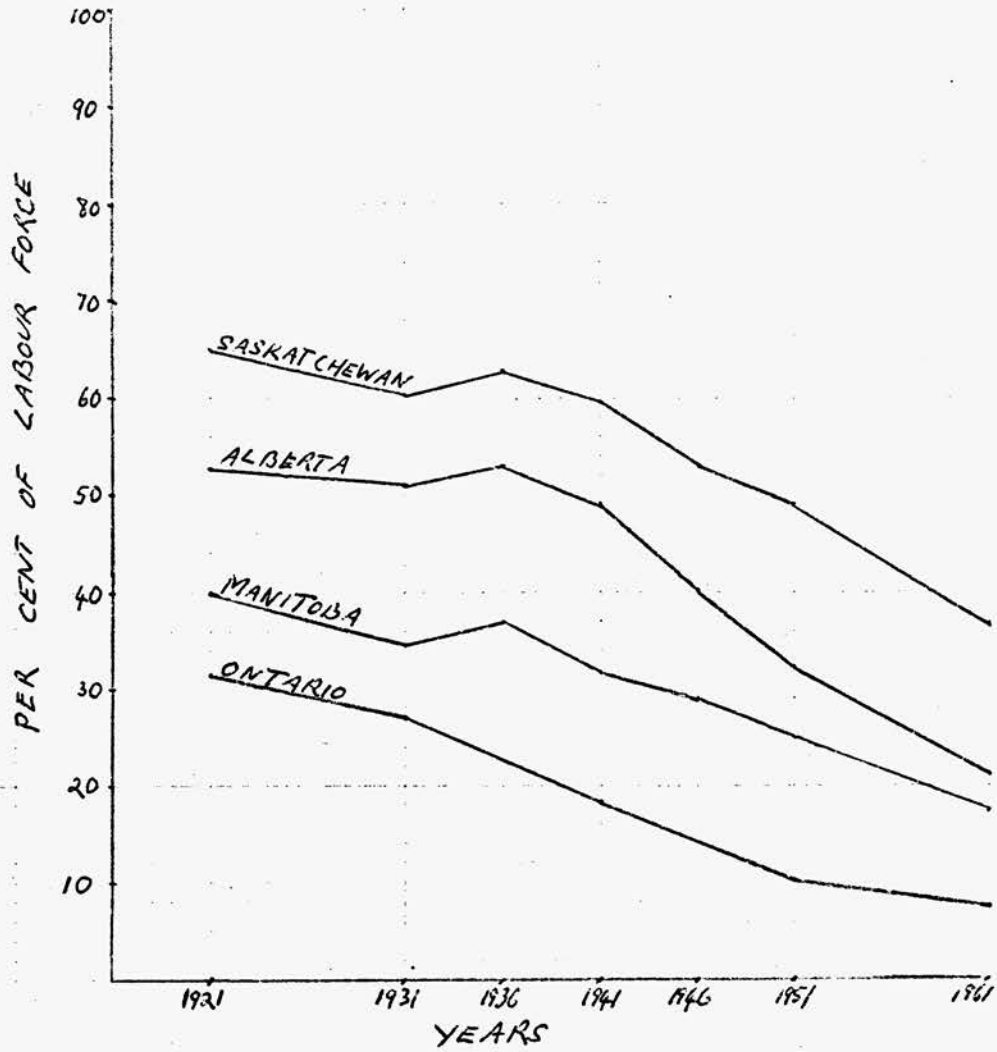
Graph 2 shows the percentage of the labour force which is employed in agriculture. In all provinces there has been a consistent decline in the relative importance of agriculture as an occupation (except for 1936) over the entire period 1921 to 1961. The

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-20.



2. Workers in agriculture as percentage of the labour force.



Source: Appendix A, Table 5.

percentage employed in agriculture has declined in Alberta from a peak of 53 per cent in 1936 to a low of 21 per cent in 1961. Saskatchewan has been even more dominated by agriculture. The comparative employment figures remained over 60 per cent until 1936, after which agriculture declined somewhat slower than in Alberta until by 1961 some 37 per cent of the labour force was engaged in agriculture. The percentage employed in farming in Ontario had already declined to 27 by 1931, a statistic which fell to only 7 per cent by 1961, the mark of a highly urbanized, industrial society.

Since the depression, all the prairie provinces show a firm trend towards a reduction in the number of farms. Only a small proportion of the decline can be attributed to changes in the definition of a farm as that definition grew more restrictive. From a total of 100,000 farms in 1941, Albertan farms were reduced to 73,000 in 1961. For the same period Saskatchewan showed a reduction from 139,000 to 94,000 farms. In Ontario the trend was under way throughout the time period 1921-61. Significantly Ontario shows a decline in the percentage of all land which is farmland and a decline in the number of improved acres. This serves to show how urbanization has encroached on the countryside in that province. However, in the prairie provinces both the total area in farmland and the improved land has shown an increase over time as the agricultural frontier pushes north and irrigation

schemes make farming possible in dry areas. Except for the period 1931-36 (the depression) the average size of farms has increased in all provinces. By 1961 the average area of farms in Alberta and Saskatchewan had reached a full section or more (640 acres +). The size of farms in Ontario has increased steadily but remains approximately 75 per cent smaller than the average in the west. Manitoba again occupies a position midway between Ontario and the other prairie provinces. Not only has the average size been increasing in Alberta and Saskatchewan but the proportion of farms over 640 acres has grown rapidly. Farms of this size comprised 15.2 per cent of all farms in Alberta in 1931, 19.1 per cent in Saskatchewan. By 1961 these figures had climbed to 28.9 per cent and 42 per cent respectively. In the same year only 10.4 per cent of Ontario farms were in this category. The trend towards larger farms in the prairies has been encouraged by the need to increase the size of holdings to provide a buffer against the effects of poor crops or low prices. Large scale production is also necessary to permit modern, expensive machinery to be used profitably (Table 2). The increase in the size of farms has been more the product of amalgamation and renting than the extension of the agricultural frontier.

In western Canada today, many feel that changes in the structure of agriculture spell the end for the family farm and the rise of the corporation farm operated by a manager. Part of the NDP appeal in 1971

was a call to preserve the family farm. Statistics on the tenure of farmland until 1961 do not support the belief in the decline of the family farm (except in absolute numbers). Table 3 shows that only in Ontario has the percentage of farms operated by a manager ever exceeded 1 per cent. In the three prairie provinces the proportion of manager operated farms actually declined from 1951 to 1961. Although data is not available, it seems reasonable to suppose that it is the largest and most prosperous farms which are operated in this way, rather than the small holding. Since 1941 both Alberta and Saskatchewan show a large drop in the percentage of farms which are tenant operated (24.6 per cent to 10.1 per cent in Saskatchewan, 17.1 per cent to 9.2 per cent in Alberta). These figures reflect a greater security for the family farm. While the percentage of farms owned by the operator has declined everywhere (51.5 per cent are owner operated in Saskatchewan, compared with 80.1 per cent in Ontario - 1961), this has been countered by a rise in the percentage of farms where the operator has added to his acreage by renting neighbouring land. The conclusion from table 3 must be that the farms which do remain in operation are, for the most part, in the tradition of the family farm.

There has also been some concern in recent years that farm operators as a group are ageing and that their children do not want to or cannot afford to take up

farming. Table 4 indicates that the percentage of operators over 60 years old in Alberta and Saskatchewan remains below that of the provinces where agriculture has been longer established. Furthermore, the percentage of operators under 25 years old is higher in the west. Therefore, the trend in age is not yet dangerous for the future of the farm. The ageing of farm operators of the west must be seen in the context of the history of settlement. In 1921 the age structure was much more oriented to youth because the task of pioneering was a young man's job. Thus the age of farmers in 1961 did not pose a serious threat to the future of farming. However, if young people are not prepared to take over the farms, then the future of the farming is indeed bleak. Unfortunately, there is no data on this aspect of prairie farming.

Although the changing importance of agriculture as an occupation has been demonstrated for Alberta and Saskatchewan, no breakdown of the persons occupied in agriculture has yet been given which would show the class composition of the farming population. In table 5 we see that the majority of those employed in agriculture in all the provinces reviewed should be considered as petite bourgeoisie in the sense I defined it earlier. It is worth emphasizing that wage earners have usually numbered less than 20 per cent of the agricultural labour force. In Saskatchewan there is a long term trend towards a decrease in the percentage of wage labour in

agriculture. The 1961 figure for Saskatchewan is 11.3 per cent compared with 16.9 per cent for Alberta and 24.1 per cent for Ontario. There is also a long term tendency for the number of workers hired the year round to decrease. This evidence is supported by the fact that the percentage of all farms which employ any hired labour has fallen every census year since 1936 (except 1951). By 1961 over 60 per cent of farms in all the prairie provinces employed no hired labour at all. Thus the effect of increasing the average size of farms has been more than countered by labour saving mechanization. (However, the very largest farms do tend to employ labour more than do others.) Not only are fewer farms employing any hired labour, but those that do are using that labour for shorter periods on average. Again Table 5 shows that for farms having any hired labour the average weeks of hired labour has decreased constantly in all provinces but Ontario. Since 1936 Saskatchewan farmers have employed less hired labour than any others. It follows from these figures that agriculture is carried on, in all provinces surveyed, by the resident farmer and unpaid family labour. MacPherson has estimated that some 5 per cent of prairie farms produce mainly for subsistence rather than the market, and that a further 5 per cent depended substantially on hired labour.<sup>33</sup> This latter figure seems somewhat high for Saskatchewan in present circumstances, since the total number of workers

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-18.



hired the year round is approximately 4 per cent of the farm labour force and these workers are concentrated on fewer farms than before. Overall it seems safe to conclude that the occupation of farming in the west, and particularly in Saskatchewan, has been overwhelmingly dominated by family units of independent commodity producers, but that this class is now losing its numerically dominant position in the class structure.

## Chapter Two

### Metropolitan Domination: Confederation and the National Policy

Any attempt to explain the origins and dominance on the prairies of both the CCF and Social Credit as protest organizations must be incomplete if it excludes an account of the policies and conditions against which these political movements were directed. To do this it is necessary to place western development as a whole in the context of Canadian history from the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The main theme of this history is how a metropolitan elite from eastern Canada initiated and put into effect a set of policies, the intention of which was to contribute to the wealth of the metropolis by exploiting the people and resources of satellite regions.<sup>2</sup> The National Policy, as it became known during John A. MacDonald's administration, was in fact a group of separate but interrelated policies on transportation, immigration, and tariff protection for manufacturing industries. The overall aim of the National

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<sup>1</sup>S.D. Clark points out that the failure to do this is a major weakness of Lipset's pioneering research on the CCF. See Clark's review of "Agrarian Socialism", in American Sociological Review, vol. 16, 1951, pp. 423-24.

<sup>2</sup>A prominent school of Canadian historians interpret Canadian history in terms of the domination of metropolis over hinterland. See J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History", Canadian Historical Review, vol. 35, 1954, pp. 1-31.

Policy was to build a transcontinental Canadian nation. However, it also became clear that the main beneficiaries of the policy were to be the eastern capitalists, who would gain from the creation of new markets in the west and from a protective tariff. Neither the Liberal nor Conservative Parties, the only ones to hold office, made any major changes in the National Policy until it was judged complete and successful by 1930. The confederation of Canada in 1867 was an essential component in the programme of metropolitan domination, although the argument cannot be defended that regional exploitation was the only, or even the dominant reason, why many politicians supported confederation. An understanding of Canada's federal structure is very important to the student of western protest because the federation provided the financial power and legal mechanism with which to implement the National Policy, as well as the framework in which all political protest organizations had to operate if they were committed to peaceful change. The federal structure makes possible the different political development of Alberta and Saskatchewan although it is not the explanation of the differences. In the light of these comments the process of confederation, the distribution of power in the federal structure, and the National Policy will be analysed below. The brevity of the treatment reflects not the importance of the subject matter, but rather the easy availability to the interested reader of many

detailed accounts by historians, economists and political scientists.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1. The Origin of Confederation

Confederation is the usual term applied to the federal union which has since 1867 comprised the state of Canada. A federal state is essentially one in which the sovereignty of the state is divided between a central government and the government of the units which comprise the state. The British North America Act (1867) federated only the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Canada. The province of Canada had been created in 1841 by combining the ex French colony of Lower Canada with English speaking Upper Canada. Under the British North America Act the old divisions were re-established as the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. However, the Act made provision for the later entry into confederation of any, or all, of the remaining British territories in North America. Leaders of Prince Edward

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<sup>3</sup> Among the most valuable studies are: D. Creighton, "John A. MacDonalld", vol. 1, "The Young Politician", Toronto, 1952, and vol. 2, "The Old Chieftain", Toronto, 1955; R.M. Dawson, "The Government of Canada", 4th ed. revised by Norman Ward, Toronto, 1963; V.C. Fowke, "The National Policy and the Wheat Economy", Toronto, 1957; H.A. Innes, "Essays on Canadian Economic History", Toronto, 1956; A.R.M. Lower et al., "Evolving Canadian Federalism", Durham, N.C., 1958; J.R. Mallory, "The Structure of Canadian Government", Toronto, 1971; W.L. Morton, "The Critical Years", Toronto and Montreal, 1964; Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, Ottawa, 1940 (hereafter called Rowell-Sirois Report); and P.B. Waite, "The Life and Times of Confederation", Toronto, 1962.

Island and Newfoundland had participated in the discussions leading to confederation but did not choose to join until 1873 and 1949 respectively. British Columbia became a province in 1871 with the promise from the federal government that a transcontinental railway would be built within ten years. In 1870 all land north of the 49th parallel and lying between Ontario and British Columbia became dominion lands. This area (Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories) had been granted by royal charter in 1670 to the Hudson's Bay Company for the prosecution of the fur trade. Out of this land the province of Manitoba was quickly carved in 1870. Thirty-five years later the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were created from the former Hudson's Bay territory.

Much of the published history of confederation is concerned with the fine details of political manoeuvring which took place from the first great debates in the late fifties, through the Quebec and Charlottetown conferences of 1864, to the London meeting of 1866, and the final proclamation of the British North America Act one year later. This need not detain us here, but what is necessary is to consider the forces which made the idea of confederation attractive to Canadian politicians. In particular, it is necessary to understand that the origins of the National Policy can be discerned among the goals advanced for confederation.

The decision to enact confederation occurred

because it appeared to the political leaders of the colonies that a federal union was the only solution to a constellation of local problems; the only solution, that is, which would be acceptable to the enfranchised population. Some had more to gain than others, which is apparent in the hesitancy of the maritime colonies to enter confederation. Co-operation from the maritimes was the first preference of Canadian leaders, but if it were not forthcoming, the problems within the province of Canada were so pressing that some form of federation was seen by many as essential. What then were these forces and fears, which were of sufficient strength in the decade of the sixties to bring about confederation? Most important were the internal political troubles of the province of Canada, a growing fear that American imperialist policies were a threat to the independence of the British colonies, and the long term danger to the colonial economy brought about by a combination of Britain's adoption of free trade policies, the failure to extend the reciprocity treaty with the United States, and the completion of the frontier settlement within the colonies themselves, which had previously been a stimulus to trade and industry.

Within the province of Canada tensions were always high as a result of the religious and ethnic differences between the two halves of the union. Lower Canada was predominantly French and Catholic, Upper Canada was English and protestant. Each part was equally



represented in the legislative assembly. The governing groups (party is hardly an appropriate term for the unstable and undisciplined coalitions, which arose and disappeared with amazing speed) tended to split ministerial posts and public funds fairly evenly between Upper Canada and Lower Canada, but the structure of the union could not survive changing circumstances. Upper Canada was increasing its population much faster than Lower Canada. Led by George Brown of the Toronto Globe, reformers in the English sector were demanding representation by population so that they could control the union government. Then they would not have to experience what they considered were the injustices of legislation such as the Separate Schools Act.<sup>4</sup> Among the French, representation by population was resisted, even by the radicals, because it was felt that the separate existence of French culture was threatened by this proposal. For the same reason the extension of the frontier by annexing the North-West Territories was opposed in Quebec. It was felt that such a move would serve to relocate the centre of power in the union in favour of the English.<sup>5</sup> In such a state of tension and conflict it was essential to bring about some form of change in the structure of government. The possibilities were a complete dissolution of the union or some form of

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<sup>4</sup>A.R.M. Lower, "Colony to Nation", Don Mills, Ont., 1964, p. 304.

<sup>5</sup>Rowell-Sirois Report, op. cit., p. 21.

federation. To understand why the latter was chosen we must turn to the other forces acting on the British colonies at this time. The internal problems of the province of Canada would be of no importance to the study of western politics had they not been so crucial in deciding the form of union in British North America. But for the dogged resistance of French Quebecers, Canada might today be a unitary state rather than a federation, and western politics could not have developed as they did.<sup>6</sup>

The second major force conducive to confederation was the long standing fear in the British colonies that they might be absorbed by the United States since, by the middle of the century, Britain no longer wished to undertake the defence of her American colonies.<sup>7</sup> Uneasy relations with the expanding American giant were reflected in the War of 1812-14, the Oregon boundary dispute, and fishing quarrels, but the most immediate American aggression arose out of Anglo-Canadian attitudes during the Civil War. Warner goes so far as to claim:

"The Civil War was probably the greatest catalyst in precipitating confederation.... Americans were bitterly hostile to Britain and to Canada, and some had not scrupled to urge that the colony be seized to replace the southern departed states...the Imperial cabinet had hastened to reinforce Canada and warned the colonials to prepare to defend

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<sup>6</sup>It is well known that MacDonalld, Galt and most Maritime politicians would have preferred a legislative union.

<sup>7</sup>Lower, op. cit., p. 316; Rowell-Sirois Report, op. cit., p. 20.

themselves."<sup>8</sup>

Subsequently, Warner argues that the fear of American aggression was groundless,<sup>9</sup> yet the available evidence was ample to justify fear from the point of view of the colonist. As the American railroads pushed ever closer to the Pacific during the fifties and sixties, the settlement frontier was being moved westward with equal haste. However, it was also extending north, and in conjunction with the aggressive rhetoric of those American politicians who believed in their 'Manifest Destiny' to control the continent, there was much in this process of expansion to strike fear into the hearts of those in Upper Canada who saw their own future prosperity in the development of the North-West Territory. The French were no less fearful of the effects of American control than the old Empire Loyalists of the English colonies. They were persuaded that the best defence of the French way of life lay in the guarantees written into the proposed federal constitution.<sup>10</sup> At this time the colonies were separate and tied directly to a Britain which was unenthusiastic about defending them. Separately, the colonies were too weak to

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<sup>8</sup> Donald F. Warner, "The Idea of Continental Union", Lexington, Kentucky, 1960, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> It should not be assumed that all colonists were repelled by the idea of annexation. Warner, op. cit., points out that many business men were attracted to union with the U.S.A. after the reciprocity treaty was broken off. However, this sentiment was not shared by the leading politicians.

withstand American pressure. Thus many Canadians felt that only in a federation of the colonies did they have any chance of preserving a British oriented society in North America.

The third important pressure for confederation was generated by the declining economic prospects of the colonies, particularly after the United States discontinued the Treaty for Reciprocity in Trade (1865). In the debates on economic affairs, which preceded confederation, we can see the first hesitant steps of English Canadian politicians in evolving a policy which would use the federation as a tool to create a vast hinterland for the purpose of stimulating commerce and trade in the St. Lawrence valley. Fowke points out that several prominent leaders in the legislature of the province of Canada saw the federation of the eastern colonies as but a beginning for a new nation.<sup>11</sup> Of these men the most prominent was George Brown. He is reported to have moved the assembly with such comments as:

"...if the mind stretches from the western bounds of civilization through those great north-western regions, which we hope ere long will be ours, to the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, what vast sources of wealth to the fur trader, the miner, the gold hunter and the agriculturist, lie there ready to be developed."<sup>12</sup>

Yet even Brown realized that such expansion was for some future date. The new constitution would be constructed

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<sup>11</sup>Fowke, op. cit., pp. 34-39.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Fowke, op. cit., p. 35.

so as to make the dream possible, but it cannot be ignored that most men were moved by more immediate economic concerns. For many the main economic issue was whether inter-colonial trade would expand after confederation and benefit all areas.

The two decades before 1867 were ones of prosperity for the Maritimes. Lumbermen, farmers and fishermen together made up over half the occupied population. Forest products and fish were the two great export staples, and these supported the shipbuilding industries and carrying trades. New Brunswick's prosperity was most dependent on lumber, and Nova Scotia, although its economy was more diversified, relied heavily on the success of her fishermen, who sailed in locally built schooners to cream the shallow banks off Newfoundland. In 1866, fish accounted for 40 per cent of the total value of Nova Scotia's exports. Prince Edward Island's specialized agricultural products were directed to supplying the other maritime colonies. With the closely integrated economies so dependent on export success, changes in the terms of trade could easily upset the golden age that existed prior to confederation. (Subsequent history has not borne out these hopes. The poverty and stagnation of the Maritimes in this century can be seen as the product of an earlier capitalist development of natural resources, which allowed only a

temporary prosperity.<sup>13)</sup>

Returning to the 1860s we find that the best timber resources had been used up. In addition, Britain had adopted free trade policies, which meant that Nova Scotia's main market for cod (the West Indies) was now open to competition from New England fishermen. Worse still, the second most important market for fish had been the United States, but after the Reciprocity Treaty had been ended, the free entry of fish was no longer possible. If these troubles were not enough, even for the stubborn Maritimers, the coming of the steamship was making the local, sail based, shipbuilding industry obsolete.<sup>14</sup>

A seafaring people, the maritimers had had little intercourse with central Canada other than the meagre St. Lawrence traffic in coal and flour. They were aware that they would benefit from the improved communications that a railway to Lower Canada would bring. It was, however, an expensive project and negotiations repeatedly broke down in the years before confederation.

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<sup>13</sup>See A.G. Frank's analysis of metropolis-satellite relations in "Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America", New York, 1967. Early development of natural resources controlled by an external metropolis leads to "passive capitalist involution" or underdevelopment when the protection and expansion of the satellite economy is no longer of primary concern to the leaders of the metropolis. For an account of Maritime history based on Frank's work see Bruce Archibald, "Atlantic Regional Underdevelopment and Socialism" in L. LaPierre *et al.*, ed., "Essays on the Left", Montreal and Toronto, 1971.

<sup>14</sup>On the Maritime economy at confederation see Rowell-Sirois Report, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-25.



The hope that confederation would bring an intercolonial railroad, and with it a continental hinterland for Halifax and St. John, was instrumental in bringing New Brunswick and Nova Scotia into the new dominion.<sup>15</sup>

In central Canada, men of commerce expected that the railway would open new markets and would give their products access to the ice-free ports of the eastern coast. With the tariff barriers removed intercolonial trade would be stimulated. This was the wish of those in central Canada who had suffered like the Maritimers when relations with Britain were weakened and free trade with the United States became impossible. The economy of central Canada was centred on farming and the forests, although manufacturing industries, most of them small and decentralized, had sprung up to supply the local market. A period of prosperity was ending for two main reasons. First, the St. Lawrence transportation system, a water and rail network constructed at great cost to the public purse, had been intended to tap the trade of America's middle western regions. However, the success of this venture was doomed when the American trade barriers cut out much of the traffic on this route.<sup>16</sup> The second factor was that the province of Canada had run out of frontier areas which could be settled

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<sup>15</sup>Lower, op. cit., pp. 315-6; Rowell-Sirois Report, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>16</sup>H.A. Innes, "Transportation as a Factor in Canadian Economic History", in Innes, op. cit.; Fowke, op.cit., p. 34.

successfully. Such areas had previously acted as a stimulus to investment and the expansion of trade and industry.<sup>17</sup> Further evidence of economic contraction was that immigration was declining and Canada was losing a third of her natural increase to the United States. This evidence of decline was recognized and stressed by several speakers in the confederation debates.<sup>18</sup> The solution envisaged was the building of a stronger united economy and expansion into the North-West Territories.

After much intrigue and heated discussion the impact of the forces outlined above (plus, no doubt, hopes of personal power) was that the majority of elected politicians in Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia voted for a federal union. What was the structure of the federation and how did the National Policy evolve from these hazy beginnings?

## 2.2. The Locus of Power in Confederation

It is not surprising that the government of Canada was modelled after that of Britain, the main difference being that Canada was created a federal state. What is of concern at this point is the distribution of powers within the federation and its influence on party organization. Much of Canada's constitution is

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<sup>17</sup>The pioneer has usually been regarded as economically unimportant in early Canadian history. Fowke's work is a vital correction and demonstrates the importance of the pioneer to the province of Ontario. Op. cit., pp. 9-24.

<sup>18</sup>Fowke, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

unwritten, but the founders of the dominion did attempt to specify in the British North America Act the spheres of jurisdiction of the separate governments. Section 91 of the Act<sup>19</sup> confers exclusive authority on the dominion parliament to legislate on the following: amendments to those parts of the constitution which deal with federal matters (but not the power to redefine what is a federal matter); public debt and property; regulation of trade and commerce; raising money by any means of taxation; unemployment insurance<sup>20</sup>; borrowing money on public credit; currency and coinage; banking; bills of exchange and promissory notes; interest; bankruptcy and insolvency; military affairs; navigation and shipping; postal services; census and statistics; Indian affairs; criminal law and prisons; and several other minor powers. In addition, the section is introduced by a general residual clause empowering the dominion parliament to "make Laws for the Peace, Order and good Government of Canada, in relation to all Matters not coming within the Classes of Subject by this Act assigned exclusively to the Legislatures of the Provinces." Section 92 also gives power to the dominion over all interprovincial communication and over those works within a province which are defined as "for the general Advantage of Canada." The central

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<sup>19</sup>It has been reprinted in many sources including Dawson, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>British North America Act, amended 1940.

government also has the right to disallow a provincial law within one year of its proclamation.

The exclusive powers of the provincial legislatures, as set out in section 92, include the following: amendment to the provincial constitution, except as it concerns the role of the Lieutenant-Governor<sup>21</sup>; direct taxation; borrowing on the credit of the province; the management and sale of public land and resources; provincial prisons; hospitals and other health institutions; municipal institutions; local licences; the incorporation of companies with provincial objectives; the administration of justice in the province; property and civil rights; and all other matters of a purely local nature. Education is entrusted to the provinces, subject to limitations protecting the rights of minority groups and the protection of denominational schools established prior to confederation. Both the dominion and the provinces can legislate on matters of agriculture, but dominion laws take precedence if there is any conflict.

Any law passed by a legislature may be challenged on the grounds that it is outwith the powers of that legislature, in which case the judiciary rule on the validity of the law. Since the clauses of the British

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<sup>21</sup>The Lieutenant-Governor represents the Crown in the provinces, is appointed and removed by the federal government, and undertakes at the provincial level tasks similar to those of the Governor-General of Canada. He may withhold assent from provincial bills, a fate which some Social Credit legislation was to suffer.

North America Act are ambiguous in the specification of spheres of power, the judiciary have played an important part in shaping the constitution. Until 1949 the final court of appeal was the Privy Council, and thereafter the Supreme Court of Canada. Both courts have vacillated in their interpretations of the peace, order and good government clause of section 91, and the vague, civil rights and property clause of section 92. Lower records that from about 1890 until 1930 the judicial committee of the Privy Council cut into the dominion government's authority by defining the residual powers clause as applicable only in emergencies. A corresponding emphasis was given to the right of provincial governments to legislate for civil rights and property. After 1930 some tendency to restore federal powers was noted, but there remained considerable inconsistency in the court decisions.<sup>22</sup>

As the Rowell-Sirois report correctly argues, it is impossible ever to know for certain how much centralization the framers of the British North America Act intended. Nevertheless the majority of constitutional historians are convinced that a strong central government was aimed for.<sup>23</sup> They are able to quote statements from

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<sup>22</sup>A.R.M. Lower et al., op. cit. There is a huge literature on this subject, most of it critical of the Privy Council decisions. For an excellent review and more favourable reaction see Alan C. Cairns, "The Judicial Committee and its Critics", Canadian Journal of Political Science, vol. 4, 1971, pp. 301-345.

<sup>23</sup>E.g., Rowell-Sirois Report, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

prominent leaders such as John A. MacDonald and Alexander Galt in which they make clear their preference for a legislative union. The English business minority in Montreal were assured that their interests would be protected since the federal government would control all matters relating to commerce. Lower presents evidence that James Madison, the prominent American advocate of centralization, was a strong influence on MacDonald.<sup>24</sup> His intention that Canada should have "a powerful Central Government, a powerful Central Legislature, and a decentralized system of minor legislatures for local purposes"<sup>25</sup> is reflected in the granting to the dominion government of all powers not explicitly given to the provinces, the power to appoint the Lieutenant-Governors of the provinces, and the power of disallowance. Even allowing for the tendency of the courts to limit the impact of the residual powers clause, the clarification clauses give to the dominion the power to legislate in the crucial areas of the economy and communications. Only the dominion government can raise money by both direct and indirect taxation, which gives it a greater capacity than the provinces to undertake expensive projects.

The centralization of economic powers in the dominion government has had important consequences for party politics. A party which can win power only at

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<sup>24</sup>Lower et al., op. cit., pp. 13-15.

<sup>25</sup>MacDonald, quoted in Dawson, op. cit., p. 30.



the provincial level will be unable to bring about major changes in economic life within the province, because the constitutional validity of its laws can be challenged in the courts. Furthermore, an unsympathetic federal government can disallow provincial legislation, or bring financial pressure on the poorer provinces. It was a crucial reason for the failure of Social Credit in the depression, that it was a party restricted to Alberta; yet its reform programme involved national economic changes, and was either disallowed by the Liberal government or referred to the courts where the most important bills were declared ultra vires. Later the Saskatchewan CCF government was to face financial and jurisdictional limitations on its programme, limitations which could have been overcome had the national CCF party held power at Ottawa.

The federal structure of the constitution also influences political party organization. Canadian parties tend to be fairly loose federations of provincial units and are in this sense a mirror image of the formal constitution. A party may evolve separate provincial and federal platforms to cope with the problem of the division of powers. The federal structure has been a greater influence on the organization of the CCF than Social Credit, because the CCF began as a national organization, with provincial sections retaining considerable autonomy. Gradually the CCF has become more centralized. Its national organization has never



been controlled from Saskatchewan, whereas the Social Credit League was very much a provincial party, with a national extension controlled from Alberta (at least until W.A. Bennett became powerful in British Columbia).

The division of powers may also be an important factor in explaining why third parties have received greater support in provincial politics than in the federal sphere. For example, while the electorate of Alberta and Saskatchewan were returning Social Credit and CCF candidates to the provincial legislatures in the nineteen-fifties, they were also sending a large group of Conservatives to Ottawa. Perhaps third parties receive greater support in provincial politics because they are seen to have a chance of winning, whereas new parties on the national level seldom appear likely to win.

### 2.3. The Development of the National Policy

Despite judicial restrictions, it seems to be an unavoidable conclusion that the Canadian federation is highly centralized, and that whichever group holds sway with federal government opinion can advance its interests throughout the country. Traditionally the Liberal and Conservative Parties have both been receptive to the interests of eastern business. The National Policy was intended to build a commercial metropolis for the east by extending the satellite area throughout British North America. This would have been impossible without the enlarged financial and legislative powers of the central

government. The remainder of the chapter will trace the history of the National Policy from confederation to 1930.

At confederation the acquisition of Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories was seen as a long term goal. However, the timing of expansion was speeded up because pressure in the United States was building up. In 1868 the American Senate Committee on Foreign Relations passed a resolution in favour of peacefully annexing the British territories in the west. American commercial expansion was following the extension of the railways. Most disturbing to Canada was the plan to build a transcontinental Northern Pacific railroad close to the international border as a prelude to commercial and political control of the west. The intent of this construction programme was known to Canadian leaders<sup>26</sup> and brought immediate action in the acquisition of the Hudson's Bay lands for the purposes of the dominion. Next year (1871) British Columbia became a province, thus creating a transcontinental Canadian state.

This land, acquired as a new Canadian frontier to encourage trade and settlement, required a rail link to make it possible, and settlement was also considered necessary to keep the United States out. Therefore, a policy was adopted to build a transcontinental railway in spite of the immense technical difficulties of

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<sup>26</sup> See Chester Martin, "'Dominion Lands' Policy", Toronto, 1938, pp. 225-226.

crossing 1100 miles of the forest, rock and swampland, which make up the Canadian shield, and then the mountains of the west. Difficult enough for the United States, the task was immense for a country with Canada's meagre resources. The problems were increased by the nationalistic requirements that the route be entirely within Canadian territory and that American investment be excluded. MacDonald's government failed to convince two competing groups of business men to combine to build the railway, but eventually, in 1873, the government incorporated the Canadian Pacific Railway Company with Sir Hugh Allan at its head.<sup>27</sup> The company was promised a subsidy of thirty million dollars and fifty million acres of arable land, but it never started construction because a bribery scandal erupted concerning Allan and MacDonald's Conservative Party. The government was defeated and a Liberal administration followed. The railway was now to be pursued in a different way - constructed in small sections, the costs coming from the public purse.

Mackenzie's Liberal administration came to office at the start of a depression in business and commerce that was to last until 1878 when fresh elections were held. With the Conservatives returned to power, rail construction was pursued with renewed vigour. By 1880

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<sup>27</sup>Some standard references on the CPR are: H.A. Innes, "A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway", Toronto, 1923; G.P. de T. Glazebrook, "A History of Transportation in Canada", Toronto, 1938; Pierre Berton, "The National Dream", Toronto and Montreal, 1970.

the government had found a new capitalist syndicate willing to construct the remainder of the railway. A second Canadian Pacific Railway Company was established and received a large government subsidy of \$25 million, 25 million acres of land, a monopoly for 20 years, tax allowances, and several minor concessions. The epic task was completed in six years; the Canadian wilderness had been mastered at last. Although other railways were later constructed by private enterprise and then rescued financially by the government (which combined them into the Canadian National Railways), the completion of the Canadian Pacific marked the end of one part of the National Policy. Yet success for the whole had to await the twentieth century because the period from 1873 to 1895 was one of depression relieved only by short term improvements. Settlement of the west and industrialization of the east advanced but slowly in this period.

We turn now to the second major part of the National Policy, namely industrialization through the protective tariff.<sup>28</sup> When MacDonald became Prime Minister again, in 1878, this was high on his priorities. Earlier tariffs had been established first for revenue and secondly for protection. The priority in considering rates of duty was now to be reversed. As

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<sup>28</sup>The best concise account is W.A. Mackintosh, "The Economic Background of Dominion-Provisional Relations," Appendix 3 of the Rowell-Sirois Report, op. cit., re-published by McClelland and Stewart, Toronto and Montreal, 1964.

early as 1872, with North American free trade an impossibility, MacDonald told the editor of the Toronto Mail that "the paper must go in for a National Policy in tariff matters, and while avoiding the word 'protection' must advocate a readjustment of the tariff in such a manner as incidentally to aid our manufacturing and industrial interests."<sup>29</sup> Speaking to business men before the 1878 election he is quoted as saying, "I cannot tell what protection you require. But let each manufacturer tell us what he wants, and we will try to give him what he needs."<sup>30</sup> The demands for protection were stimulated by the continuing depression in the seventies, and in 1879 a complex protective tariff was introduced, which discriminated against highly processed or finished imports. In cotton and woollen textiles, and iron and steel products - the industries where competition had been greatest - the tariff was made very protective. Further adjustments brought the tariff to its most complete form by 1887.

Tariff policy was related to the settlement policy in that the west was to become a new market to be exploited by the growing eastern industries. The connection with rail policy was clearly stated by Charles Tupper when he introduced the Canadian Pacific Rail Bill to parliament:

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<sup>29</sup>MacDonald to Patterson, 24-2-72, quoted in Creighton, "John A. MacDonald", vol. 2, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>30</sup>MacDonald, quoted in Fowke, op. cit., p. 65.



"...we must look upon that western country as a field for the manufacturing industries of the older and more settled parts of Canada. Every person acquainted with this country knows we have exhausted to some extent its bread-growing power, but under the National Policy that Canada has adopted, we must look forward not only to building up thriving centres of industry and enterprises all over this portion of the country, but to obtaining a market for these industries after they have been established; and I say where is there a greater market than that magnificent granary of the North-West...let us (by supporting the Canadian Pacific Railway) strengthen the hands of those who are engaged in a great national enterprise, upon the success of which the rapid progress and prosperity of the country depends."<sup>31</sup>

The prosperity for industry which Tupper glowingly anticipated in 1880 was to be nearly two decades away. Not until the middle eighteen-nineties were economic circumstances favourable to expansion. At that time industrialization and urbanization were proceeding rapidly in Europe, which brought an increasing demand for food and raw materials. This was accompanied by a dramatic fall in transportation costs and a consequent increase in the relative value of imports. Low rates of interest in Europe also encouraged investment in the new countries. Furthermore, by 1900, improvements in farming techniques permitted western Canada to participate fully in this expansion.

The economic development of the east required large scale immigration to the prairies. Fortunately for Canada the completion of the Canadian Pacific was

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<sup>31</sup>Charles Tupper, 15-4-88, in R. Brown and M. Prang, "Canadian Historical Documents", vol. 3, Scarborough, 1966, p. 26.

closely followed by the settlement of all the good farm land in the American middle west, so that by the end of the century Canada's prairies were a growing attraction to prospective immigrants. Land which had been granted to neither the railroad companies nor to the Hudson's Bay Company was made available to settlers in quarter sections (160 acres) at a nominal fee (Dominion Lands Act, 1872). The land was so divided that adjoining quarter sections were usually available for purchase from the government or from one of the companies referred to above.

The Conservative federal government tried to promote immigration by advertising in Europe and by subsidizing transportation, yet the rate of population growth in Canada during the last decades of the nineteenth century remained far below that of the United States. The immigration policies were intensified by Clifford Sifton in the Liberal government of 1896. Services to assist immigrants from Europe were improved and a special attempt was made to attract people from the American middle west. The agricultural areas of Manitoba were well settled by about 1900, while settlement in Alberta and Saskatchewan was sparse. But from the turn of the century there was an immigration explosion that continued, interrupted only by the First World War, until all the best lands in the west had been occupied. This point was reached around 1930. The increase was most dramatic in the decade 1901-11, when

the population of Saskatchewan increased from 91,279 to 492,432, and that of Alberta from 73,022 to 374,295.<sup>32</sup> In some years as many as 40,000 homesteads were filed and even the inner triangle of the prairies, the short grass, semi-arid region, was occupied. This area was better suited to large scale livestock rearing than to wheat farming, and, therefore, many of these farms were abandoned by 1921. On the social origin of the new settlers in Canada there is very little information, but we know they came as individuals, families and groups of families from all over Europe, from Britain, and from the United States. The highly varied ethnic origin of the prairie population can be appreciated by consulting Table 10 of Appendix A.

Business men had long awaited this inflow of immigrant settlers. It must be remembered that the protective tariff was established to develop industries to supply a market which did not yet exist, and by means of a transportation system as yet incomplete. The business men had to wait twenty years for the market to develop, during which time the tariff remained in force. The Liberal Party, although the party of free trade, made only minor alterations when it came to power in 1896. The eastern business world could wish for no more encouraging sound than the Liberal Prime Minister, Wilfred Laurier, speaking about the new settlers:

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<sup>32</sup> Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1961, Bull. 1.1-10, Table 6.

"They will require clothes, they will require furniture, they will require implements, they will require shoes - and I hope you can furnish them to them in Quebec - they will require everything that man has to be supplied with. It is your ambition, it is my ambition also, that this scientific tariff will make it possible that every shoe that has to be worn in those prairies shall be a Canadian shoe; that every yard of cloth that can be marketed there shall be a yard of cloth produced in Canada; and so on and so on..."<sup>33</sup>

The opportunity was taken, because Mackintosh reports that during the period 1895 to 1920 there was a high rate of investment encouraged by the hopes of profit from exploiting the natural resources of the country, and especially the wheat producers of the west.<sup>34</sup> The expansion of the wheat economy is indicated by the increase in the total value of wheat exports. In 1890 it was an insignificant \$14 million, but by 1920 exported wheat was worth \$279 million, by far Canada's most valuable single commodity.<sup>35</sup> Development of the west brought commercial and financial gain to central Canada. The tariff raised the price of imports to the consumer, thus directing the demand of wheat producers for goods and services to Canadian business. Montreal made the biggest gains in commercial activity, Toronto and Ontario in industrial development. These were the controlling centres of Canada's economic integration.

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<sup>33</sup>W. Laurier to Canadian Manufacturers Association, 1905, in Brown and Prang, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

<sup>34</sup>Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

The war effort ensured further development of manufacturing, especially in iron and steel, machinery and textiles. It also saw increasing use of domestic sources of investment funds.

The rapid expansion reached a peak in 1920 after which there was a sharp fall in prices. Unemployment reached 16.5 per cent in 1921 but improved quickly. Hardest hit were farmers who produced for the export market. Their purchasing power was estimated to have dropped by 59 per cent from 1920 to 1924. It then recovered to the 1920 level during the next two years.<sup>36</sup>

This brief review of the main features of confederation and the policies of the federal government provides a historical background, which is necessary to understand the people in the west, who depended on agriculture for a living. I have claimed that the frontier society was created in the interests of the business classes of metropolitan Canada. The immigrants, attracted by the promise of the new country, peopled a hinterland, which the metropolis could exploit. The frontier was necessary to the metropolis, but the metropolis always controlled the direction of development through the influence of business in the federal government. Government controls were only exercised when the weakness of the small producers was seen to

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

threaten future prosperity in the east.<sup>37</sup>

The reader at this stage might imagine that the inhabitants of the wheat lands were passive in the face of problems of development. This was far from true because many defined themselves as objects of oppression, and fought back both economically and politically. Their criticisms and their struggles during the working out of the National Policy form the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>37</sup>Fowke, op. cit., p. 93.



## Chapter Three

### Early Responses to Metropolitan Domination

It has been suggested that the west was created as an agricultural hinterland to serve the interests of the metropolitan east. Further, it has been suggested that the relationship of metropolis to hinterland is one in which the metropolis exploits the hinterland. The people who came to settle the west certainly defined themselves as an exploited group and periodically they combined to fight back against the domination of the eastern metropolis. The CCF and Social Credit were both examples of such reactions, but the present chapter is concerned with earlier expressions of discontent, which relate to the main focus of the study in two ways. First, many farmers who were either leaders or supporters of the CCF and Social Credit had been active in both Canadian and American organizations, which flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century. Thus they had undergone a long term socialization experience in the philosophy and practice of co-operation. The new organizations founded in the thirties carried on the tradition of co-operative action. Secondly, the reasons why Social Credit won power in Alberta, and the CCF in Saskatchewan, are closely connected with the history of political activity by agrarian organizations in these provinces. Social

Credit replaced a farmers' organization which had been in power for 14 years, while Saskatchewan had had no history of direct control by an agrarian party when the CCF became popular. For both these reasons it is important to give considerable attention to the development of the agrarian response to domination before the depression.

The first protest organizations developed at a time when the economy of the prairie provinces was based almost entirely on the growing of wheat as a cash crop, although there was more variety in the longer settled parts of Manitoba. The difficulties faced by wheat farmers in both the United States and Canada have been recounted many times<sup>1</sup>; these problems need only be summarized here. For a start the climate is such that the correct amount of rain at the right time is not guaranteed. Each year crops may be subject to damage by drought, unseasonal frosts, insect pests, as well as dust storms in which the precious top-soil is blown away. Yield per acre is, therefore, extremely variable from one year to the next.

The price that the farmer received for his wheat depended on a combination of how it was graded, the cost

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<sup>1</sup>E.g., S.M. Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", 2nd edition, New York, 1968; Paul F. Sharp, "The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada", Minneapolis, 1948; John D. Hicks, "The Populist Revolt", Minneapolis, 1931; Robert L. Morlan, "Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922", Minneapolis, 1955; Harald S. Patton, "Grain Growers' Co-operation in Western Canada", Cambridge, Mass., 1928.

of transportation, and world demand. The price of wheat on world markets, which the individual farmer could not influence, was highly variable. Given all this the farmers still complained that the price which they actually received was lower than it should have been for the following reasons:

1. Elevator companies undergraded the wheat which the farmer brought to his local elevator. At the large terminal elevators wheat of different grades was mixed and sold by the companies at the price of the higher grade.
2. Elevator companies formed a cartel to keep prices and storage charges high.
3. Railroad rates in the west were exorbitant compared with charges in other parts of the country.
4. In Canada farmers were especially bitter about the protective tariff, which, they complained, raised the cost of goods they had to purchase, especially implements and household goods.
5. It was claimed that banks charged too high a rate of interest on the loans which farmers required to develop their land and for general expenses incurred before money was received for the year's crop.
6. In giving credit banks were favouring large companies over the small ones, and in this way they helped maintain oligopoly in the grain business. The large milling and grain companies were able to control the price of wheat on the Winnipeg market.

This does not exhaust the list of grievances, for which the most complete evidence is the Report of the Saskatchewan Elevator Commission.<sup>2</sup> In sum, it is clear that the farmers of the west considered themselves to be harassed at every major point by external forces, whether of nature or man. They were prevented from receiving what they felt was a fair return for their effort, and responded to their circumstances by founding a series of reform organizations.

### 3.1. First Attempts at Organization

Most studies of agrarian organization in western Canada begin with either the Grange or the Territorial Grain Growers Association. But predating both was the Manitoba and North-West Farmers Union, active as a pressure group during the 1880s. It was founded in southern Manitoba in 1883 at the conjunction of the collapse of a land boom, low yields, and low prices for wheat.<sup>3</sup> Any ratepayer could join if he subscribed to the declaration of rights and demands which included:

"Absolute control by the province of Manitoba of its public lands and natural resources; the granting of power to the municipalities to erect their own grain storage elevators, warehouses and flour mills; the appointment

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<sup>2</sup>Report of the Elevator Commission of the Province of Saskatchewan, Regina, 1910.

<sup>3</sup>Donald F. Warner, "The Farmers' Alliance and the Farmers' Union: an American-Canadian Parallelism", *Agricultural History*, vol. 23, 1949, pp. 9-19; Louis A. Wood, "A History of Farmers' Movements in Canada", Toronto, 1924.

of grain inspectors under provincial authority; the construction of the Hudson Bay Railway; and the removal of duties on agricultural implements and building materials, together with a lowering of such other duties as bore on articles of daily consumption."<sup>4</sup>

In subsequent years most of these demands were to be repeated throughout the west. The Union failed to achieve any favourable results and fell into disrepute, especially when it advocated an end to immigration. By 1885 it was defunct, but pressure continued for many of the reforms referred to above. Warner, for example, records that pressure against the railroad persisted until 1888, when the Canadian Pacific monopoly in Manitoba was rescinded.<sup>5</sup> For our purposes the Manitoba and North-West Farmers Union is relative unimportant because it preceded the main influx of settlers to Alberta and Saskatchewan. Most of the farmers who came to this territory were unfamiliar with the precedent in Manitoba.

For early inhabitants of the North-West Territories the first contact with organized farm protest was probably The Grange (sometimes called The Patrons of Husbandry), which flourished for a few years in the area at the end of the nineteenth century. However, the low tariff policy of The Grange was little different from that of the Liberals, and after early success in

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<sup>4</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>5</sup>Warner, op. cit.

politics the organization disappeared from the prairie.<sup>6</sup>

The problems of the wheat economy continued into the twentieth century, as did the arrival of pioneers, many of whom came from the United States, where they had experience in organizations such as the Farmers' Alliance and the populist parties. In the first years of the new century these men were to combine in much more effective organizations than had existed in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

1901 was a crisis year on the prairie, paradoxically, because it was the year of the largest crop ever known. Farmers were entitled to load their crop directly into freight cars at local loading platforms, or, indirectly, by dealing with a line elevator company. When the boom crop arrived, the railway was unprepared. Freight cars were in short supply, and those that were available were given first to the elevator companies. This served to aggravate the problems of farmers, who were already concerned at the difficulty of getting their only source of income to market. The issue

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<sup>6</sup>Wood, op. cit., chapter 12.

<sup>7</sup>The history of these organizations has been written many times. The summary here is in debt primarily to the following: Hugh Boyd, "New Breaking: an Outline of Co-operation among the Farmers of Western Canada", Toronto, 1938; Lipset, op. cit., chapter 3; William A. Mackintosh, "Agricultural Co-operation in Western Canada", Toronto, 1924; Hopkins Moorhouse, "Deep Furrows", Toronto and Winnipeg, 1918; W.L. Morton, "The Progressive Party in Canada", Toronto, 1950; Patton, op. cit.; William K. Rolph, "Henry Wise Wood of Alberta", Toronto, 1950; Sharp, op. cit.; and Wood, op. cit.



spurred on some men in the well established Indian Head settlement to promote a permanent organization to look after the interests of grain growers. The outcome of an informal meeting in December 1901 was the formation of the Territorial Grain Growers' Association. This organization immediately advocated and won a law to ensure that the available grain cars would be distributed in the order they were applied for. The crop of 1902 was even larger than in the previous summer, and so was the transportation problem. Under the new law the Territorial Grain Growers challenged the Canadian Pacific Railway on the grounds that it had again given preference to elevator companies in the distribution of freight cars. In winning this case the Territorial Grain Growers' Association received much publicity, which was followed by a rapid increase in membership.

When the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were created in 1905, the Territorial organization was re-named the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association. By this time the success of the old Territorial organization against the Canadian Pacific Railroad had encouraged the establishment of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, which had similar aims and constitution to the older body. The two organizations made joint representations to government. In the newer territory of Alberta, the United Farmers of Alberta was not formed until 1909, when the small Alberta Farmers' Association and the Society of Equity amalgamated.

### 3.2. The Beginning of Economic Co-operation

Among the most active of farmers in the Territorial Grain Growers' Association were those in the Sintulata district of Saskatchewan. In 1905 they sent E.A. Partridge to Winnipeg to study the workings of the grain trade. His observations led him to conclude that the farmers should themselves start a company to transport and sell grain on the Winnipeg exchange, thus cutting out the profits of middlemen. He received little support from the formal organizations, but in his home district farmers were enthusiastic. They decided to set up a Grain Growers' Grain Company to operate in the 1906 season. Early problems of financing a charter and buying a seat on the exchange were overcome, only for the other members of the exchange to ban the farmers' company after it had been but six weeks in operation. However, the exchange was in Manitoba, and by this time the Manitoba farmers' organization was supporting the Grain Growers' Grain Company. Such pressure was brought to bear on the provincial government that it, in turn, forced the Winnipeg exchange to readmit the farmers' grain company. The company barely survived its first trading year, but thereafter expanded and prospered under the guidance of T.A. Crerar.

A major event during this period was the founding of the Grain Growers Guide, a journal dedicated to educating the farmer and which supported the idea of populist democracy in opposition to the "corrupt",

corporation dominated party system. Partridge became its first editor, but he soon resigned when his socialist ideas were not accepted by his associates. Shortly after its first appearance the Guide was accepted by all the farm organizations as their official paper. It was to become a major influence among farmers, and its columns are a valuable source of agrarian opinion and debate.

As we have seen criticisms of the elevator companies was widespread on the prairies, and it was in the elevator business that the next major organizing activity took place. During 1907 Partridge promoted a plan for the state ownership of elevators, which was quickly endorsed by the provincial farm organizations. His plan called for the federal ownership of terminal elevators and provincial ownership of line elevators. During the next three years, much pressure was brought on all governments concerned, but this resulted only in procrastination of a definite decision. In the end the federal government would not support state ownership, agreeing only to improve inspection procedures. However, the provincial governments depended on agrarian support if they were to be re-elected, which encouraged them to take some action because the feelings of the farmers remained firmly behind the Partridge plan. As an indication of the strength of opinion, petitions containing about ten thousand names were handed to both the Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments.

In 1909 the Manitoba government reversed its earlier statement that state control was unconstitutional, and requested the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association to provide a plan for consideration in drawing up an elevator bill. The chief suggestions of the farmers' organizations were that the purchase price of existing private elevators should be the cost of building a replacement, and that control of the elevators should be vested in an independent commission of three members appointed by the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association and removable by either a two-thirds majority in the legislature or by the provincial Court of Appeal. These requests were then ignored by the government with the result that the Manitoba Elevator Act of 1910 provided for arbitration when the value of an elevator was in dispute, required that the commission be appointed by the cabinet and be subject to cabinet control, and included a clause whereby no elevator could be purchased or built unless a petition were received with the signatures of at least 60 per cent of farmers who were in the area to be served by the proposed elevator. The Manitoba Grain Growers' Association predicted failure, but still asked farmers to support the Act. Patton concluded from his investigation that "the statutory conditions under which the Manitoba elevator system was established was such as to make losses in its operation more or less inevitable."<sup>8</sup> The outcome of this fiasco

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<sup>8</sup>Patton, op. cit., p. 90.

was that the Grain Growers' Grain Company paid the government a rent of 6 per cent of the total cost of the elevators and took over their operation. A loss in the first year was followed by years of increasing profit. Controlling its own elevators the Grain Growers' Grain Company was now able to improve its competitive position and its service to patrons. In Thompson's terms it had reduced uncertainty by extending control over its environment.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile in Saskatchewan the Liberal government had been more cautious. In response to pressure from the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, premier Scott decided to appoint an investigating commission to study the feasibility of government owned storage facilities. Reporting in 1910, the commission rejected public ownership and suggested that the solution to the problem "must be sought along the line of co-operation by the farmers themselves assisted in the matter of finance by a provincial loan."<sup>10</sup> At the first legislative session of 1911, the main recommendations of the commission plus some amendments from the Grain Growers' Association provided the basis of a bill to establish the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company. The bill, which was accepted by the farmers' organization, provided for a board of six directors, who would take

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<sup>9</sup>James D. Thompson, "Organizations in Action", New York, 1967.

<sup>10</sup>Report of the Elevator Commission of the Province of Saskatchewan, Regina, 1910, pp. 96-98.

subscriptions and form locals of the company. Shares were in \$50 units and were sold only to farmers, each of whom could hold no more than ten. A local could be formed when enough shares were sold to pay for the construction of an elevator, but the government would advance 85 per cent of a local's capital on a long term loan basis. When 25 such locals had been formed the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company could start business. Profits were to be distributed according to the amount of business brought to any elevator. From 46 elevators in 1911 the company expanded to 137 in the 1912 crop year. Nearly 13,000,000 bushels of grain were handled for a membership of 13,156 (out of a total of 95,013 farmers).<sup>11</sup> The new company was now strong in the province, although supported by a minority of farmers. Its support came from the earliest settled regions, where many farmers, who had come with hopes of quick wealth, had had their hopes shattered by a combination of poor crops and exploitation. After the Grain Growers' Grain Company had relieved the Manitoba government of responsibility for its elevators, "in both provinces the solution of the elevator crisis was found in the assumption of elevator operation by farmer-owned companies on a competitive basis."<sup>12</sup>

In Alberta, the last area of the prairie to be settled, production of grain had expanded more rapidly

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<sup>11</sup>Patton, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 112.



than the construction of elevators, although in Alberta the problem was less than elsewhere. The demand for government-owned elevators was always resisted by the ruling Liberal party. But the extension of production of marquis wheat and the success of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company brought an increase in demand for farmer-controlled elevators. Under pressure from the United Farmers of Alberta the Liberals enacted (in 1913) a bill which permitted the formation of the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company, which was similar in most respects to the one in Saskatchewan. All marketing was done through the agency of the Grain Growers' Company in Winnipeg. Although never as large as the Saskatchewan company, the Alberta Elevator Company operated at a profit during the four years of its existence from 1913 to 1917.

The formation of the United Grain Growers' Company provides an excellent example of that class of organization, which is established by the merging of two older organizations with complementary interests. The co-operative elevator companies had their main strength at the initial loading points, whereas the power of the Grain Growers' Grain Company lay in the marketing of the crop and at the terminal elevators. As noted above, the Alberta Farmers' Elevator Company worked in close co-operation with the Grain Growers' Grain Company. In 1911 the latter company had at last received a federal charter which gave it enlarged powers, which permitted

the company to deal in all farm products and in all substances related to agricultural production. The subsequent expansion of operation increased the chances of overlapping and rivalry between farm organizations. For example, by 1914 both the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association and the Grain Growers' Grain Company ran co-operative trading departments in Saskatchewan. The case for a united farmers' company was proposed by Crerar to such effect that in 1915 a shareholders meeting of the Grain Growers' Company resolved to have the directors carry out a plan for federation. The Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company responded with a similar resolution, but in Saskatchewan the acceptance was indefinite and lukewarm, since the powerful Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company had less to gain than any of the other parties.

"Controlling as it did a large volume of grain in the principal producing province, the Saskatchewan Company was in fact reluctant to relinquish its profitable and well established commission and sales business, for participation in the earnings of a central company, in the determination of whose policy and methods it would have only a partial voice."<sup>13</sup>

When firm proposals for a complete merger, rather than the establishment of a joint central company, were presented the Saskatchewan Company withdrew completely. The other two companies, with overwhelming support from their membership, continued negotiations leading to the formal establishment in 1917 of the United Grain Growers' Company to be managed by T.A. Crerar.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

### 3.3. The Development of Political Action among the Farmers

The above section has dealt only with early attempts to organize in the economic sphere, in particular, the storage, transportation, and marketing of crops. More important for the aim of this study is to trace the origins of political action and to show how it came to be increasingly dominant as a way of protesting. Of course, farmers hoped by political action to increase their living standards just as they hoped to do this by economic co-operation. The history of agrarian politics on the prairie shows a transition from predominantly pressure group action to the support (if not the founding) of new political parties. A brief review of this political history follows.

During the 1890s The Grange had succeeded in having a few independent farmer candidates elected to government bodies, but in this decade and the first ten years of the next century, farmers usually confined their political activity to lobbying the established political parties. The farmers were concerned not only with the problems of marketing but also with the tariffs on goods coming into the country, which had the effect of raising the costs of farm production. The resistance of governments, particularly in Ottawa, to agrarian demands produced a growing movement among western farmers for independent political action. From 1913 several conventions passed resolutions for the establishment of a third party

similar to the British Labour Party.<sup>14</sup> All that actually happened was that watered-down initiative and referendum laws were introduced to Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1913.<sup>15</sup> In this we see the influence of American populist thought. (Although the public voted heavily in favour of direct legislation laws in Saskatchewan, the law was repealed, the premier arguing that its total support was insufficient.<sup>16</sup>)

Agrarian discontent continued through the First World War, aggravated now by the issue of conscription, to which farmers were generally opposed. (It was this more than any other issue which brought the more conservative farmers of Ontario into political action.) South of the border in North Dakota, farmers faced with problems similar to those of the Canadian prairie farmer had formed a Nonpartisan League to protect their interests. The strategy of the League, guided by A.C. Townley, was to gain power by taking over the nominations of the North Dakota Republican Party. The League's programme was for the state control of all those aspects of the farmers' environment, which could not be controlled without direct government intervention. The main proposals were for:

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<sup>14</sup>Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association Convention, 1913, minutes. Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>15</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 286; and Elizabeth Chambers, "The Referendum and the Plebiscite", in N. Ward and D. Spafford, "Politics in Saskatchewan", Don Mills, Ont., 1968.

<sup>16</sup>Chambers, op. cit.

1. State ownership of terminal elevators, flour mills, packing houses and cold-storage plants.
2. State inspection of crop grading and grain dockage (charges against loss of grain in handling).
3. Exemption of farm improvements from taxation.
4. State hail insurance based on a tax on the acreage under crop.
5. Rural credit banks operated at cost.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to observe that this was not a programme inspired by theoretical socialism, no attempt being made to remove control of property or other possessions from the majority of people in the state, i.e., the farmers themselves. The policy of the Nonpartisan League is of particular importance for Canada because it became influential north of the 49th parallel.<sup>18</sup>

The Nonpartisan League was introduced to Saskatchewan by S. Haight who settled near Swift Current in 1916. He promoted the League to such effect that by 1917 there were some three thousand members in Saskatchewan and two thousand in Alberta.<sup>19</sup> A newspaper was started in each

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<sup>17</sup>Fred E. Haynes, "Social Politics in the United States", Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1924, p. 309.

<sup>18</sup>The best accounts of the rise and decline of the Nonpartisan League are: Paul Fossum, "The Agrarian Movement in North Dakota", Baltimore, 1925; Morlan, op. cit.; Theodore Saloutos, "The Rise of the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota, 1915-1917", Agricultural History, vol. 20, 1946, pp. 43-61; Theodore Saloutos, "The Expansion and Decline of the Nonpartisan League in the Western Middle West, 1917-1921", Agricultural History, vol. 20, 1946, pp. 235-252; Sharp, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup>Wood, op. cit., p. 294.

province and both advocated a reform programme similar to that of North Dakota. Candidates were put forward in provincial elections but the only successful one was endorsed by the other parties as well.

The fate of the Nonpartisan League in Saskatchewan was determined by the closeness of ties between the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association (which by 1916 had 28 thousand members from a possible 104,000) and the Liberal government. Morton records that most legislation demanded by the grain growers was enacted by the government.<sup>20</sup> Many men moved from the Grain Growers' Association into the government. Cabinet ministers such as W.R. Motherwell, J.A. Maharg, G. Langley and C. Dunning retained their membership in the organization. Given the close ties between the organized farmers and the provincial government it is not surprising that the League made little headway in Saskatchewan. It did thrive in Alberta and, as will be demonstrated, contributed in a major way to the entrance of the United Farmers of Alberta into politics.

Meanwhile, in Saskatchewan, high prices and the failure of the federal government to reduce tariffs, prompted the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association to adopt in 1917 the Farmers' Platform of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, an interprovincial organization, which had been founded in 1910. The platform:

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<sup>20</sup>Morton, op. cit., pp. 35-6.



"contained declarations in favour of tariff reductions on farm supplies and the necessities of life, extension of Imperial Preference and renewal of Reciprocity negotiations with the United States, greater dependence on direct taxation for federal revenue, nationalization of railways, non-alienation of natural resources, women's suffrage, provincial autonomy in liquor legislation, etc."<sup>21</sup>

This platform, or the New National Policy as an enlarged version was called in 1918, was endorsed by the provincial farm organizations of Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario as well. Feelings among the farmers were so strong that in October, 1919, independent agrarian candidates won federal by-elections in Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick.<sup>22</sup> Motherwell, the defeated Liberal in Saskatchewan, was a former president of the Grain Growers' Association. These three independent candidates were, in effect, the first MPs elected on the Progressive ticket. In provincial elections the most outstanding event was the victory of the United Farmers of Ontario, who formed a government with the help of Independent Labour members in 1919.

The Progressive Party is a major landmark in the development of political action because it constitutes the first formal agrarian political party in Canada. In 1920 a conference called by the Canadian Council of Agriculture, and attended by delegates of all major farmers' organizations, recognized T.A. Crerar as head

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<sup>21</sup>Patton, op. cit., pp. 388-9.

<sup>22</sup>Wood, op. cit., pp. 350-1.

of what was now called the National Progressive Party. From the beginning the new party was not united behind the leadership of Crerar. The internal divisions are recounted in detail by Morton.<sup>23</sup> Crerar saw the party as a national unit and aimed to include all members of society in its membership. In this he was supported by most Saskatchewan, Manitoban and eastern members. Henry Wise Wood, however, promoted a philosophy of government by co-operating interest groups and argued that the Progressive Party should be restricted to the economic class organization of farmers. In this Wood had the support of Albertan members and a few from Saskatchewan. A further division was over state or free market control of the price of wheat. Saskatchewan farmers were especially keen on state control and could not be ignored by Liberals such as Crerar. Before describing the fate of the Progressives at Ottawa, it will be necessary to return again to the history of the Nonpartisan League and the United Farmers of Alberta in order to understand the divisions within the Progressive Party, which brought about its early decline.

It is probable that the divisions in the Progressive camp would have been less severe had not Alberta farmers been subject to the influence of Henry Wise Wood. Paradoxically, Wood was antagonistic to party politics and his influence would not have been so great had he not been pressured by the Nonpartisan League. As we have

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<sup>23</sup>Morton, op. cit., chapter 4.

seen the League flourished and declined rapidly in Saskatchewan. In Alberta, a more diversified province economically, there were less close relations between organized farmers and the Liberal government, particularly after that party was split by a scandal over the allotment of contracts on the construction of the Great Waterways railway.<sup>24</sup> Morton argues that this split in the Liberal Party was never effectively healed and it created a climate receptive to protest movements.<sup>25</sup> In these circumstances the Nonpartisan League remained strong, its most influential member being William Irvine, who edited the organization's newspaper in Calgary. In Canada, the policy of the League was strongly in favour of independent party organization, and ties between farmers and government were much less in Alberta than in Saskatchewan. Wood was the president of the United Farmers of Alberta, and it was the strength of the League as a possible major competitor which may have changed his mind about bringing the United Farmers into politics. (By 1919 the Nonpartisan League was absorbed into the United Farmers of Alberta, but not before the principle of political action was accepted.) Thus Morton considered that Wood changed his mind because:

"...his hand was forced, and he chose rather to lead his followers where they were going

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<sup>24</sup>L.G. Thomas, "The Liberal Party in Alberta", Toronto, 1959.

<sup>25</sup>Morton, op. cit., p. 36.

in any event than to remain fixed by his own doubts. In particular, the invasion of Alberta by the Nonpartisan League, the militantly class conscious farmers' organization which arose in North Dakota in 1915, threatened to stampede the U.F.A. membership into politics despite their leaders' opposition."<sup>26</sup>

The absorption of the League into the United Farmers of Alberta may have stimulated the political awareness of members of the organization, but in so far as it was active politically, it was dominated by the populist and group government theories of Wood. In order to understand Wood's thought it is necessary to know something of his social history. Rolph's biography provides by far the most complete account of Wood and the organizations in which he played a part.<sup>27</sup> Wood was born in Missouri into a prosperous farming family; his father fought for the south but surprisingly emerged from the war in a healthy financial condition. For a mid-western farmer's son Wood was well educated, spending two years at Christian University, Missouri. For a time he was an active member of the Campbellite sect, or Church of the Disciples. These people "placed their emphasis on fellowship and following the way of life advocated by Jesus" rather than on dogma or organization.<sup>28</sup> (The religious philosophy of fundamentalist sects such as the

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<sup>26</sup>W.L. Morton, "The Social Philosophy of Henry Wise Wood, the Canadian Agrarian Leader", *Agricultural History*, vol. 22, 1948, p. 120. (My emphasis.)

<sup>27</sup>Rolph, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

Campbellites is entirely consistent with the political philosophy of self help through co-operative action. A close relationship persisted on the prairies between religion and politics, climaxing in the appeal of William Aberhart, fundamentalist preacher and Social Credit leader.)

To return again to Wood's biography, he remained interested in literature and philosophy after leaving university. He became familiar, for example, with some of Marx's writing, but rejected the revolutionary exhortations therein. By the 1880s Wood had become a leading cattle breeder in northern Missouri. He joined the Farmers' and Labourers' Union; became a free mason; refused a Democratic nomination to the state legislature; organized a successful mutual telephone company in opposition to Bell; studied but was not active in the Alliance and Populist organizations. He grew up in a region subject to a political philosophy described by Hicks as follows:

"(It)...boiled down finally to two fundamental propositions: one, that the government must restrain the selfish tendencies of those who profited at the expense of the poor and needy; the other, that the people, not the plutocrats, must control the government."<sup>29</sup>

When he finally entered politics through the United Farmers of Alberta, Wood was guided by these principles. However, his reluctance to enter politics at all has been ascribed by Rolph to his experience in Missouri

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<sup>29</sup>Hicks, op. cit., p. 406.

with political patronage and bargaining, and especially the defection of agrarian leaders to the old parties.

Wood had become successful not as an owner, but as the manager of his father's farm. In order to get inexpensive land of his own, he joined the thousands who were moving north to Canada. In 1905 Wood started a wheat farm on the Canadian frontier near Calgary and was active in the Society of Equity, subsequently a part of the United Farmers. In politics Wood at first supported the Liberal Party. It is noteworthy that in the same year he became president of the United Farmers of Alberta (1916), Wood tried for but failed to receive the Liberal nomination in Calgary West. This is important for two reasons. First, that Wood was prepared to be actively involved in politics at this time casts some doubt on the usual reason put forward for his reluctance to bring the United Farmers into politics, i.e., did he feel threatened by the political opinions of other members of the organization, especially William Irvine. Secondly, at a time when he had already read extensively in politics, philosophy and economics, Wood was willing to work within the Liberal Party, the party of the status quo. This gives some support to MacPherson's assessment that the politics of farmers in Alberta had always been the politics of a liberal, petite bourgeoisie.<sup>30</sup> The political opposition of

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<sup>30</sup> MacPherson, op. cit. This is a major theme of his work.



farmers at this time was an attempt to ameliorate capitalism from the standpoint of the small, independent producer.

Wood's political philosophy of group government was a proposal to alleviate the ills of industrial capitalism, and it was a philosophy which owed much to his knowledge of the populist tradition of the United States mid west. According to Wood, social life in industrial society is a history of competition and conflict between a plutocracy and the masses. Within this competitive society only the plutocracy was organized. This enabled the industrial producers to exploit others, who participated in the market only as individuals. Farmers were especially exploited. Wood's solution lay in co-operative production and class organization; the organized strength of each class would then prevent the exploitation of any one class:

"When you get class and class equally efficient in competition, as the less developed classes develop higher, I don't think the conflict in the last analysis will be very destructive. I think that before it reaches the acute stage the better judgement of all will prevail."<sup>31</sup>

To say the least this approach naively assumes common interests and the inability of one organized group to dominate others. However, in a province where farmers were demographically so dominant it proved attractive, especially when it was coupled with a rejection of the

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<sup>31</sup>Wood, as quoted in W.L. Morton, "The Social Philosophy of Henry Wise Wood, Canadian Agrarian Leader", op. cit., p. 118.

party system. Both Liberals and Conservatives were denounced as autocratic and committed to the "moneyed interests", that constant focus of populist anger. Instead of a party system Wood supported political representation by democratically organized occupational groups, each nominating its delegates to the legislature and instructing them about what to support. Failure to comply would lead to the recall of the member. The organization of a new party was rejected because it was believed that parties led invariably to corruption. Instead a new co-operative government would be formed by the elected representatives of class organizations.<sup>32</sup>

The opinions of Wood dominated in rural Alberta and had far reaching consequences for the success of the Progressive Party. Although he was against class war, Wood also opposed creating a political organization open to members other than farmers. This meant that there could be no official co-operation between farmers and labour in areas such as Edmonton and Calgary.<sup>33</sup> The presence of United Farmers of Alberta members among the Progressive candidates in the 1921 federal election led to charges by the opposition that the Progressives were a class party. Although denied by T. Crerar, the party leader, the charge was buttressed by Wood's statements in Alberta, for example, - "...we are now an economic

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<sup>32</sup>MacPherson, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup>Rolph, op. cit., chapter 4.

group preparing to take action."<sup>34</sup> (In practice there was little attempt to win the labour vote. Ever since farmers had opposed the Winnipeg general strike of 1919 there had been tension between farmer and worker.) Clearly, by limiting their appeal to farmers, there was no hope that the progressives could dominate a federal government, although in an agrarian province such as Alberta this might be possible. Populist influence can be seen in the decentralized organization of the party. Candidates were selected and elected completely by the efforts of the local constituency members. Fearing the corruption of traditional parties, there was only a house leader, no national organizer, and no central party fund. Despite its "loose" organization, the Progressive Party won 65 seats in the 1921 federal election and formed the second largest group in parliament.<sup>35</sup>

At Ottawa those Progressives who were influenced by Wood were opposed to party government with its divisions into cabinet, supporting party and opposition. Thus the commitment of many western members to constituency autonomy and group government was responsible for the Progressives in parliament refusing to become the official opposition. T.A. Crerar then resigned his leadership and, in return for a few concessions from MacKenzie-King, rejoined the Liberal Party. Subsequently the majority of eastern Progressives followed

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<sup>34</sup>Henry Wise Wood, quoted in Wood, op. cit., p. 352.

<sup>35</sup>Morton, "The Progressive Party...", op. cit., chapter 4.

suit. The breakdown of the Progressive Party has been ascribed by Morton to the failure to accept the title of official opposition. This failure was perhaps inevitable given the fundamental divisions within the party between populist followers of Henry Wise Wood and the more conservative members, who were little more than Liberals outside the Liberal Party. Also, the opposition of United Farmers of Alberta to official labour membership would have prevented the party from acquiring a wide enough social base to form a government. Even those who wanted a composite, national party had been vehement in their opposition to the Winnipeg general strike of 1919. Defection to the Liberals after 1922 gives credence to the claim that people like Crerar were really Liberals in disguise. They were also supported by such staunch Liberals as John Dafoe and his Winnipeg Free Press.<sup>36</sup> Dafoe argued that the Liberal Party acted like Conservatives, any sign of true Liberal action being crushed by big business and finance.<sup>37</sup> His strong support for the Progressives suggests that they were in large part bourgeois and "true" liberals. Thus, although the rejection of parliamentary institutions by the progressives defines the beginning of their decline, they had never been, for the most part, anything but liberals. Lipset is only partly accurate in his statement that:

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<sup>36</sup>Ramsay Cook, "The Politics of John W. Dafoe and the 'Free Press'", Toronto, 1963.

<sup>37</sup>Morton, "The Progressive Party...", op. cit., pp. 25-6.

"The Progressive movement failed principally because it was more a product of immediate discontent than of long term crisis. It was not the expression of a self-conscious class demanding deep-rooted change. The farmers turned to independent political action because of the threat posed to their way of life by the post war crisis. Once the conditions which before produced the protest disappeared, the mass movement died."<sup>38</sup>

As I have recounted, the immediate discontent to which Lipset refers was only the immediate appearance of long term problems which afflicted the farmers. These problems, particularly vulnerability to market changes, did not disappear in the twenties, but returned with greater impact in the following decade. Furthermore, the farmers of Alberta who followed Wood did identify themselves as a class, but Lipset is correct in that few were demanding "deep-rooted change"; they wanted to improve capitalism.

The more radical populists from the United Farmers of Alberta, together with a few isolated members from Saskatchewan, continued to be elected as Progressives to the federal government where they joined the two labour members to form the Ginger Group. We shall see in a later chapter that this group was to be the chief source of the pressure for a co-operative commonwealth party.

In provincial politics the United Farmers of Alberta were highly successful. Although receiving only 28.8 per cent of the popular vote in 1921, the United Farmers benefited from the biased distribution of

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<sup>38</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 82.

seats, which has always favoured the parties with rural strength, and won 63 per cent of the seats.<sup>39</sup> This large proportion of seats may have led MacPherson to conclude that Alberta from 1921 has been characterized by a quasi-party system, by which he means, in part, that one party has held the vast majority of seats at any one time.<sup>40</sup> If a high percentage of the popular vote is taken as an important indicator of dominance, then one party dominance appears much less, because no party has ever won more than 56 per cent of the popular vote. The United Farmers' government did last for fourteen years and the operation of United Farmers' democracy in action has been acutely examined by MacPherson.<sup>41</sup> The direct responsibility of the MLA to his constituents quickly gave way to cabinet control. Cabinet and premier operated according to the usual cabinet system. This process was probably hastened by Wood's personal refusal to accept the premiership, because others among the farmers were less committed to delegate democracy. The constituency association also became subservient to the annual convention in the formulation of policy, and the convention itself was soon dominated by government ministers, especially on issues which were defined as critical by government

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<sup>39</sup>Appendix B.

<sup>40</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., chapter 8, the general conclusion to his analysis.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-92.



members. The theory of group government, which required that the cabinet be composed of representatives of the different economic classes, was abandoned even before the first election. One Labour member was subsequently made Minister of Labour, but this was the only concession to theory. MacPherson argues that in spite of the loss of constituency autonomy when the United Farmers began to operate like a conventional political party, some of what the farmers had attacked in politics was avoided. Nomination and financing of candidates was done in the constituency and not controlled by a party "machine". It did not develop the characteristics of party which had been denounced. The United Farmers' government did not become conglomerate, unprincipled, develop a central machine, or place itself at the disposal of outside interests. In short the United Farmers was what I have defined as a democratic populist party.

The United Farmers organization is important in the study for two main reasons. First, it reflects the continuous pragmatism of prairie politics. The United Farmers of Alberta promoted co-operation among producers and generated opposition to financiers and industrialists from the east. It was not rejected by the farmers until the severe economic crisis of the thirties implied that it had failed. The Social Credit League then replaced the United Farmers as the governing party. In fact, the theory of Social Credit was first introduced to the

province by members of the United Farmers organization, locals of which became centres for the distribution of Social Credit ideas. Many of those who were subsequently to support Aberhart and the Social Credit League were actually introduced to this new panacea through the United Farmers. Secondly, the United Farmers, through the radical members who made up the Ginger Group in Ottawa, was of considerable importance in the negotiations leading to the founding of the CCF. Of the CCF Morton has written:

"While it is true that the new organization was in its inception an attempt to apply Wood's doctrine to a combination of groups, the spirit was different. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, properly for a political party, did not content itself with Wood's long perspective or with waiting for the millenium to be accomplished by group organization but set out to capture national power."<sup>42</sup>

The combination of the introduction of the ideas of Social Credit by the United Farmers and the part played by some members in establishing the CCF implies that both these organizations were within the agrarian populist tradition (a major point which must await the documentation of later chapters).

The strong liberal orientation of many prairie farmers is most obvious in the province of Manitoba. In 1920 the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association became the United Farmers of Manitoba. Leaders of the

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<sup>42</sup>Morton, "The Social Philosophy of Henry Wise Wood...", op. cit., p. 123. Morton tends to overstate the influence of Wood and the United Farmers of Alberta in the founding of the CCF.

organization were loath to withdraw support from the Liberal government, resolving only that "the question of taking provincial action be left entirely at the initiative of each local constituency."<sup>43</sup> In the election of 1920 fourteen independent farmer candidates were elected. A minority Liberal government was then defeated in 1922, after which the United Farmers formally entered the election and achieved a working majority.<sup>44</sup> Thereafter farmers governed in conservative fashion until 1928 when the farm organization withdrew from politics leaving a "progressive" government directly supported by the Liberals.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile in Saskatchewan political activity had been less dramatic. The Liberal government held a snap election in 1921, before an independent opposition could be mobilized, and regained power, claiming all the time that Saskatchewan Liberals were independent of Ottawa. Having skilfully avoided a clash with the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, the Liberals continued in office until 1929. This long term in office (1905-1929) is usually attributed to the party's highly organized election activities and a well developed system of patronage. It is also recognized that the Liberals

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<sup>43</sup>Quoted in Wood, op. cit., p. 342.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 341-3.

<sup>45</sup>M.S. Donnelly, "The Government of Manitoba", Toronto, 1963, pp. 63-4.

were generally sympathetic to agrarian demands.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.4. The Extension of Co-operative Activities in the Twenties

Not only were the early nineteen-twenties characterized by the founding of independent political organizations by farmers, but also by the extensive development of co-operative marketing, especially the wheat pools. This provides some evidence to reject Lipset's thesis that in the great plains:

"Political action usually arises during a depression or during a major social crisis such as war, whereas cooperation occurs most frequently in periods of prosperity.... In a depression, farmers are less likely to accept gradualism when immediate action is called for."<sup>47</sup>

We are then forced to ask why political action and widespread co-operation occurred together during the post war agricultural depression. It is quite clear that both reactions are complementary and can develop together.

Two pressure groups were chiefly responsible for the establishment of the wheat pools in Canada, these being the United Farmers of Alberta and the Farmers' Union of Canada. Despite its national title the latter was a radical splinter organization, which separated from the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association in 1921.

The price of wheat, we know, was highly variable

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<sup>46</sup>Escott M. Reid, "The Saskatchewan Liberal Machine before 1929", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, vol. 2, 1936, pp. 27-40.

<sup>47</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 83.

from year to year, and farmers were also forced to sell in the fall when prices were at their lowest. There had been a long standing debate over whether marketing should be subject to government control or remain free. In 1919 a federal Wheat Board was set up, but its policies were opposed because Canadians felt that they were not getting such high prices for their produce as were Americans. However, the ending of the Board in 1920 coincided with a large fall in the price of wheat. The Canadian Council of Agriculture now looked round for alternatives and some members were influenced by the success of Aaron Sapiro and California Fruit Growers' Association, the members of which pooled their produce in co-operative marketing. Wood, who was on the Council's investigating committee, favoured a voluntary, co-operative pool, but received little support outside Alberta. In parliament the new Progressives pushed so hard for a Wheat Board that the government did introduce some compromise legislation. These proposals were found unacceptable by farm leaders, and the bill to establish the Board was rejected by the Manitoba legislature (support from the provinces was legally required for the bill). The rejection of compulsory market legislation resulted in attention being focussed again on the idea of a co-operative pool. Still Wood and the United Farmers delayed so much that the Calgary Herald took the initiative of bringing Sapiro to Alberta. Under his influence a board of directors chaired by Wood

was established on August 16th, 1923. The Alberta Wheat Pool required that farmers sign contracts to deliver wheat to the Pool organization. The Pool would then market the wheat, and of the total return for the year, each farmer would receive an amount proportionate to how much he had contributed to the total Pool. If the operation were to be successful, a large proportion of the total acreage would have to be signed up, in order that the Pool would have some control over prices. Therefore, a target of 50 per cent of the crop was agreed and a vigorous campaign followed. 45 per cent of the wheat acreage was actually contracted, marketing was undertaken, and Pool members received higher payouts on the 1923 crop than did non-members.<sup>48</sup>

In Saskatchewan the new Farmers' Union rejected all remedies that had been tried so far, proposing instead a strong international union of farmers who would then be able to control the marketing of produce to greater effect.<sup>49</sup> Following the failure of the national Wheat Board proposals, the Farmers' Union promoted the pool idea. Sapiro was invited to Saskatchewan, where again he converted many farmers to the pool marketing system. However, leaders of the older co-operative organizations were at most lukewarm towards the pool, feeling that it would eventually encroach on their territory by entering

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<sup>48</sup>Rolph, op. cit., chapter 7.

<sup>49</sup>On the Farmers' Union of Canada see especially Duff Spafford, "The 'Left Wing', 1921-1931", in N. Ward and D. Spafford, op. cit.



the elevator business. When only 37 per cent of the 1923 crop had been signed up it was decided to delay formal operations of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool until 1924. Within two years over 50 per cent of farmers in the province had signed contracts. 1924 also saw the setting up of the Manitoba Co-operative Wheat Producers and a central sales agency to co-ordinate the activities of each pool. From 1925 to 1928 the Pools were successful to the extent that members received several cents per bushel more than did non-members.

It soon became evident that to be more efficient the Pools would require their own elevators. Elevator companies, both private and co-operative, had resisted the formation of the Pools, because they anticipated a loss of business. Yet despite the opposition of its leaders, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company voted in 1925 to merge with the new Wheat Pool. There followed a rapid growth in the number of co-operatives for the marketing of livestock and dairy produce, and also consumer purchasing co-operatives.<sup>50</sup> Educational work was also extended, particularly after the Farmers' Union and the Grain Growers' Association were reconciled and formed a new organization, the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section). Within the United Farmers organization, old members of the Farmers' Union formed a radical Farmers' Educational League to promote

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<sup>50</sup>For a full review of consumer co-operation see J.F.C. Wright, "Prairie Progress: Consumer Co-operation in Saskatchewan", Saskatoon, 1956.

the idea of a co-operative commonwealth. These farmers wanted a compulsory pool, which would give greater control of the market, but were opposed on this issue by Pool leaders in all the provinces. Before the great depression began the United Farmers made little impact on the much larger Wheat Pool, but thereafter became very influential. However, the details of agrarian history in this period are directly connected with the origin of the CCF and Social Credit League, and will be reserved for the discussion of the founding of these organizations.

### 3.5. A Comparative Note on American Cotton and Fruit Farmers

While it may be somewhat of a diversion, it is perhaps useful to conclude this chapter with some reference to other types of farming in North America, lest we fall into the trap of accepting generalizations, which refer to farmers as a whole, when our evidence is restricted to those involved in wheat production. To some degree the relative neglect of farming areas other than the large grain producing states has led to the acceptance of statements such as the following, which refers to the Greenback, Farmers' Alliance, and Populist organizations:

"An examination of the electoral support of these agrarian movements reveals a consistent pattern. It was the economically and climatically vulnerable wheat belt that formed the backbone of all the protest

movements, from the Independent parties of the 1870s down to the contemporary CCF in Canada."<sup>51</sup>

This statement is wrong in several respects. It should not be assumed in the first place that election results give ground for generalizing about all the protest movements. As we have seen with reference to western Canada, many were non-political in the sense that they did not aim to participate directly in government. More important, the historian Saloutos, among others, has located an important source of agrarian protest that is outwith the wheat belt.<sup>52</sup> Through The Grange, The Agricultural Wheel, the Southern Alliance, the Southern Cotton Association, and the Farmers' Union, southern United States cotton farmers expressed discontent and influenced the agricultural thinking of other areas. The important Alliance and Farmers' Union organizations both originated in the south. Saloutos argues that agrarian reaction against racial and religious out-groups (most where white fundamentalists), and against labour and commercial organizations of the city, were reactions of despair from a people who felt they were losing control of their lives. He claims that in many other respects they were progressive, being ahead of both government and other agricultural circles in their thinking. For example, the cotton farmers were ahead

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<sup>51</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>52</sup>Theodore Saloutos, "Farmers' Movements in the South, 1865-1933", Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960.

of the New Deal in advocating methods of control such as limiting crop acreage, withholding produce from market, fixing minimum prices, and co-operative buying and selling. This was part of the policy of the Southern Alliance in the 1880s. Neither the production of wheat nor the variability of climate would seem to be the critical factor in North American agrarian protest; more important seems to be the production of a single crop sold for cash in an open market, and in particular when that market is international (which increases insecurity).<sup>53</sup>

In the political sociology of agriculture a lack of comparative analysis has encouraged the acceptance of the following generalization: the most radical farmers, those who first organize and support protest organizations, are the largest and most prosperous single crop producers; small producers, especially those near a subsistence level, are most conservative. A considerable body of evidence has been gathered to support this theory with reference to wheat producers. However, Chambers' history of California farm organizations casts doubt on the validity of the statement as a generalization

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<sup>53</sup>In fact, a similar generalization has been put forward by Lipset himself in another place. See S.M. Lipset et al., "The Psychology of Voting", in G. Lindzey, "Handbook of Social Psychology", vol. 2, Addison-Wesley, Cambridge, Mass., 1954, especially p. 1137. However, his formulation re North America in "Agrarian Socialism", op. cit., remains uncorrected in the 1968 edition.

about all types of agriculture.<sup>54</sup>

Chambers records that many crops are grown in California, but on any one farm there tends to be specialization in one crop. Success has always depended on an uncertain water supply, a large number of migrant labourers, and the sale of perishable goods on markets thousands of miles away in sufficient quantity to cover high costs of production. Careful planning and exact timing of crop operations is essential. The following make up the classes of producer:

1. A few large "industrial" farmers tilling thousands of acres with the help of large numbers of migrant labourers.
2. Substantial commercial farmers with heavy capital investment.
3. Small and part-time farmers, who work on too small a scale to provide an adequate return - the largest group.
4. The poverty stricken migrant labourers.

These differences were reflected in the support of the different farm organizations.

The California State Grange, dormant since 1880, experienced a large revival during the depression of the thirties. For the most part members were the small or part-time farmers from the northern region of the state. For some The Grange was basically a fraternal

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<sup>54</sup>Clarke A. Chambers, "California Farm Organizations", Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1952.

organization, but for many more it was a vehicle of protest. The Grange was continually to the left of other farm organizations on key issues such as the rights of labour and state control of irrigation.

The California Farm Bureau Federation was originally formed as an extension of the Colleges of Agriculture, i.e., as an educational organization. Membership was widespread but concentrated in the richest regions and included many members of the prosperous categories (1 and 2 above). Close relations were maintained with other farm organizations in the country, apart from The Grange. As a response to the costly and violent farm strikes of 1933-34, the Associated Farmers were organized by an agricultural-industrial coalition, and were directly supported by the Farm Bureau. The new organization was concerned solely with opposing the development of unions among the migrant labourers. The Associated Farmers undertook intense "red" baiting and vigilante action, including some instances of severe violence. They co-operated with the Farm Bureau to promote anti-labour legislation and to keep the level of state relief payments low, thus forcing wages down. Grange members, who employed little labour, were for the most part opposed to these activities.

Thus, while similar to wheat farmers in their economic situation (although they required more migrant labour), the large farmers in California were conservative, even reactionary, whereas the small farmers were



somewhat more to the left. The proposition outlined earlier is deficient probably because it takes no account of either cultural history or of the direction of radical action, whether reactionary or innovatory, when a large body of landless labourers participate in the production process. In the case of California fruit growing the migrant labour is of crucial importance. Where the technology of production requires a large labour force, as in California fruit and southern cotton production, the political organizations of single crop, large scale, farmers will be conservative.

This brief comparison with fruit and cotton growers reinforces the thesis that agricultural producers in North America are pragmatic in politics. Except for a few of their leaders, they have not been concerned with the theoretical implications of economic and political policies for the whole of society. Where their activities have seemed consistent with socialist doctrines this has been in some types of agricultural production in which state control of opposition forces is to the advantage of the farmer, and the farmer has not been hesitant to use the state to further his own interests.

## Chapter Four

### Third Parties and the Depression

Since both Social Credit and the CCF developed during the depression as new third parties, it is appropriate to examine theoretical studies of the rise of third parties in Canada. On the basis of the criticism of the work of Pinard and MacPherson<sup>1</sup> a revised model will be presented and some supporting data on the structural sources of third party protest will be sketched out.

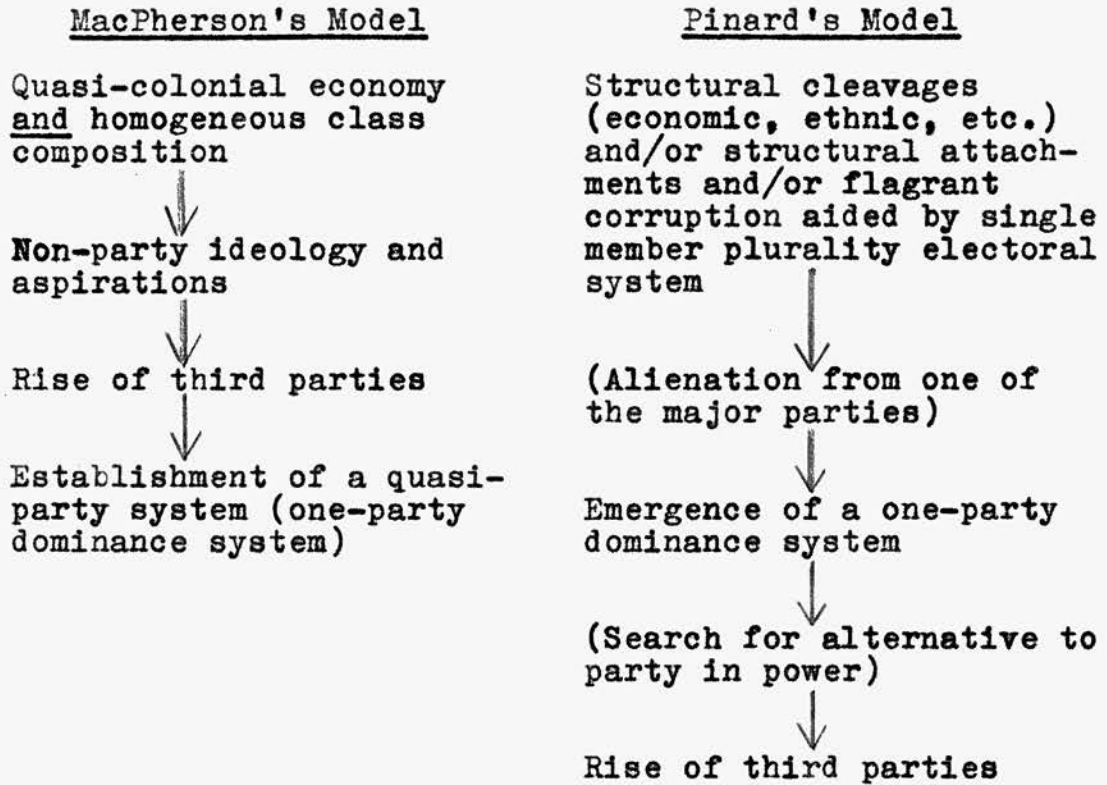
#### 4.1. Models for the Rise of Third Parties

Perhaps the best attack on the problem of how third parties develop in Canada can be mounted by examining how Pinard has interpreted the work of MacPherson and substituted his own theory. Figure 1 is a reproduction of Pinard's schematic model, at the structural level, of both his own and MacPherson's theory.

Looking first at Pinard's interpretation of MacPherson, we find that it is deficient in several respects. There is no sign that Pinard recognizes that MacPherson's model for the rise of third parties is only implicit and incidental to the main theme of his work. His study involves third parties because his area of

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Pinard, "The Rise of a Third Party", Englewood Cliffs, 1971; C.B. MacPherson, "Democracy in Alberta", Toronto, 1953.

Figure 1. Models for the Rise of Third Parties.

Source: Adapted from M. Pinard, "The Rise of a Third Party", Englewood Cliffs, 1971, Figure 4.1, p. 67.

By structural attachments Pinard means the degree to which social relations in the community are close-knit.

investigation was the province of Alberta, but MacPherson's main aim was to establish the conditions for the development of a quasi-party system. To Pinard the quasi-party system is equivalent to one-party dominance. The latter term refers to a political system dominated by one party but in which other parties continue to exist. It is operationally defined as a party system in which the main opposition party gets less than one-third of the votes.<sup>2</sup> For MacPherson the quasi-party system is something more than this, because it shares some of the attributes of other political systems.

"It shares the attributes of a non-party system in its emphasis on 'business government', that is, on administration rather than policy formation as the function of government and as the government's main claim on the electorate. It shares, too, some of the qualities of a one-party system, especially in its rejection of the orthodox notion that party is beneficial, and in its belief in the general will of the community."<sup>3</sup>

MacPherson concludes that the Alberta system is sui generis and calls it quasi-party; it is not equivalent to one-party dominance. More important than this definitional issue is the fact that MacPherson's theory does not require that a new party be the basis of the quasi-party system. Thus MacPherson's theoretical concern is only incidentally with the rise of third parties, and Pinard's argument that MacPherson's theory

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<sup>2</sup>Pinard, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., p. 239.

requires that third parties precede the development of quasi-party systems is wrong.<sup>4</sup> It is wrong because MacPherson makes no claim for this and because Pinard has not appreciated precisely what the quasi-party system is.

Pinard has also misread the structural conditions which MacPherson stated were necessary for the development of his quasi-party system. MacPherson did argue that the quasi-party system would emerge from a quasi-colonial economic condition, but he added qualifications - that the economy should be in a state of an undefined "mature capitalism", and that the population should be homogeneous and petit bourgeois relative to other areas. He did not state as his critics have claimed that Alberta was a one class society.<sup>5</sup> MacPherson actually wrote:

"The quasi-party system, as it has emerged in Alberta, may be seen as a response to the problem of democratic government in a community mainly of independent producers which forms a subordinate part of a mature capitalist economy."<sup>6</sup>

Overall, I am forced to conclude that MacPherson has relatively little to say about the rise of third parties

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<sup>4</sup>Pinard, op. cit., p. 69. He does correctly point out that MacPherson is inconsistent as to whether Alberta ever did have an alternate two-party system out of which the quasi-party system developed.

<sup>5</sup>See, e.g., Pinard, op. cit., p. 69; and the debate between Lipset and MacPherson - S.M. Lipset, "Democracy in Alberta", Canadian Forum, vol. 34, 1954, pp. 175-7 and 196-8; C.B. MacPherson, "A Reply", ibid., 1955, pp. 223-5.

<sup>6</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., p. 239.

other than those in Alberta, and that Pinard has created a straw man.<sup>7</sup>

Pinard's own model (figure 1) is specifically one of the rise of third parties. Several structural strains are presented, which, alone or in combination, lead to a rejection of one major party in an alternate party system. This means one-party dominance, a situation which may be stable for long periods. However, during periods of critical stress, voters search for alternatives, and, finding the old opposition parties weak, will support a new party.

There are several problems with this formulation. Pinard emphasizes the prior necessity of one-party dominance, stating that "one-party dominance precedes and is a factor in the rise of new movements; it does not follow from the rise."<sup>8</sup> It is easy to agree with Pinard that a weak opposition party makes it easier for a new third party to become popular, but one-party dominance is not a necessary condition of the rise of third parties. Pinard presents no specification of why it must be the case that structural strains lead to the rejection of one major party and support for the alternative, rather than to no response or to the rejection of both existing parties. All of these possibilities

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<sup>7</sup>MacPherson does have a general theory about quasi-party systems but has not faced the problem of why the Maritimes, where all his pre-conditions are present, did not develop a party system like Alberta's.

<sup>8</sup>Pinard, op. cit., p. 69. Printed in bold type.



seem plausible. Finally Pinard claims predictive power for the theory, but it breaks down where it should have been most certain of success. In Pinard's terms Alberta had a one-party dominance system for 35 years (i.e., the Social Credit government), but in 1971 it was replaced not by a third party but by the "weak" Conservative Party.

In view of these deficiencies I have developed another model which is less deterministic, more conditional in form. It is not intended as a tightly knit theoretical system; it is more a speculative listing of plausible relationships which should be investigated in trying to understand the rise of a third party. It seems sensible to agree with Pinard and MacPherson by assigning initial importance to structural divisions or strains in society. These need not be economic, as in MacPherson's model, although economic class divisions have been the main force behind prairie third parties. However, to provide a more general model, my argument is that some form of structural cleavage (economic, ethnic, etc.) is a necessary, but not always sufficient, condition for the development of third parties. As Pinard states, there must be some rejection by the people of existing parties if a new one is to become popular. However, it is here that we must supply a missing link between structural strain and the rejection of existing parties. This we might call the experience of deprivation or felt deprivation. (Later the use of relative deprivation theory in this context

will be assessed.) Furthermore, the deprivation must be connected by the people to the existing parties. Whether structural cleavage leads to felt deprivation, rejection of the existing major parties, and to the further step of supporting a new third party will depend on the presence of a number of facilitating conditions, one of which is Pinard's one-party dominance. Others might include what Pinard calls structural attachments (or close-knit communities), and open corruption. Internal social homogeneity is not necessary, but where the population experiencing the deprivation is divided on other issues, then we might expect more than one third party to be supported. Even given all the conditions suggested above, a third party will not be founded and supported unless both resources are available (money, leaders, etc.) and people retain enough hope to believe they can do something to improve their circumstances.

In Alberta and Saskatchewan the strain which precipitated the rise of Social Credit and the CCF as third parties was the impact of the depression. Therefore, a general outline of the depression and its impact on social life will follow. In the context of this discussion I shall try to show that the Palliser Triangle was so destitute that experiences of deprivation could not be transformed into active support for the CCF (the Triangle was mostly in Saskatchewan). This helps to explain why the CCF was slower to develop in Saskatchewan than was Social Credit in Alberta.

4.2. The Depression of 1929-394.2.1. In Their Own Words

This section contains a series of anecdotes which are of major importance because they describe from personal experience a kind of living which could otherwise only be inferred from economic data.<sup>9</sup> Under the combined impact of depressed prices and drought, living conditions on the farms deteriorated badly. This description of diet comes from one of the areas of Alberta least affected by the drought.

"I spent most of 1934 with my uncle and aunt. Unhappily they had even less to eat than people on relief in Edmonton. We lived for most of that year on potatoes. The crop had been good and they had a great unsaleable surplus. So we had potatoes varied with eggs, varied with an occasional chicken which had stopped laying, and potatoes varied with potatoes. There must be a hundred ways of cooking potatoes and my aunt tried them all. Some of the leafy weeds made excellent greens and my aunt used to mix some of the spicy weeds in with the potatoes."<sup>10</sup>

The Reverend Sandy Nicholson, stationed at Hudson Bay junction in the northern park belt of Saskatchewan, became an organizer for the CCF, and a federal M.P. for MacKenzie in 1940. His diary of conditions on the northern frontier area is now quite famous. It deserves another exposure.

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<sup>9</sup>The reader might usefully consult the novels and autobiographies of the period. See especially, Ross Annett, "Especially Babe", New York, 1942; Sinclair Ross, "As for Me and My House", Toronto, 1966; W.O. Mitchel, "Who has Seen the Wind", Toronto, 1947; James H. Gray, "The Winter Years", Toronto, 1966; N.B. James, "Autobiography of a Nobody", Toronto, 1947.

<sup>10</sup>Russell Shepherd, quoted in James H. Gray, "Men against the Desert", Saskatoon, 1967, p. 120.

"Friday, March 29th (1935).... They had gone to the neighbours for additional food supplies and we had potatoes, butter and a pie as 'extras' for breakfast.... Supper with S\_\_ M\_\_. Bread, butter, tea (cream and sugar); no meat, fruit or syrup. It is hard for bachelors to get adequate relief he complained.... We went to J\_\_ R\_\_'s for the night. J\_\_ and the man who is 'batching' with him slept on the floor while F\_\_ and I had the only bed in the shack. They had a cup of tea and bread without butter before we went to bed.

"Saturday, March 30th.... J\_\_ had hot cakes for us for breakfast with syrup he made from white sugar and water. He had a drink made with roasted wheat which he called 'Bennett coffee'. We had dinner at K\_\_'s. They had three fried eggs for four people and some potatoes, tea, bread and corn syrup. Relief allowances were always so low that food was very scarce at the end of the month they complained. We went to E\_\_ T\_\_'s for the night. I had known E\_\_ when I taught school at Davidson 15 years before. Dry years drove him north. He has a small 2-roomed log house.

"Sunday, March 31st. What poverty! Their tea kettle sprung a leak last fall and the trouble with the relief system said F\_\_ was it assumed that people never required a new lamp chimney, tea kettle, or wash basin. For five years they had been seeing one utensil or implement after another wear out without being able to replace it. Mr. and Mrs. J\_\_ P\_\_ kept us for the night. J\_\_ homesteaded near Strasburg about 30 years ago. He put up good buildings - later bought another quarter on which he paid \$2,000 cash. Finally he lost the half because he could not meet his payments. Mrs. P\_\_ in her early fifties is almost blind because she cannot get the necessary medical care for her eyes."<sup>11</sup>

These comments highlight the problems of poor housing, diet, debt and health which confronted the people. In the worst hit areas this was added to by drought lasting

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<sup>11</sup>Rev. A.M. Nicholson, extract from his diary, quoted in G.E. Britnell, "The Wheat Economy", Toronto, 1939, pp. 211-2.

up to eight years. The condition of the animals suggests the state of the country as a whole.

"Things got so bad in some of those years that the cattle seemed to go a little crazy. They'd eat anything in sight and the vets used to find such weird stuff in the stomachs of the cattle that they had to coin a new word to describe it. You won't find it in any of the textbooks, but hundreds of cattle died in those days from what they called 'hardward disease'. They would eat door knobs or pieces of iron, or hinges that fell off gates, they were that desperate to get something into their stomachs."<sup>12</sup>

Conditions got so bad in the Palliser Triangle that:

"The Mounties used to say that they were busier gathering up people who had been driven insane by the depression than in chasing crooks. There was one occasion when I was getting a ride back from school to Moose Jaw (in the centre of the dried out area) and we were stopped by the Mounties. They were searching for a farmer who had disappeared. His section and a half farm had once been excellent land but it had grown no crop in five years. The day before the Mounties stopped us, people going past had noticed this man driving his binder up and down a field in which nothing was growing. He had stopped and shouted to one of them:

"'Look at this for a stand of wheat! If it will go to a bushel, it will go 50 bushels to the acre! Best crop I ever saw! Best crop I ever saw!'"<sup>13</sup>

Poverty in the countryside meant depression for the urban industries and retail trades which depended on purchases by farmers. A salesman describes his experience:

"I went to work for Westinghouse after graduation and in 1929 was calling on the power

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<sup>12</sup>Dick Painter, quoted in Gray, "Men against the Desert", op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>13</sup>Dan Cameron, ibid., p. 167.



companies of Alberta, selling generators, turbines and transformers. The heavy end of the electrical business died in 1930 but Westinghouse kept me on by switching me to appliances. It got to the point where all I ever sold were fuses, light bulbs and radio tubes. But I kept trying and when I found a store that was still in business I sure gave him service.

"I had a good customer in Hanna which in 1939 was the only town in the whole of eastern Alberta that had any survival potential...."<sup>14</sup>

Relief expenditure in Alberta was concentrated on relieving the plight of the urban unemployed. In Saskatchewan, by far the largest amounts were paid out to the rural municipalities, which had become incapable of relieving their own poor. Part of the relief was given in the form of agricultural supplies in order that new crops could be planted and livestock survive the winter. It was often woefully inadequate. The Regina Star published a letter which described how a government official had treated a farmer:

"Dear Sir, Re Feed and Fodder, 1935-36. We are in receipt of yours of the 28th in which you apply for twenty bushels of feed wheat to feed your hogs and chickens. In reply we wish to advise that owing to the low market for chickens at the present time and further that no revenue may be expected from that source during the winter, the government does not deem it advisable to supply feed to winter chickens. We would therefore ask you to dispose of them in order to purchase food for your hogs."<sup>15</sup>

It was pointed out that the farmer could get little for his chickens if the price was low and that he had asked

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<sup>14</sup>Alvin Geddes, ibid., p. 66.

<sup>15</sup>Letter to the editor, Regina Star, 26-12-38.



for feed for laying hens. Eggs were a reasonable market proposition. However, now the farmer would have neither hogs nor hens since the money for selling chickens would be insufficient to feed the hogs.

#### 4.2.2. Impact of Depression and Drought

The string of quotations which were given above present something of the experience of living in Alberta and Saskatchewan of the thirties, but they are based on personal observations of particular events. Therefore they cannot alone describe the impact on the total society. For this we must turn to statistical data, but always keeping in mind what these abstractions meant in the everyday experience of the people.

Because Canadian prosperity depended on the export of primary products, the depression in prices from late in 1929 quickly drew Canada into economic trouble. Table 4.1 shows that the most rapid and severe effect was experienced by exporters of farm products. The decline in industrial production and in employment was slower and less severe. For those depending directly on the sale of exports, declining income was only partially compensated by the fall in price of the goods and services which they had to buy.<sup>16</sup> Saskatchewan, where wheat had usually accounted for about 80 per cent

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<sup>16</sup>Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion Relations (Rowell-Sirois Report), Ottawa, 1940. Reference will be made to the 1954 edition in 1 vol. Book 1, p. 144.

Table 4.1. The Decline in Export Prices and Economic Activity, 1929-33.

	Prices of 17 major exports	Export prices or farm products (a)	All whole-sale prices	Index of employment	Index of industrial production
1929 July	100	100	100	100	100
1930 June	82	70	90	93	80
1930 December	66	42	80	87	74
1931 June	62	42	74	83	64
1931 December	61	41	72	80	61
1932 June	54	37	68	72	59
1933 December	47	30	66	67	52

(a) Includes wheat, barley, potatoes, cheese, bacon and cattle.

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, Ottawa, Book 1, p. 144.

of the total value of agricultural products, experienced the brunt of the depression in prices. Wheat production was less dominant in Alberta and the economy as a whole was less directly dependent on agriculture. Nevertheless, agriculture was by far the largest industry in both provinces. "In 1936 agriculture accounted for 79 per cent of the total value of all production in Saskatchewan, compared with 62.9 per cent in Alberta, 39.8 per cent in Manitoba...."<sup>17</sup> When the export prices for Canadian wheat and cattle fell by 57 per cent and 38 per cent

<sup>17</sup> Britnell, op. cit., p. 33.

respectively, Alberta and Saskatchewan were the hardest hit.<sup>18</sup> From 1929 to 1933 incomes declined by 72 per cent in Saskatchewan and by 61 per cent in Alberta, the two largest reductions among Canada's provinces.<sup>19</sup> The relative position of western export producers was made worse by the early imposition of higher tariffs on imports, which was intended to cushion the effects of the depression on eastern manufacturers by holding up the price of goods. This policy was severely criticized by western radicals and later by a government commission, which reported that:

"The increase in protection widened the domestic market for the Canadian producer and thus helped to maintain employment and income in the manufacturing industry. But had tariffs not been raised the purchasing power of exporters would have been greater, debt defaults would have been less and the expansion of industries such as gold mining and electric power would have been more rapid. It is possible that these circumstances would have contributed just as much to the maintenance of the market for Canadian manufactures as did the rise in duties, and that the national income would have remained at the higher level."<sup>20</sup>

Apart from the collapse of prices two other factors complicated the position of western farmers. The years 1926 to 1929 were ones of good yields and high prices for wheat. This encouraged farmers both to expand their holdings and to increase mechanization (by incurring debts) in the expectation that good times

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<sup>18</sup>Rowell-Sirois Report, Book 1, p. 144.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 150, Table 50.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

would continue. A similar process was evident in earlier periods of prosperity, although debt charges were not so great a burden when good quality, free homestead land was still available. Table 4.2 gives a

Table 4.2. Estimated Farm Indebtedness of Prairie Provinces, 1931.

Type of Debt	Amount	Percentage
Mortgages and agreements of sale	\$488 million	75.2
Implement companies	49	7.6
Banks	48	7.4
Stores	10	1.6
* Other	55	8.5
Total	650	100.0

Source: W.A. Mackintosh, "Economic Problems of the Prairie Provinces", Toronto, 1935, p. 266.

conservative estimate of the total private farm debt at \$650 million, of which roughly 75 per cent was contracted for land purchase. At interest rates of at least 8 per cent this created a heavy burden of fixed charges, which were bearable in boom periods but ruinous when gross income fell sharply. "At 8 per cent the interest charge would be \$2 per acre of wheat or at the farm price of 1932 (30 cents) nearly 7 bushels of the average yield of 15 bushels per acre of wheat."<sup>21</sup> The second major addition to the price problem was that of

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<sup>21</sup>W.A. Mackintosh, "Economic Problems of the Prairie Provinces", Toronto, 1935, p. 259.

prolonged drought, complicated by disease and insect plagues. Farmers who were afflicted in this way soon found that low prices were accompanied by a low yield per acre.

Drought, disease, insects and debt did not affect all parts of the prairie equally. Therefore, statistics such as for the average decline in income hide great regional differences. The most badly affected region was Palliser's Triangle, where tens of thousands became destitute. Palliser's Triangle is named after the region's first surveyor, who pronounced it unfit for agricultural settlement. The apex is just south of Saskatoon, in central Saskatchewan, and the baseline lies along the United States border from south-east Alberta to south-west Manitoba. Sixty per cent of the total area is in Saskatchewan. Palliser's assessment was not completely accurate because in the best years the world's highest quality wheat could be produced here, but the rainfall was unreliable and the threat of an early killing frost ever present. In bad times the people were kept on the land by the conviction that next year would bring a bumper crop, thus earning for the region the name which best describes its character, "next-year country". Part of the region's difficulty resulted from the settlement policy of establishing farmers in quarter sections. Unfortunately, the region was only capable of supporting a sparse population of large scale ranchers and grain growers. Ranching had

to be on large spreads because the land would not support a high density of cattle per acre; wheat growing was best carried out on full section farms (or larger ones if possible) because a large total acreage, even when yields or prices were low, might still provide enough cash to get by. Many suffered as they learned this lesson. In 1927 the Palliser Triangle produced \$90 million of wheat; in 1936 it produced \$3 million.<sup>22</sup>

The dry summers of the depression years intensified the problem of soil erosion because the moisture, which helped to hold soil down against the wind, was obviously missing. In some areas crops were only possible by summerfallowing every third year. The soil was ploughed and left black during the summer months in order to absorb the summer rain, some of which would be retained to help the following season's crop. However, if there was no rain this bare earth was subject to wind erosion. During the "dirty thirties" the wind could blow away the entire top soil down to the hard bed. Country roads, blocked by snow drifts in winter, were now blocked by dirt drifts in summer. Worst of all, soil blowing from abandoned land could upset the earth on hundreds of acres nearby and destroy occupied farms.<sup>23</sup> A dust storm is described by a farmer near Hanna, Alberta:

"...away off to the northwest a heavy black cloud is forming between sky and earth.

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<sup>22</sup>Gray, "Men against the Desert", op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 33 and pp. 2-3.



Black, yes, black as night. It sweeps towards us rapidly forty, fifty, sixty miles an hour. We turn, each individual one of us, looking for the nearest shelter. Teams are unhooked as quickly as possible, and if no stable room is near, turned with their heads away from the storm. Those of us with tractors either make for shelter or stay with the machines as long as possible.... The air gets colder. The huge black wall is only a mile away. A minute, and with a blast like the roar of a thousand lions it is upon us. We are alone in a sightless mass of hurtling soil, stinging sand and thumping clouds. We lose all sense of direction.... This is the black blizzard.

"For hours the tortured soil is torn and ravished until the storm ceases. Then we look out on the fields that we have tilled. They are as smooth as if polished by a giant plane. Here and there a few wheat plants, stricken, stand on roots still remaining in the hard subsoil. With tomorrow's sun they will probably fade and die. Millions in rich topsoil is gone forever. That is the black blizzard, the most appalling thing in nature."<sup>24</sup>

The technology to defeat the dirt desert was created by the scientists in the experimental stations scattered throughout the prairie. Funds came from the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, which was established by the federal government in 1935 to save the Palliser Triangle for human habitation. Slowly the land was brought back to grass and, eventually, to commercial grain production and cattle ranges.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>J.K. Sutherland, quoted in Jean Burnet, "Next-Year Country", Toronto, 1951, pp. 6-7.

<sup>25</sup>Gray's "Men against the Desert" is a history of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration. Its crowning achievements were the post war irrigation and recreation developments on the South Saskatchewan river. The South Saskatchewan Dam will bring stable producing conditions to hundreds of thousands of acres.

Part of the task of the agricultural experimental stations was to solve the problems of disease and insect pests, which ravished the south country in those years when the rain was sufficient to grow crops. This was also achieved but not before grasshoppers had infected 60,000 square miles in Alberta and 100,000 square miles in Saskatchewan.

"By far the worst pests were the grasshoppers that came on the winds from Montana and North Dakota in numbers beyond all calculations, even beyond the exaggerative genius of the yarn spinners of the prairies. Single flights would descend out of nowhere, devour everything in sight and move on. They ate the handles off pitchforks, armpits out of shirts on farmers' backs, clothes off the line. A single flight was once trapped by a cold wind over Lake Winnipeg, fell into the water and when blown toward land covered the shoreline for 20 miles to a depth of several feet."<sup>26</sup>

As we might expect the depression produced the greatest disruption of social life within the Palliser Triangle. One of the most obvious consequences was a great migration comparable to the westward trek of the American dirt farmers from the plains of the Mississippi basin. How many people abandoned their farms is not precisely known, but the Royal Commission on the South Saskatchewan River estimated that the prairies lost 247,000 people from 1931 to 1941, with 73,000 leaving the Saskatchewan section of the Palliser Triangle. They left not in a publicity catching mass, but in a slow persistent trickle. Some headed for the cities; others

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

searched for new land in central British Columbia or the Peace River district of northern Alberta. Still others migrated within the boundaries of Saskatchewan. Taking only what household goods and equipment could be carried (there was usually little enough left anyway), an estimated 10,000 farm families moved by wagon over the dirt roads from south Saskatchewan to the northern parklands.<sup>27</sup> For a brief period this trek received official government support, but not after it was realized that the abandoned farms were making life more difficult for those who remained, because these farms were subject to soil drifting which nobody was trying to control. Still the trek north continued. Some of those who moved suffered as much as their neighbours who remained to sit out the dirt and drought. In the north they found uncleared, unbroken land of poor soil quality. Only the earliest migrants could become established easily; the others became an impossible relief burden for the northern municipalities. With the help of the Northern Saskatchewan Re-establishment Board the migrants survived the first years, but not without great hardships, such as the extracts from Sandy Nicholson's diary describe.

Because relief expenditure took up so much of municipal and provincial budgets, there was little money left over to pay for the services which were the usual responsibility of these governments. Health, education and communication services suffered most severely in the

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<sup>27</sup>The migration is described in ibid., chapter 11.

dried out area. It was hard to retain doctors in rural areas where incomes were so reduced that even the doctors found it impossible to remain debt free. A number of municipalities had hired doctors on a salary basis, but now found it difficult to maintain them, since so few people were paying taxes. Thus the inequalities in adequate provision of health services, which are a well known phenomenon of rural areas, were exacerbated by the depression. Diets were so poor that, for the first time, signs of scurvy were reported to the government by doctors, whereupon 782 freight cars loaded with fruit, vegetables, fish and cheese were distributed among the poor.<sup>28</sup>

In education, the rural districts had their usual disadvantages multiplied. The provision of primary schools was the responsibility of the local rural municipality, as was the appointment of teachers, although educational standards were the subject of inspection by the province. With primary education based on local finance it was inevitable that the quality of education would suffer. Worn out books were not replaced; buildings went without repair; salaries dropped by over 50 per cent in some cases, with teachers being paid in promissory notes. Secondary education became non-existent in several rural areas. Jean Burnet describes how the rural population around Hanna became apathetic towards their education system. There

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<sup>28</sup> Britnell, op. cit., p. 170.

was little interest in school board meetings, and taxes for education purposes became impossible to collect. On the low salaries offered, only poorly qualified teachers could be obtained. Burnet quotes an inspector of schools located near Hanna: "The majority of these schools present the appearance of weather-beaten desertion. The teacher has nothing to work with except a scarred and cracked blackboard, some chalk and what material her ingenuity can improvise."<sup>29</sup>

Religious organizations were unevenly affected. It seems that churches suffered while sects flourished. "The activities of the churches in rural communities were seriously curtailed, though to some extent the social welfare services were expanded."<sup>30</sup> This was, of course, the period of high popularity for the fundamentalist evangelist sects, which were responsible for the southern prairies being called the Bible Belt. They offered hope to all those who had lost confidence in secular institutions and even in the established churches. It will be shown in the next chapter that part of the widespread political success of Social Credit can be attributed to the sectarian religious influence of its leader, William Aberhart.

The extent of destitution in the Palliser Triangle has been discussed in some detail in order to show that here the deprivations were so great that a mass third

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<sup>29</sup>Burnet, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

party movement was unlikely. Whereas the failure of both provincial and federal governments to control depression conditions provided the main source of political capital for the new protest parties, the severity of depression in parts of Saskatchewan also created a major hindrance to the immediate success of the Saskatchewan CCF. While there was some early success for the CCF within the Triangle (in 1934), by 1938 support for the CCF was much greater in the constituencies which fringed this area. In the worst hit region there was a constant lack of funds, which were necessary to publicize and organize a new party. More important, it seems that the people had lost hope and with it the motivation to work for a new party. In his study of the rise of Social Credit in Quebec in the sixties, Pinard also found that the poorest people were least likely to be among the first supporters of the new protest party.

"In trying to account for this generalization, many other factors have been considered.... The lack of hopefulness seemed to account for the lower degree of support for the new party among the poor."<sup>31</sup>

Such a result is consistent with the model outlined earlier in this chapter.

Alberta in general fared better than Saskatchewan and was able to support a stronger protest movement in the thirties. Every region suffered from the fall in farm produce prices, but Alberta farmers had higher cash

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<sup>31</sup>Pinard, op. cit., p. 158.



incomes than Saskatchewan ones, because the average yield per acre during 1930-37 was only a little below normal and 60 per cent greater than in Saskatchewan.<sup>32</sup> Another indicator of the comparative impact of the depression is the dollar value of retail sales. Again Saskatchewan shows a greater loss than Alberta, but Ontario survived better than either (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Index of Net Value of Retail Sales in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, 1930-37.

	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
Alberta	100	76.1	65.6	61.8	69.0	74.0	78.7	86.3
Saskatchewan	100	70.8	59.2	54.5	59.4	63.2	69.7	68.3
Ontario	100	86.6	71.8	67.4	74.9	78.0	83.0	92.9

Source: G.E. Britnell, "The Wheat Economy", Toronto, 1939, p. 198.

The rise of a new party is conditional on the rejection of the existing parties. Therefore, the account of the depression will conclude with some indication of how the governing parties tried to control the disaster. The problems of debt adjustment and the burden of relief were the burning political issues for prairie governments during the thirties. As income fell farmers found themselves unable to meet the heavy fixed charges which they had incurred in prosperous times. The hint of a good crop brought creditors to

<sup>32</sup>Rowell-Sirois Report, op. cit., Book 1, p. 170.

the doorstep. Failure could mean proceedings for foreclosure or eviction (either from mortgage companies or from rural municipalities to which taxes had not been paid). After several years of consecutive disaster in the dry country it became obvious that government intervention was necessary.

In Saskatchewan, debt adjustment legislation was passed in 1933, which prevented civil action by creditors without the permission of a government Debt Adjustment Board. Creditors were restricted to the proceeds of one-third of the crop in any one year, less one year's taxes. In 1935 the personal covenant clause was removed from all future mortgages and agreements of sale. These Acts, however, were only intended to delay payments and did not meet the agrarian demand for a reduction in the amount of indebtedness.<sup>33</sup> The federal government had established a Review Board to consider debt reductions in individual cases, but the process was slow and the results were "insignificant when related to the total burden".<sup>34</sup> As times grew worse the Saskatchewan Liberal government negotiated an agreement on voluntary debt adjustment with the Dominion Mortgage and Investments Association. This included the cancellation of debt incurred for direct relief up to

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<sup>33</sup>Britnell, op. cit., pp. 33-4.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 84. This was part of Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett's attempt to introduce a Canadian New Deal Programme in 1935. Most of the legislation was later declared unconstitutional.

January 1st, 1935, of tax arrears (excluding 1935 and 1936), and of unpaid interest up to January 1st, 1935. In full form this agreement applied only to 174 rural municipalities in the drought areas. Under this legislation the total reductions effected by 1937 amounted to \$88 million out of a total debt in 1936 of \$525 million. However, the new debt which accumulated next summer brought the total back up to about \$525 million by the end of 1938.<sup>35</sup> In other words the Saskatchewan programme failed.

Until 1936 debt adjustment legislation in Alberta was similar to that operating in the rest of Canada. A minimum of assets were set aside for the maintenance of the debtor and an administrative agency was "empowered to stay proceedings on secured debts under circumstances defined by the legislature."<sup>36</sup> The policy changes of the Social Credit government will be considered in the next chapter.

The other great issue was relief, the burden of which was by far the greatest on Saskatchewan. The cost of providing relief (which was barely enough to allow survival) amounted to 13.3 per cent of the total provincial income in the years 1930-37. This compares with an average for all provinces of 3.6 per cent.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-8.

<sup>36</sup>J.R. Mallory, "Social Credit and the Federal Power", Toronto, 1954, p. 99.

<sup>37</sup>Rowell-Sirois Report, op. cit., Book 1, p. 164.

For the whole period relief expenditures amounted to a yearly average of 60 per cent of the total receipts of the province and its municipalities.<sup>38</sup> The dominion government was forced to provide 85 per cent of the funds for relief, partly in the form of direct payments.

"Direct and guaranteed Dominion loans supplied 35 per cent of the total outlay. Only about 15 per cent of the funds required for relief were raised by the province and the municipalities. Nevertheless the share (50 per cent) of the burden left as the responsibility of the provincial and municipal governments involved the addition of large amounts to the provincial debt.... Between 1930 and 1937 the total debt of the provincial government was more than doubled."<sup>39</sup>

By 1937 the interest charges on the provincial debt amounted to 23 per cent of the total revenue.

Having been spared the worst of the crop disaster, Alberta was in a much better position with regard to relief expenditure, the total amount being equal to the average for all provinces. Here the main problem was unemployment in Calgary and Edmonton. The loss of farm purchasing power precipitated a contraction in trade and industry, to which was added the influx of people who had left the land in hard hit areas of south-east Alberta and Saskatchewan.<sup>40</sup> The generally healthy condition of Alberta does hide pockets of destitution as severe as anything across the border (such as the Hanna region described by Jean Burnet). The greatest problem

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-1.

for the United Farmers' government was the huge provincial debt, which had accrued as the province tried to tame the frontier by building roads, schools and other amenities on borrowed capital. The position when the Social Credit government took office was described as follows:

"The Saving Certificate Fund was bankrupt; no adequate provision had been made for maturing obligations; interest on the public debt absorbed 45.47% of the total revenue; the revenue was quite inadequate to meet current expenditures; the finances of the province had been bolstered up for years by a continuous policy of borrowing which had inflicted a net funded debt of over \$153,923,027.49 on taxpayers; and, in short, the affairs of the province had been permitted to drift into a highly unsatisfactory state."<sup>41</sup>

In both provinces there was much evidence in the daily affairs of people that their existing parties were not coping with the depression. It has been shown that the structural strains required for the development of third parties were present in the depression, that there were strong grounds for the experience of deprivation and the rejection of existing parties. It has also been argued that the impact of the depression was too severe in some areas to generate mass support for a new reformist party. In the last section of the chapter I propose to find out whether relative deprivation theory can contribute to explaining this aspect of the development of the third parties, and to discover whether students using this theory can specify the

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<sup>41</sup>Report of the Social Credit Board, quoted in Mallory, op. cit., p. 126.

conditions under which felt deprivations are transformed into active protest.

#### 4.3. Relative Deprivation and Prairie Third Parties

It has recently become fashionable to explain social protest and revolution as a function of the mass perception of relative deprivation; that is, people's perception that they are being prevented from realizing aspirations which they have come to define as their legitimate right.<sup>42</sup> The "objective" deprivation is less important than how the actor defines his position in relation to some reference point. Such a reference point might be found in memories of the past achievements of his own membership group, or in the success which he attributes to some other group in his contemporary society.

As a theory to explain the rise of protest organizations, relative deprivation requires a time dimension, such as we find in Davies' J curve theory of the origin of revolution. Revolution, he argues, does not follow from a long period of abject poverty, rather it is

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<sup>42</sup>On relative deprivation theory see especially, James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution", American Sociological Review, vol. 27, 1962, pp. 5-19; James A. Geschwender, "Explorations in the Theory of Social Movements and Revolutions", Social Forces, vol. 47, 1968, pp. 127-35; T.R. Gurr, "Why Men Rebel", Princeton, 1970; Denton E. Morrison, "Some Notes Toward Theory on Relative Deprivation, Social Movements and Social Change", American Behavioural Scientist, vol. 14, 1971, pp. 675-690; Pinard, op. cit.; W.G. Runciman, "Relative Deprivation and Social Justice", London, 1966.



preceded by a period of improving conditions and rising expectations, which are then perceived to be blocked for some reason.<sup>43</sup> Geschwender has modified Davies' theory to include forms of protest other than revolution. His basic argument is that the conditions which initiate a protest movement and a revolution are, in principle, the same. He then tries to clarify the relationship between the perception of deprivation and subsequent protest action. Geschwender hypothesizes that individuals will attempt to reduce the strain which is created when their aspirations are seen to be unachievable.<sup>44</sup> Morrison argues that a reduction in the strain can be accomplished by the actor changing his perceptions, or by attempting to change his position in the social structure such that he will have the opportunity to achieve his aspirations, or, more radically, by combining with others to reform the social structure.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, the conditions favouring any one response are not specified.

A further difficulty in the relative deprivation approach is that it requires an extensive historical perspective together with data on the subjective orientation of the actor. Much of the evidence for the theory is indirect since long term data on the motivation of actors (other than leaders) is not usually available. In giving examples, most writers have

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<sup>43</sup>Davies, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup>Geschwender, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>45</sup>Morrison, op. cit.

presented data on socio-economic conditions over an extended time period, and have inferred from the timing of protest that relative deprivation does explain the origin of protest movements. I shall try to show that this produces poor results for western Canadian history.

On the evidence of dissatisfaction of farmers as reported in the minutes of the annual meetings of farm organizations in the prairie provinces it is probable, or at least plausible, that relative deprivation was endemic in the west. Farming people continuously expressed their sentiments of deprivation, produced by their perceived subjection to the economic power of the eastern financial and industrial corporations.<sup>46</sup> Such feelings were probably based on the severe fluctuations of income which characterized the west in the pre-industrial period. Political debate in Saskatchewan and Alberta has consistently centred on questions of the economy and the conditions of life associated with it. With relative deprivation being endemic, slumps in prosperity would serve only to accentuate feelings of deprivation already in existence. If we look at economic prosperity in relation to protest politics over a long time period in the west, then the relationship is unclear because of this persistence of feelings of deprivation both in good times and bad. Of the three

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<sup>46</sup> See the files of farm papers such as the Grain Growers' Guide and the Western Producer; local dailies, especially letters to the editor; also the minutes of annual conventions of farm organizations.

main political protests between 1915 and 1950, only the first, the Progressive movement, fits the J curve pattern. The Progressives flourished during the early 1920s when a sharp slump followed the long war time period of relatively high farm income. Social Credit became popular in Alberta after five years of depression conditions. The Saskatchewan CCF came to power in 1944 as conditions were gradually improving. Therefore, as a theory of the origin of protest movements relative deprivation seems over-simplified.

Where it is perhaps most useful is in giving support to the well known hypothesis that severe, prolonged despair tends to produce a resigned apathy rather than active protest.<sup>47</sup> This phenomenon has already been noted with regard to the Palliser Triangle. It was argued that whereas all farmers suffered during the economic crisis only the wealthier ones had the financial and mental resources to do anything about it. Relative deprivation theory adds to this the suggestion that the status of the wealthier is even more threatened than that of those who have always been poor.

"The wealthier farmers during the Depression experienced a rapid and sharp decline in their economic position in both absolute terms and relative to the poorer farmers. This decline relative to their previous high

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<sup>47</sup>E.g., Daniel Bell, "The End of Ideology", Glencoe, 1960, p. 31; Davies, op. cit., p. 7; S.M. Lipset, "Political Man", London, 1960, p. 63 and pp. 258 ff.; Pinard, op. cit., p. 137; Runciman, op. cit., pp. 25-6; Maurice Zeitlin, "Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class", New York, 1970, pp. 60-65.

position (which we may assume they preferred) led to their organization and participation in the CCF."<sup>48</sup>

Earlier I stated that we remain uncertain under what conditions the perception of relative deprivation will be resolved by attempting to reform the social structure. Morrison has speculated on a number of enabling conditions, but it is unclear whether he believes all must be present together.<sup>49</sup> They are worth investigating because they may be important additions to the list of facilitating factors in the rise of third parties. Morrison suggests that for organized protest to develop there should be a large population experiencing the deprivation, close interaction and proximity among the deprived, high role and status commonality (i.e., Pinard's structural attachments), a stratification system with clear strata boundaries and visible power differences between the strata, and the presence of much voluntary association activity.

In Alberta and Saskatchewan several of these conditions were present. The deprivation experience was obviously widespread. While interaction was limited by geographical factors until telephones and cars became numerous, the farmers' ideas and feelings were widely distributed by the agrarian journals. Thus relatively isolated people could be aware of

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<sup>48</sup>Geschwender, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>49</sup>Morrison, op. cit., pp. 684-5.

dissatisfaction throughout the west.

A low degree of social division among the deprived would make a united protest organization easier to found and would increase its power. It has been usual to consider the rural prairie community as homogeneous in status,<sup>50</sup> but, although united by virtue of a common class position, differences of social status have often divided the people. The farming community has been internally stratified by the degree of prosperity of individual farmers, by type of agriculture (especially ranching versus grain farming<sup>51</sup>), by ethnic origin and religion. These differences have hindered the development of united agrarian protest.

Morrison's category of a clearly defined stratification system is difficult to assess. I shall assume that he refers to the actor's definition of the stratification of the society in which he lives. Such perceptions are likely to be very complex because stratification may be perceived in the distribution of any number of scarce and valued properties among a population. It may also have a local and a national dimension. In the present context we would want to know under which conditions will farmers tend to ignore local differences and act unitedly with regard to other groups at a national level. To the prairie farmers

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<sup>50</sup>E.g., S.M. Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", rev. ed., New York, 1968, p. 212.

<sup>51</sup>See John W. Bennett, "Northern Plainsmen: Adaptive Society and Agrarian Life", Chicago, 1968.

the main division at a national, and even international, level appeared to be between the farmers and the controllers of finance and monopoly industries. Such perceptions of stratification provided a focus for protest.

Frequent activity in voluntary organizations has been an important characteristic of prairie regions. They provide the source and training ground for an active protest leadership. This earlier organizational history was outlined in considerable detail in the last chapter.

In this chapter I have tried to present the economic and social impact of the depression as the context in which the CCF and Social Credit developed. A model for the development of third parties was presented. The depression created conditions of structural strain which generated feelings of deprivation. Existing political parties were blamed for the catastrophic fall in the quality of life, and where the hope of the people had not been destroyed they turned towards Social Credit and the CCF, each of which promised a new prosperity. The rise of these parties was facilitated by a number of additional conditions such as one-party dominance (in Alberta), corruption in government, close interaction among the deprived, prior experience of voluntary organisation, and perception of a common class enemy. The task of the following chapters is to describe and account for the development of separate third parties - Social Credit and the CCF.



## Chapter Five

### Social Credit in Alberta, 1933-1944

In this chapter I shall describe the Social Credit economic doctrine and trace the sudden upsurge in Social Credit popularity, climaxed by victory in the provincial election of 1935. Then the policies of the government during the Aberhart administration will be examined.

#### 5.1. Aberhart's Social Credit Economic Doctrine (1935)

Social Credit has its origin in the political and economic philosophy of Major C.H. Douglas (1872-1952), a Scottish engineer, who became convinced that he had discovered a flaw in conventional economics which was easy to cure. Human misery in the twentieth century would then disappear. The meaning of Social Credit is best identified in his theory of the cultural heritage. Modern technology, he argued, made possible a superabundance of goods and services. The cultural heritage was the increase in goods and services which new scientific discoveries made possible, but this was an unearned increment from the point of view of the whole society. It was then a social increment, and one which would grow ever larger as time passed. This unearned social increment is what Douglas defined as the Social Credit of the community. But all goods and services were not being distributed as they should, because the

existing financial system did not allow financial credit to keep pace with Social Credit. This problem would have to be solved by controlling finance and issuing dividend credits to each member of the community, thus increasing purchasing power. The history of the Social Credit movement in England, the detailed economic and political doctrines, and the critiques, need not concern us in the present context.<sup>1</sup> The Douglas proposals had relatively little popular impact in Alberta; rather it was the simplified and distorted programme of William Aberhart which captured the imagination of the people. Therefore, this section will present the Aberhart Social Credit system as he had developed it by 1935.

Before entering politics Aberhart combined the careers of teacher and preacher. In 1915 he became a high school principal, strict in discipline and primitive in teaching method (a supporter of the rote learning method). By many he was esteemed as a leader, but was intensely disliked by others. All recognized his imposing presence and technical skill as a public speaker. At the same time Aberhart was a fanatical religious leader. He was constantly active in the Baptist Church until he founded his own Prophetic Bible Institute, from which in the middle twenties he used the new technique of radio broadcasting to reach a large audience all over the southern part of the province.

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<sup>1</sup>For an excellent analysis of all these aspects of Social Credit see C.B. MacPherson, "Democracy in Alberta", Toronto, 1953, pp. 93-141 and 179-192.

Bible study groups were set up and kept in close contact with the Institute, to which students of Bible prophecy were attracted. (One of these, Ernest Manning, was to follow Aberhart as premier of the province.) In short, Aberhart was the most successful of the many radio evangelists who operated in Alberta at that time.<sup>2</sup> These personal details have been presented to aid our understanding of two aspects of his later social relationships. First, his personal experience as an authoritarian leader in religious and secular life made him particularly likely to approve that part of the Douglas philosophy which left specific policy making to experts. More important, it suggests how much Aberhart was already a part of the culture of the ordinary people. In his religious crusade he already had a message to which tens of thousands clung. His distinctly personal contribution to the rise of Social Credit was to link the economic doctrine with the moral, and to direct the publicity campaign, which vastly extended his audience. It is important in reviewing Aberhart's Social Credit proposals to remember that they were presented to the people in the context of severe economic depression and mixed in with strong doses of fundamentalist religion.

From early in 1933 Aberhart issued a series of leaflets and pamphlets in which he argued for a new monetary system based on the Douglas Social Credit

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<sup>2</sup>John Irving, "The Social Credit Movement in Alberta", Toronto, 1959, pp. 8-49.

proposals. These were widely used in the bible study groups, which he had already established as a religious leader. His Social Credit idea provoked much excited discussion among those who were reached in this way.<sup>3</sup> Many others heard Aberhart introduce Social Credit as part of the religious broadcasts. Without doubt the most comprehensive statement of his doctrine appears in the Social Credit manual.<sup>4</sup>

"During the campaign it became a constant reference for charges and counter-charges in radio broadcasts, speeches at mass-meetings, and newspaper comment. There must have been few adults in Alberta who did not read at least a part of it at some time or other during the election campaign. Its doctrines provided the basis for the speeches of the Social Credit candidates...."<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the manual is the most important documentary source of Aberhart's Social Credit and forms the basis for the following description.

In general terms Aberhart proposed that the state should issue to each person a social credit or dividend in order to increase the purchasing power of the consumer. The evils of depression would then disappear. At no time did Social Credit mean an attack on the principle of private enterprise or private profit. Social Credit proposals were directed only towards reforming the economic system so that the small scale capitalists of Alberta could prosper. The basic

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>4</sup>Social Credit Manual, Calgary, 1935.

<sup>5</sup>Irving, op. cit., p. 298.

premise of the system was that:

"It is the duty of the state through its Government to organize its economic structure in such a way that no bona fide citizen, man, woman, or child, shall be allowed to suffer for lack of the bare necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, in the midst of plenty or abundance."<sup>6</sup>

He argued that Alberta was wealthy enough to provide the necessities of life for her people and still have an excess with which to reward individual enterprise.

Readers of the manual are advised that Social Credit does not mean confiscation of property, interference with inheritance, bank deposits, or insurance policies. Social Credit supports capitalism but "it prevents wild-cat exploitation of the consumer."

The Manual diagnosed the problems of Alberta to be the result not of over production, but rather the result of a lack of consumer purchasing power, excess profiteering, and the high interest rates which retarded the flow of credit. (Fifty-one per cent of taxes in Alberta were used to pay interest charges, stated the manual.) Although it is not explicitly stated in the manual, the widely discussed A + B theorem provided the rationale for the diagnosis. In brief, A + B represented the total costs of production. A represented those costs which were paid out to individuals as wages, salaries and dividends. B represented those costs of production which were paid to other organizations in overheads, taxes and raw materials. It was then argued

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<sup>6</sup>Social Credit Manual, op. cit., p. 5.

that the total cost of production of all goods and services (A + B) must be greater than the total purchasing power (A) of all individual consumers. It was, therefore, necessary to restore the B segment to the consumer in the form of a Social Credit dividend, or to lower prices by giving the dividend to the producer.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise there would be "Poverty in the Midst of Plenty", a favourite Social Credit slogan. In its apparent simplicity the A + B theorem appealed to those unskilled in economics.

If the cause was accepted, then the solution was simple. The manual explained how Social Credit would operate. The people had only to grasp its four basic terms.

1. Cultural Heritage. This was defined as the people's heritage of natural resources from which all citizens ought to benefit. But the products of the resources were controlled by a few "Big Shots".

2. Basic Dividends. In order that everyone be assured of food, clothing, and shelter, their cultural heritage would be returned to them through the issue of basic dividends. The figure of \$25 per month per adult was suggested as a suitable sum over and above regular wages and salaries.

3. Non-negotiable Certificates. This was how the

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<sup>7</sup>The economic fallacies of this crude algebra are best stated in MacPherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-112. See also "The Case of the Economic Safety League", Appendix IV in Irving, *op. cit.*



dividend credit would be used. The certificates were to be blank forms in which each citizen would fill out the amount he was spending in a commercial transaction and have the receiver of the credit sign for it. The receiver would then have to deposit the credit certificate in a bank or credit house. His account would be credited, the other person's debited. The receiver could then meet his own requirements by issuing a certificate. Aberhart argued that a continuous circulation of credit, "the life blood of the state", would be assured because all income would have to be spent by the end of the year in which it was received.

4. Unearned Increment. If the province were to issue credit continuously but remain out of debt, said Aberhart, it would require some means of recovering the credit which it issued. This was to be achieved by recovering the unearned increment, which was defined to mean much the same as excessive price spreads. (This was a complete misunderstanding of the Douglas concept.) In the manual, unearned increment refers to that portion of the selling price of goods which is not earned by the producer. This would be recovered in taxation. Aberhart did not present any precise description since total retail sales in the province amounted in 1933 to \$112 million, and could hardly be said to contain \$120 million in price spreads. (To issue a dividend of \$25 per month to each citizen, the province would require \$120 per annum exclusive of costs of administration.)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Case of the Economic Safety League, op. cit.

The other main ingredient in the proposals was price control, which was defined as the setting of a just price. Experts would meet to decide a just price for all goods. It would give a "fair commission" but allow no exploitation. Consumption would be made to balance and control production. Therefore, a compensating price would be declared periodically and made up to the retailer or consumer in a way similar to the issue of basic dividends.

These were the main elements in Aberhart's inflationary economic programme for Social Credit. These ideas spread like a prairie fire. Orthodox Douglas Social Creditors were also active in the province during the thirties. These people came together in the New Age Club and worked hard to spread the Douglas ideas. But their more technical, impersonal presentations could not compete successfully for popular favour with the simplified Aberhart mixture of economics and religion.<sup>9</sup>

## 5.2. Ascent to Power<sup>10</sup>

Social Credit was known in Alberta, although not widely popular, many years before Aberhart became a

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<sup>9</sup>Irving, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-67.

<sup>10</sup>The following description is based primarily on the extensive account in Irving, *op. cit.*; but see also MacPherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-179; C.H. Douglas, "The Alberta Experiment", London, 1937; Harold J. Schultz, "Portrait of a Premier: William Aberhart", Canadian Historical Review, vol. 45, 1964, pp. 185-211.

convert. William Irvine, an Alberta M.P. at Ottawa, was responsible for having Douglas appear before the federal Committee on Banking and Commerce in 1923. But on that occasion Douglas only impressed Irvine and Henry Spencer, another prominent member of the United Farmers. After this many of Douglas' writings were distributed through the United Farmers information services. Thus the ideas of Social Credit had already had some airing by 1932, the year when Aberhart was finally persuaded by a friend to read some of the English literature. Apparently Aberhart became convinced overnight that Social Credit was the solution to the poverty of the depression.

Therefore, in the autumn of 1932 he began to introduce Social Credit into his religious broadcasts, and early in 1933 he began a series of public lectures on the subject at the Bible Institute. As requests for lectures increased Aberhart set up study groups to train speakers in Social Credit, just as he had been doing for years in his evangelist activities. His printed expositions were also widely distributed. In the summer Aberhart and Manning toured all over the southern part of the province preaching Social Credit to the small town inhabitants and the farmers:

"It was these very people who had learned to know and trust him through his religious work who now threw off their coats to aid in advancing this new economic movement which he sponsored."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Irving, op. cit., p. 60.

Towards the end of 1933 officials of the governing United Farmers party began to notice the growing interest in Social Credit in the rural areas. However, they attached no political importance to this grass roots activity until, in January 1934, Aberhart was reported to have requested Social Creditors to vote only for those candidates (in a Calgary by-election) who would urge a government investigation of the Social Credit proposals. Coupled with pressure from within their own organization, this forced the United Farmers' leadership to debate the subject at their convention. Internal conflict within the United Farmers organization resulted in separate resolutions calling (1) for the introduction of the co-operative commonwealth to Alberta (i.e., the CCF programme), and (2) an investigation by the executive of the Douglas Social Credit proposals. The government, hoping the storm would pass, did nothing, but soon the Liberals, of all people, asked for Douglas to be called to Alberta to explain his proposals. By March the government was forced to call hearings on Social Credit with Aberhart and Douglas as the chief witnesses.

During the early months of 1934 Aberhart came under severe attack within the Social Credit movement. Conventional followers of Douglas were very critical of Aberhart's misinterpretation of Social Credit. The group at the New Age Club were foremost in the attempt to discredit him, and towards the end of February they received support from the Douglas headquarters in London.

Douglas himself wrote to Aberhart insisting that his name be withdrawn from the pamphlet titled "The Douglas System of Economics". The result of these attacks was that at a mass meeting of his supporters Aberhart resigned from the leadership of the Social Credit movement. Members of the New Age Club, who were prominent in the central council, then succeeded in having Gilbert McGregor elected to the presidency. His reign was to last only two months, but this interval indicates that Social Credit could survive by this time without the magical-religious appeal which Aberhart gave to it. Irving records that, "Under the new leadership no diminution of popular interest in Social Credit seems to have occurred."<sup>12</sup>

Despite having resigned, Aberhart was still called with Douglas to the provincial hearings. The differences between the two were now highlighted in the press, but neither was very specific about what should be done. Rank and file Social Creditors became convinced that Douglas was being unfair to Aberhart when he attacked him at the investigation; and they were more convinced of this when, at a mass meeting in Calgary, Douglas both ignored Aberhart and appeared to have little knowledge of the Alberta situation. The hearings brought Aberhart back into the limelight, and with the increasing popular pressure for Aberhart to return to the official movement, McGregor felt obliged

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

to resign.

Installed once more in power, Aberhart proceeded to purge his organization of orthodox Douglasites. The message was then spread with renewed vigour in the summer of 1934. Aberhart and secondary leaders moved out from the Institute in tours which took them all over the province, speaking to enthusiastic audiences in the towns and rural school houses. Everywhere the leaders established local Social Credit groups (often with the same personnel as the United Farmers' locals). A weekly newspaper was started to combat the opposition of the daily press.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the summer Social Credit had achieved a mass popularity in the small towns and in the rural areas of the province. In the large cities there were also active groups.

After the hearings in March the United Farmers government had done nothing more about Social Credit, in the hope that its inadequacies had been amply demonstrated, but the continued upswing of the movement throughout the summer forced further consideration. The executive was forced to invite Aberhart to appear before the United Farmers' annual convention in January, 1935, when he again presented his theory. After long, heated debate a resolution which called for Social Credit to be made part of the United Farmers' platform was overwhelmingly rejected.

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<sup>13</sup>The country weeklies were much more in favour of Aberhart.



In New Zealand, where Douglas Social Credit had some support among the farmers and small business men, supporters of the new solution had hoped that existing parties could be persuaded to adopt Social Credit monetary policy. Apparently the Labour Party had done so in 1935 but then ignored the policy while in office. Eventually in 1953 a Social Credit Political League was formed, which contested elections but never won a seat.<sup>14</sup> Having been so firmly rejected at the United Farmers' convention, the founding of the Alberta political organization was much quicker than the New Zealand counterpart. Aberhart and his followers immediately formed the Social Credit League to fight the next election. The social relations of this organizational structure will be discussed in detail in chapter 8. It will suffice to say at this point that the League was based on the local study groups and under the direct control of Aberhart - to the extent of his having the final say in the choice of both policy and candidate. This power was conferred on Aberhart by delegates at two regional conventions, one in Edmonton, one in Calgary.

Meanwhile, although the United Farmers had rejected Aberhart, they still passed a resolution on the next day which called for Douglas to be invited back to Alberta as a consultant. Eventually the government followed the convention's mandate, but this resulted, when made

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<sup>14</sup>R.S. Milne, "Political Parties in New Zealand", London, 1966, p. 299.

public, in a demand from the United Farmers' own membership that Aberhart be asked to submit his proposals as well. Again the government gave way to pressure but Aberhart declined his invitation. Douglas, on the other hand, accepted a position as a reconstruction adviser. The report which he made under contract to the government did not contain specific proposals by which the government could save itself.<sup>15</sup>

The 1935 election campaign which followed became a bitter battle between Social Creditors and United Farmers' leaders, but without doubt William Aberhart was the dominant figure around which charge and counter-charge were hurled.<sup>16</sup> Aberhart conducted the Social Credit campaign from the Bible Institute, which became a rallying centre for groups of supporters from all over the province. Chief weapon in the Social Credit attack was the radio facilities of the Bible Institute. Aberhart's broadcasts now turned more and more towards exhorting his listeners to vote Social Credit. He and his lieutenants toured the province speaking to capacity audiences everywhere, while the opposition parties could drum up little support, and fewer signs of hope and enthusiasm. An example of the impact of an Aberhart campaign meeting is this account of an Edmonton Social Credit picnic.

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<sup>15</sup>The report is published as an appendix in Douglas, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>For a detailed account of the election campaign see Irving, op. cit., pp. 290-333.

"The programme concluded with one of Aberhart's greatest oratorical efforts. With tears in his eyes, he described the pitiable conditions into which the depression had plunged hundreds of thousands of people in Alberta. He promised that a Social Credit government could end all this by giving every adult in the province a monthly dividend of \$25.... In closing, Aberhart graphically described the struggle of a deep-sea diver with a devil-fish, and compared this struggle with Alberta's terrific struggle with the money octopus. 'We still have one hand free,' he roared, 'with which to strike - to mark our ballot on election day. Let us strike then with all our might at this hideous monster that is sucking the very life blood from our people!'

"Thunderous and prolonged applause from ten thousand picnickers assured him that the people were with him in the fight. Hundreds in the audience wept as the meeting closed with 'O God Our Help in Ages Past!'" (the Social Credit theme song).<sup>17</sup>

Aberhart was viciously attacked for mixing politics and religion, for being a dictator, for appealing to the emotions while having no sound solution to the problems of the day. All these assaults from the opposition parties, the newspapers, and the Economic Safety League were brushed aside by the Social Credit leadership. If anything Social Creditors became more determined to vote for Aberhart because they believed in him. Aberhart was close to the people; the intellectual leadership of the other parties had lost touch with the grass roots. By the end of the campaign (August 22, 1935) the United Farmers of Alberta had been destroyed as a political organization. In the new legislature Social Credit held an overwhelming 56 seats out of 63, the Liberal

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

Party 5, the Conservatives 2, and the United Farmers none. The voter turnout was up 63 per cent on the 1930 figure, and it seems safe to assume that this was because Social Credit had attracted many people who had previously taken no part in politics. Norman James, a successful Social Credit candidate, describes how many of the candidates were like himself, newcomers to politics, who had previously avoided involvement in the "dirty game" and had little idea of how a government was actually conducted.<sup>18</sup>

There is an unfortunate dearth of evidence on the social composition of Aberhart's support, but it was not restricted to a single occupational group such as the farmers. Social Credit won all the seats in the province except for some of the Calgary and Edmonton ones, and followed this up with a repeat performance in the federal election of 1935. Irving's study brings out the varied composition of Social Credit support, which included farmers, small town entrepreneurs, the poorer white collar workers and manual working class of the cities.

"An unyielding insistence that the monetary system was uniquely responsible for the depression attracted a wide variety of people to the Social Credit movement. In small towns and villages teachers, merchants, ministers, druggists, farmers, railroad workers, and doctors frequently assembled in the same study group."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>N.B. James, "Autobiography of a Nobody", Toronto, 1947.

<sup>19</sup>Irving, op. cit., p. 234.

Even the coal miners of Drumheller voted for Aberhart. The only group from which Social Credit seems to have drawn no support was the urban professional and managerial class. The greatest support was in the rural areas and in the villages, where "the movement offered the people...a new opportunity of re-entering the political life of Alberta, from which they had felt themselves excluded ever since 1921."<sup>20</sup>

It is always difficult to find out why people favour or reject a party in a political campaign (especially when the event is many years old, with the result that participants in the campaign are no longer available for interview). In the fifties John Irving was able to interview a sample of secondary leaders and supporters of Social Credit who were active in the movement by 1935. He claims that the sample was representative but does not state how it was drawn, nor does he consider the problem of how people reinterpret events which have happened to them years earlier in their lives.<sup>21</sup> However, it is the only information available on an important problem in Social Credit research. The extensive quotations from these interviews, which are available in Irvine's book, suggest that Aberhart and Social Credit were supported for several closely connected reasons.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 235-6. The interview data on the response of the people to Aberhart is discussed in chapters 8 and 9 of this book.

Some became Social Credit supporters because they accepted the economic diagnosis and they believed that Aberhart could really make a reformed system work. These people could respond to the secular aspects of Social Credit without being convinced of its sacred connections. Some, less concerned with the general interpretation of society in Social Credit theory, supported Aberhart because he promised them \$25 per month and a just price for their products.<sup>22</sup> Farmers were especially susceptible to these promises. Of foreign born groups such as Scandinavians, Ukrainians and Germans Irving writes, "Many of the older generation of these and smaller groups could scarcely speak English and the \$25 monthly was probably all that thousands of them heard or understood of Social Credit."<sup>23</sup> Of those who emphasized the secular aspects of Social Credit, few claimed to understand the technicalities of putting it into operation. "All such matters, people constantly insisted, could be left to Aberhart and the experts he would call in...."<sup>24</sup> In their despair they were prepared to trust.

To others Social Credit was "applied Christianity". More than any other reason they followed Aberhart because he was a "Man of God" who really cared for the people. The more extreme, often his loudest supporters,

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 250-5.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 256.



saw him as divinely gifted. The fervour which Aberhart aroused for Social Credit can only be described by the people themselves. For example:

"We felt he was a born leader, with something great to do in the world. It seemed to us as if God had picked Mr. Aberhart and then prepared an audience for him in Alberta first as a religious leader and then as a leader of the Social Credit movement. The life of Mr. Aberhart in Alberta was a fulfilment of a Divine Plan."<sup>25</sup>

"He showed us how Social Credit was a natural result of the Bible and Christianity. A lot of us were convinced that this God-inspired man had a plan which would, without any possibility of failure, solve the problems of the common man forever."<sup>26</sup>

"I was an old U.F.A. man and had worked for our local for years. But our government in Edmonton refused to do anything about the depression.... Then along came Aberhart and his standing as a religious teacher attracted me to Social Credit. I felt that Aberhart was a God-fearing man that we could all trust, so I left the U.F.A. for good.... If he said Social Credit would work then I figured it would work.... One night I went to a Social Credit meeting in a town near us where Mr. Aberhart was speaking. A U.F.A. man began to throw questions at him and made a disturbance. I got real mad at this U.F.A. man for doing that, and I couldn't hold myself in. So I jumped up and led the meeting in prayer. I said, 'Let us pray for Mr. Aberhart. Let us pray for his soul.' As we prayed aloud the U.F.A. man got frightened and shut up. There we were, all down on our knees praying for Mr. Aberhart. We were a bunch of hard working slaves - over-worked, over-tired, eyelids half closed from exhaustion and misery, children lying all about, under and over benches. When we finished praying tears were rolling down practically everybody's cheeks. Later on I was surprised myself that I had led that

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 259; "a lower middle class housewife".

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 261; "a small town real estate and insurance broker".

meeting in prayer for Mr. Aberhart."<sup>27</sup>

For many people the religious and the economic aspects of Social Credit were closely interwoven in the image of Mr. Aberhart. The result was a strong emotional commitment to Aberhart, a faith that conferred charismatic authority on him. The faith is reflected in the leaving of a specific programme to experts, and in the centralization of decision-making in the person of Aberhart, a demand which he made and was freely conceded.

### 5.3. Social Credit in Office, 1935-1944

A necessary prelude to describing the policy and action of Social Credit in office is to indicate those parts of Major Douglas' political philosophy which were imported to Alberta. The crux of this philosophy is contained in the following passage:

"A democratic parliament is...from its inherent nature an assembly of representatives, not of delegates.

"It is concerned with impressing the will of the people upon the institutions of industry, agriculture, and commerce, and that will can only be concerned with results. Methods are for experts, and popular election is an unsound method by which to appoint an expert."<sup>28</sup>

The people are only to be consulted about broad policy goals but do have the power to change the executive elite since "the domain of policy comprises the removal of executives if the results achieved are unsatisfactory."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 262; "a farmer in the Edmonton area".

<sup>28</sup> Douglas, op. cit., pp. 55-6.

<sup>29</sup> C.H. Douglas, "Social Credit", London, 1924, p. 143.

Aberhart subscribed to the interpretation of society as having a general will seeking expression through a leader. The will of the people was defined as "the abolition of poverty in plenty"; the people should concern themselves only with this objective, not with methods and techniques. This was to be left to leaders of the movement who would promise to achieve the general will of the people. This was summed up in the Social Credit election slogan of "Vote for Results, not Schemes". Thus the mass is urged to unite behind the leader and trust in his ability. In conventional Douglas theory the legislature and the cabinet were to represent the general will of the people by choosing appropriate experts who would advise on specific policies. This was formally accepted by Aberhart, but in practice he was to retain strong personal control over what policies were implemented.<sup>30</sup>

When Social Credit won with its huge majority in 1935, Aberhart formed a government and was quickly given a safe seat (he was not a candidate in the election). However, premier and cabinet did not move to introduce Social Credit. Confronted with an enormous provincial debt, Aberhart's first official act was to appeal to the federal government for financial help. R.J. Magor, an orthodox eastern financial expert, was appointed to assist the government. His advice was reflected in the

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<sup>30</sup>Other less important points of divergence between Aberhart and Douglas are discussed in MacPherson, op. cit., pp. 160-62.

conventional methods of finance and administration which the Social Credit government followed in its first year in office.

Meanwhile Douglas was still under contract to the Alberta government as a reconstruction adviser. He was the obvious choice for the Social Credit expert who would bring about the new utopia. However, Aberhart refused to rubberstamp the Douglas proposals. Angered at Aberhart's misunderstanding of Social Credit and at his compliance with orthodox finance, Douglas insisted on resigning. His public statement of resignation charged that interference by other officials made it impossible to carry out Social Credit policies and constituted "a danger to the people of Alberta in their aspirations and a breach of contract with myself."<sup>31</sup> Aberhart had, in fact, restored to the cabinet the responsibilities for government policy which, according to Social Credit theory, should have been left to experts.

Before the election Aberhart had asked for 18 months to introduce a full Social Credit programme, during which time he was to be given trust and loyalty. But as the 18 months drew to a close there was still no sign of the expected dividends, while the depression in the south persisted. Late in 1936 John Hargrave, leader of a Social Credit faction in England, arrived in Alberta and produced a complex set of proposals, which the Social Credit leadership then proceeded to ignore. Hargrave

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<sup>31</sup>Regina Leader-Post, 4-3-36.

left in disgust in January, 1937.<sup>32</sup> A few days later the government's debt settlement legislation, which would have meant a loss for the mortgage companies, was declared ultra vires.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the speech to open the new session of the legislature proposed only orthodox financial measures; a full Social Credit programme was to be delayed for another year.<sup>34</sup> This combination of circumstances was enough to threaten the legitimacy of Aberhart's personal power. Members of the legislature, who had accepted that their function was to represent the people's will, but to leave the details to experts, now recognized that results were not forthcoming. They had been asked to demand only results, and this they were now determined to do. The insurgents, as the dissident Social Credit Members of the Legislative Assembly (M.L.A.) were called, provided the biggest challenge which Aberhart ever had to face in his government career.

In anticipation of a move to oust him, Aberhart appealed over the heads of caucus members direct to the constituency associations, hoping perhaps that a display of popular support would be enough to hold back any

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 27-1-37; Harold J. Schultz, "The Social Credit Back-benchers' Revolt", Canadian Historical Review, vol. 41, 1960, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup>Regina Leader-Post, 19-2-37. There were now hints that the government was going to introduce a moratorium and a law for the reduction of principal on debts.

<sup>34</sup>Regina Leader-Post, 25-2-37; Schultz, 1960, op. cit., p. 5.

opposition. He admitted temporary failure and asked for more time.<sup>35</sup> By this time the press was reporting a strong current of discontent within the Social Credit League,<sup>36</sup> although the first public opposition did not come until the debate on the budget. It was attacked vigorously by several members of the house, who believed that the financial measures were contradictory to the principles of Social Credit. Their strength in the house was enough to prevent closure of the debate, and the insurgents were able to force the government to introduce legislation setting up a Social Credit Board of experts, in return for which they would vote the government a temporary supply of money. However, the terms of the new Social Credit Bill proved unsatisfactory to the insurgents, whereupon the government introduced a new Act, which provided for a Social Credit Board of five M.L.A.s (who were not to be cabinet personnel) to appoint from three to five experts, who would devise a complete system of Social Credit. Each expert on the commission would hold office for ten years.<sup>37</sup> Although they had helped frame the Act, prominent opponents, such as Dr. H.K. Brown, criticized its final form. They protested the wide powers granted to the Board, its permanent appointment and the shifting of responsibility from the cabinet to the personnel of the house. Brown

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<sup>35</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

<sup>36</sup>Regina Leader-Post, 1-3-37.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 13-4-37; Schultz, 1960, op. cit., pp. 7-14.



called it unrecognizable as the bill which had been discussed in committee.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the Act was passed on April 13th and the house recessed until June. In effect it was a skilful government device to buy time.

During the recess Aberhart appealed over his radio station to the grass roots supporters that they should either support him or ask their constituency M.L.A. to cross the floor of the house. He would countenance no opposition from within the party. At meetings in the constituencies the insurgents hit back in self defence, but they lacked the advantage of their own radio station. The hot debate lasted all through May and there was some uncertainty about what would happen when the legislature would meet in June. However, although there was still some evidence of opposition within the League, the budget was finally approved on the understanding that another session would be called in August to enact the Social Credit legislation that a team of experts was preparing.

Meanwhile the Social Credit Board had tried to get Douglas to prepare a plan. He did not come himself but sent two close followers, who, by August, had prepared a series of Social Credit Acts. These Acts were designed to force the banks to operate under licence from a Social Credit commission, and to prevent any opposition in the

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<sup>38</sup> Regina Leader-Post, 14-3-37; MacPherson, op. cit., pp. 173-4. In fact, MacPherson shows that the Act divided responsibility between the Board, the appointed commission of experts, and the government.

courts by the banks or any other party, if such action questioned the constitutionality of the government's legislation. Banks were given two weeks to get a licence, and, if they refused, another Bill preventing them from taking any civil action in the courts would come into effect. Taxation in Alberta was to be abolished, the government's revenue to be supplied in future by contributions of credit from the banks.<sup>39</sup> These measures were quickly passed in the legislature and this marked the end of the insurgents' revolt. The new legislation clearly involved a severe attack on the power of chartered banks and as such it provoked intervention by the federal government. Prime Minister MacKenzie-King disallowed the legislation on the grounds that it involved an encroachment on the powers ascribed by the British North America Act to the federal parliament.<sup>40</sup>

It is evident that this action was anticipated by Social Credit leaders in Alberta,<sup>41</sup> and perhaps it was even a relief for them. In the first place, it prevented them from having to make Social Credit work in practice, and secondly, it provided a scapegoat against which the government could direct the wrath of the people. "See what we are up against," Aberhart could

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<sup>39</sup>Regina Leader-Post, 5-8-37.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 18-8-37.

<sup>41</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., p. 178.

say to the people;<sup>42</sup> he could point an accusing finger at the eastern politicians and business interests in order to justify his failure. Yet Aberhart could no longer be assured of the complete allegiance of the people based on their belief in his inspired ability to produce results. It was at this time that a petition began to circulate in Aberhart's own constituency in an attempt to get enough signatures to have him recalled from parliament. Social Credit theory allowed that the mass of the people did have the right to get rid of their representatives when results were not forthcoming. For this reason a Recall Bill had been passed in 1936 which allowed for the recall of an M.L.A. when a petition to this effect had been signed by two-thirds of the registered voters in his constituency. Now, when the Bill was a threat to Aberhart's personal position, it was quickly repealed. The incident is important because it provides evidence of doubts about Aberhart's legitimacy, not only within the legislature, but also in the province at large. His position was further weakened by the refusal of the Lieutenant-Governor to sign further Social Credit legislation and a press control bill during the final session of the house.<sup>43</sup> In December Social Credit even lost a seat in the legislature when a Unity candidate (Liberal + Conservative) won the Lethbridge by-election.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Regina Leader-Post, 18-8-37.

<sup>43</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1937-38, pp. 482-3.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 476.

The next two years brought an end to any serious attempt to introduce a Social Credit system, as all further legislation to this effect was disallowed by the federal government.<sup>45</sup> Only the Social Credit Board survived, but under a new Act which left it only with the power to undertake an educational programme. By 1938 Aberhart publicly stated that the attack on finance was over and Social Credit would adjust to the inevitable and pursue conventional policies.<sup>46</sup> The most notable legislation in the 1938 session was an attempt to change the method of taxation from one based on property to one based on production. The Agricultural Land Relief Act proposed a production tax of seven per cent but was not to be proclaimed until the courts decided on its validity.<sup>47</sup> Although defended by the government as a form of crop insurance, since income would be turned over to areas in need, the new legislation was bitterly opposed by farmers in mass meetings from the day of its announcement until it was declared ultra vires by the courts.<sup>48</sup> The tax was opposed because it more than doubled the previous tax burden and would have centralized municipal funds in Edmonton. The 1939 session contained no further attempt to introduce Social

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<sup>45</sup>For details see J.R. Mallory, "Social Credit and the Federal Power", Toronto, pp. 87-90.

<sup>46</sup>Schultz, 1964, p. 201.

<sup>47</sup>Canadian Annual Review, op. cit., p. 484.

<sup>48</sup>See Regina Leader-Post, 27-4-38, 21-5-38, 23-5-38, 1-6-38, 3-6-38.

Credit, this being explained by Manning, the deputy leader, as the result of the power which "international money monopolists" could bring to bear on the federal government. In the face of such strength Alberta could not act.<sup>49</sup>

With the next provincial election due in the summer of 1940 at the latest, Social Credit leaders were seeking a new base of authority by emphasizing a tradition of sound administration in the everyday affairs of the province. It was pointed out how the educational system had been improved by reorganizing local school units into regional ones and achieving more efficient use of scarce resources. Advances in social welfare and public health legislation were claimed.<sup>50</sup> In February, 1940, Aberhart announced the new election giving the minimum legal time for campaigning - 33 days. In the campaign speeches the theory of Social Credit was avoided as much as possible and took a minor place in the party's official platform.

"The entire program, except for plank twelve which promised to continue the fight for monetary reform and increased purchasing power, was based on the government's five-year record and the promised extension of welfare services.... Aberhart emphasized this record in radio broadcasts to the province. State medicine, a new school system, travelling health clinics, road

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<sup>49</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., p. 201.

<sup>50</sup>Harold J. Schultz, "A Second Term: 1940", Alberta Historical Review, vol. 10, 1962, p. 18. This article contains a detailed account of the 1940 election.

construction, treasury branches and marketing boards were the exhibits which the party was displaying to the voter."<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps the most attractive government legislation to the farmers was the Aberhart record on the private debt issue. The mortgage companies tried to establish a compromise debt adjustment agreement in Alberta similar to the one which had been negotiated in Saskatchewan, but in 1937 Aberhart introduced aggressive legislation which required a reduction on principal of 50 per cent. This was followed in 1938 by a moratorium on debt for one year, the restriction of creditor action and the prohibition of foreclosures on rural homes. The federal government disallowed some of this legislation, but left the debt adjustment sections to be tested in the courts. This turned out to be a slow process and while the legislation was before the courts creditor action was prohibited. Since the Privy Council did not declare the legislation ultra vires until 1943, farmers were still being protected by it at the 1940 election.<sup>52</sup> At this time we are told that "farmers fully believed that the choice was either Aberhart or the sheriff."<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, many people were less enthusiastic

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20. The "state medicine" meant public care for a few selected diseases. There was no form of general state health insurance.

<sup>52</sup>Mallory, op. cit., chapter 6. Many farmers were saved by the long delay in giving a decision because the time clause in their contracts limited the period in which the creditor could force foreclosure.

<sup>53</sup>Schultz, 1962, op. cit., p. 23.



than before about Aberhart and Social Credit. He had not, after all, produced the promised utopia.

"The premier was still effective on the hustings and crowds continued to enjoy his platform mannerisms and homilies, although in contrast to the 1935 crusade, he was frequently jeered, booed and heckled at meetings."<sup>54</sup>

The Opposition came from a weak CCF and the Independent Party, which was a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives. Considering that the Independents had no leader and weak organization (e.g., there was no central headquarters), they did surprisingly well because when the election results were announced Social Credit had been returned but with a reduced majority. The Social Credit share of the popular vote fell to 43 per cent and 63 per cent of the seats (36) were won compared with 89 per cent in 1935.<sup>55</sup> Independents took 19 seats and were joined by one Labour and one independent Liberal candidate. Aberhart himself topped the polls in Calgary.

For the new government the war now provided adequate justification for doing very little to further Social Credit legislation, since it was now "perfectly proper for the government to subordinate contentious measures to a policy of co-operation with the federal

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>55</sup> The number of seats in the new legislative was reduced from 63 to 57, which is why Social Credit losses are not given in terms of seats. A decrease in voter turnout probably hit Social Credit harder than the other parties.

government in the prosecution of the war."<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the major event before the election of 1944 was the death of William Aberhart in May, 1943. Ernest Manning was chosen by caucus to succeed as leader and he carried on the Aberhart policy of war-time co-operation with the federal government. The post-1944 development of Social Credit under Ernest Manning's leadership will be considered in chapter seven below.

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<sup>56</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., p. 202.

## Chapter Six

### On Route to Power: the Saskatchewan CCF, 1932-1944

This chapter will deal with the development of the CCF as it came to power in the province of Saskatchewan. I shall consider the origin of the party, the transformation of its initial socialist policies from the election of 1934 until power was won in 1944, and the social composition of CCF support during these elections. In a largely rural society such as Saskatchewan land policy is crucial to an understanding of political developments and, therefore, the chapter concludes with a section devoted to changes in the CCF land policy up to 1944.

#### 6.1. Origin of the Saskatchewan CCF

The Saskatchewan section of the CCF emerged as a coalition of farmer and labour forces at the beginning of the depression. It has already been stated in chapter three that those farmers who were most interested in reform had established an independent Farmers' Union in 1921. A major concern of this group was political education, a task which was continued within the United Farmers of Canada organization (formed after the Farmers' Union and the Grain Growers' Association had reconciled their differences).<sup>1</sup> By early 1928

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<sup>1</sup>Among the farmers who sought to spread socialist ideas were several Communists who later formed the Farmers' Unity League, a Communist front organization.

the left had two important successes. At the annual convention of the United Farmers of Canada a resolution was passed which favoured the compulsory marketing of wheat through the Pool, when and if 75 per cent of farmers signed contracts with the existing voluntary Wheat Pool. The few socialists within the organization had long been campaigning for a compulsory Pool as the only way for farmers to have any control over price, since they could then eliminate competition among themselves. In addition, George Williams, the leader of this group, was elected vice-president of the United Farmers' organization.<sup>2</sup> This victory was consolidated in the following year when Williams became president and an unqualified demand for a compulsory or 100 per cent Pool was passed.<sup>3</sup> The new radicalism of the organization was expressed by the retiring president, J.A. Stoneman, who said, "We should stress more and more that we do support public ownership and control of not only railways but natural resources as well."<sup>4</sup> This was a very important statement because in asking for the public ownership of natural resources, he was saying that farmers should give up personal ownership of land. The leftward swing was not taken without much debate and friction, which resulted in the resignation of ten

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<sup>2</sup>UFC (SS) Minutes, 1928, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1929. Supporters saw it as 100 per cent control, opponents as 100 per cent compulsion.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., presidential address.

directors, who accused Williams of destroying co-operation and drawing the organization into politics.<sup>5</sup>

As the depression took grip in 1930 the pressure for direct political action increased. In an address which stirred the United Farmers' convention (also published in the *Western Producer*), the honorary president, E.A. Partridge, demanded a form of Christian socialism to replace capitalist exploitation:

"We must organize along class lines, we must realize that it is the same class, who exploits labour, who exploits the farmer, only in a different way, and that the propertyless farmer must join hands against the common enemy.... True co-operation has its final goal in socialism, which is the continual observance of the Golden Rule, the gospel the man Jesus Christ preached and practised, two thousand years ago."<sup>6</sup>

Following this speech the debate on a motion to allow the United Farmers' organization to undertake direct political action produced a narrow defeat for the motion.<sup>7</sup> However, it was agreed that farmers should set up another organization "for the purpose of more directly selecting and electing representatives to the legislature and the House of Commons, pledged to support the demands of organized agriculture."<sup>8</sup> As 1930 drew

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<sup>5</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1929-30, p. 480.

<sup>6</sup>Address of honorary president, UFC (SS) Minutes, 1930, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>7</sup>The minutes show that few of the speakers were against direct political action because they had faith in existing remedies or existing parties. Indeed, some opposed the motion because they wanted an independent political party which could unite farmers and workers.

<sup>8</sup>UFC (SS) Minutes, 1930, Archives of Saskatchewan.

to a close, there was no sign of an end to the depression and the farmers were growing angrier at the existing social structure. Many were facing foreclosure after years of working to build up their farms, and so were in the best possible mood to agree with Partridge at the 1931 convention when he demanded a transition "from a system of production for profit to a system of production for use."<sup>9</sup> This year there was again little opposition to taking political action, but a heated debate as to whether the United Farmers should act directly or set up a new party. In the end Williams persuaded the convention to support direct political action as an economic organization.<sup>10</sup>

The decision for direct political action was taken in order to implement the economic policy, which had been established at the same convention. This policy appears confusing because it combined the long standing requests for agricultural reform with a long range socialist objective. The ultimate objective states that:

"In the opinion of the United Farmers of Canada, the present economic crisis is due to the inherent unsoundness of the capitalist system which is based on the private ownership of resources, and capitalistic control of production and distribution that involves the payment of rent, interest and profit; we recognize that social ownership and co-operative production, for use, is the only sound economic system."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1931.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.; and Organized Farmer and Labour Programme (Sask.) 1931, Farmer-Labour pamphlet, Archives of Saskatchewan.



Part of the provincial economic policy demanded "that 'Use-Leases' be implemented, and that all land and resources now privately owned be nationalized, as rapidly as opportunity will permit."<sup>12</sup> This resolution passed despite opposition from those who wished to retain title to their land. It marked the biggest policy victory for the left. However, it should not be thought that all the farmers in Saskatchewan were committed socialists. The policy was passed after heated debate in an organization which represented a minority of farmers in the province. More than anything else, this plank in the platform was to cause the rejection of the CCF during the thirties. All other parts of the United Farmers' platform were directed to patching up the existing system.<sup>13</sup>

By this time George Williams and other socialist influenced farmers were linking with Saskatchewan's tiny Independent Labour Party - in fact, they had been doing so for two years. In 1931 the United Farmers and the Labour Party presented joint reform proposals to the province's Conservative-led coalition government, and

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<sup>12</sup>UFC (SS) Minutes, 1931, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>13</sup>In addition to the "Use-Lease" policy the provincial government was asked to prevent any more foreclosures, evictions and seizures; to give the farmer absolute safety on his homestead quarter section; to improve debt adjustment legislation; to undertake a plebiscite on the 100 per cent Wheat Pool; and to see that no more new farms were set up in the province. It probably reflects the division within the United Farmers that much of this programme becomes redundant in view of the policy to nationalize land.

after all their demands had been rejected a conference was held at which the two reform groups agreed to work together to build a co-operative commonwealth. 1932 brought formal recognition to the agrarian-urban coalition with the founding of the Saskatchewan Farmer-Labour Party at a joint UFC-ILP convention where the only surprise was the election of ILP leader M.J. Caldwell to head the new party. This year also saw the establishment of the national CCF to which the Farmer-Labour Party affiliated. Although it did not change its name until 1934, the Farmer-Labour Party was, de facto, the Saskatchewan CCF.<sup>14</sup> By virtue of its affiliation the Saskatchewan organization was required to accept the national CCF policy, and, therefore, it is worth giving some brief space to the forming of the national party.

Unlike Social Credit, which was first and foremost a provincial organization, the CCF was a national party with provincial sections. It is also misleading to accept Lipset's assertion that the CCF was formed mostly because of pressure in this direction from agrarian socialists in Saskatchewan.<sup>15</sup> The origins of the national CCF are much more varied. The farmer and labour members of parliament, who formed the ginger

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<sup>14</sup>S.M. Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", New York, revised edition, 1968, p. 134, seems to give undue importance to the retention of the old name and extends it one year too long anyway.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-5.

group, frequently discussed the need for a united party to build a co-operative commonwealth. Many like James S. Woodsworth worked strenuously throughout the country for this goal, and by 1932 their efforts bore fruit. Up to this time socialism in Canada had been advocated in some form by a series of small labour parties, which often became even smaller as factions split off in ideological disputes.<sup>16</sup> But the parties did succeed in sending a few influential labour leaders to parliament, where they kept socialist ideas alive. It was the western conference of labour parties, which, from 1929, reduced the internal bickering in the labour political movement and provided a point of contact with the agrarian organizations by inviting farmer representatives to join them.<sup>17</sup> Preachers of the social gospel, who saw in socialism the principles of Christian co-operation, were active both within the labour movement and on the prairie. The importance of radical theology as an influence in founding the CCF is suggested by the fact that major leaders such as Woodsworth, William Irvine and R.C. Henders had once been men of the cloth.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> A comprehensive history of Canadian labour parties before 1930 is Martin Robin, "Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930", Kingston, Ontario, 1968. See also Charles Lipton, "The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959", Montreal, 1966.

<sup>17</sup> Stanley Knowles, "Le Nouveau Parti", Montreal, 1961, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> On the social gospel see Kenneth McNaught, "A Prophet in Politics", Toronto, 1959, pp. 30-57; and Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928", Canadian Historical Review, vol. 49, 1968, pp. 381-99.

Early in 1932 a group of intellectuals from the eastern universities, who had studied in England and been influenced by Fabian socialism, set up a League for Social Reconstruction. This was to be an educational organization which would work to establish a social order in which the principle of social relations would be the common good rather than private profit. Woodsworth was made honorary head and the League worked closely with him to establish the new party. It was this intellectual elite which drafted the party's manifesto. On the agrarian front the 1931 conventions of both the United Farmers in Saskatchewan and in Alberta voted in favour of building a national organization of all those seeking fundamental change.<sup>19</sup>

The product of these forces was the CCF, established on August 1st, 1932, at Calgary. Here the regular conference of western labour parties was joined by representatives from the farm organizations of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, the League for Social Reconstruction (as observers), but only one representative of the labour unions, who was A.R. Mosher of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees. There was much rhetoric about the compatibility of farmer and labour interests, but the structure adopted for the party reflected the problems of unity. It was to be a federation in which membership could only be

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<sup>19</sup>The U.F.A., 1-8-32. 1931 was the year Gardiner took over from H.W. Wood as president of the United Farmers of Alberta.

attained through the provincial sections and the federated organizations were to retain their individual identities.<sup>20</sup> This meant that unions could not affiliate because they were national bodies; it would be up to union locals to join if they wished.

In Saskatchewan and elsewhere, enthusiastic supporters worked hard and with great personal sacrifice to build up the party's strength before the first national convention, to be held at Regina in 1933. Here J.S. Woodsworth was confirmed as the national leader and a formal constitution was ratified. The most notable document was the Regina Manifesto, the party's document of faith. It begins:

"We aim to replace the present capitalist system, with its inherent injustice and inhumanity, by a social order from which the domination and exploitation of one class by another will be eliminated, in which economic planning will supersede unregulated private enterprise and competition, and in which genuine democratic self-government, based upon economic equality will be possible. The present order is marked by glaring inequalities of wealth and opportunity, by chaotic waste and instability; and in an age of plenty it condemns the great mass of the people to poverty and insecurity. Power has become more and more concentrated into the hands of a small irresponsible minority of financiers and industrialists and to their predatory interests the majority are habitually sacrificed. When private profit is the main stimulus to economic effort, our society oscillates between periods of feverish prosperity in which the main benefits go to speculators and profiteers, and of catastrophic depression, in which the common man's normal state of insecurity and hardship is accentuated.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.; later the party became more centralized after David Lewis was appointed national secretary.



We believe that these evils can be removed only in a planned and socialized economy in which our natural resources and principal means of production and distribution are owned, controlled and operated by the people."<sup>21</sup>

The manifesto stated that the CCF would "eradicate capitalism" when it was elected in place of the capitalist parties. Proposals to create the "planned and socialized economy" were sufficiently vague that none of the affiliated groups could take serious offence at being ignored. Any group could see in the document what it wished. How, for example, is one to identify the "principal means of production"? No answer is given in the manifesto. The provincial sections had only to subscribe to the vague general principles of the manifesto, and could construct their own specific policies in the provincial sphere. Although the national administration of the party occasionally brought pressure on the Saskatchewan section to alter policies, we are justified, overall, in treating the Saskatchewan section as the unit of analysis in the remainder of this work.

## 6.2. The Provincial Election of 1934

The provincial election of 1934 was the first in Saskatchewan during the depression and the first opportunity for the CCF to test its strength. Unfortunately

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<sup>21</sup>The Regina Manifesto, 1933. It is reprinted in several publications including McNaught, *op. cit.*, and Walter D. Young, "The Anatomy of a Party: the National CCF", Toronto, 1969. A comprehensive and penetrating analysis of the document is found in Young, pp. 39-67.



for the CCF, this strength did not appear great. Financially the party began the campaign with funds at their usual low level. At the 1933 convention the secretary reported that little work could be done because there was no money available and voluntary workers were constantly out of pocket. Office staff rarely received full pay and several times the central office was on the brink of closing.<sup>22</sup> Contesting the election at all was a remarkable feat of personal sacrifice by those who fought for the CCF (or Farmer-Labour Party, as the old name was retained until after the election).

The CCF fought the 1934 election on a platform which had a strong socialist component, which was stated in the Handbook for Speakers as "the social ownership of all resources and the machinery of wealth production."<sup>23</sup> As might be expected opposition was constant from the established parties and the provincial newspapers. Apart from the general assault on socialism as a threat to individual freedom, the most frequently criticized policy was the aim to socialize land. The opposition

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<sup>22</sup> Farmer-Labour Group minutes, convention, 1933, secretary's report. See also secretary Eliason's personal hardship and commitment to the movement as expressed in a letter to Coldwell, 2-6-33. CCF Papers, file No. 20/2, Archives of Saskatchewan. Much of the party correspondence is devoted exclusively to matters of finance.

<sup>23</sup> Handbook for Speakers, 1933, p. 21, CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan. The handbook was compiled from reports of conferences held in Saskatoon and Regina, 7-1-33 and 11-2-33.

raised the spectre of Saskatchewan farmers being forced into state collectives, complained that under the proposed system the farmers would lose control of their land, that they would have no choice but to surrender their title, and that they would lose the value of improvements which they had made to their holdings.<sup>24</sup> Countering this accusation that the CCF was against the idea of the family farm became a necessary part of nearly every speech by CCF candidates in the countryside.

Often the CCF was charged with communism and the support of violent revolution. For example the Regina Star reported that the United Farmers' "left wing group objected to co-operation along constitutional lines."<sup>25</sup> George Williams was particularly subject to attack because he had visited the Soviet Union and written about his experiences. The Minister of Justice in Ottawa even accused him of being a "paid agent of Moscow", which received extensive press coverage.<sup>26</sup>

Religion became a major issue in the campaign. M.J. Coldwell accused the Liberal Party of spreading fear among the Roman Catholic population that the CCF would prevent them from practising their religion. More important the Catholic Church hierarchy had a letter

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<sup>24</sup>E.g., Regina Star, editorial, 8-7-33; and Lipset, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>25</sup>Regina Star, 6-7-33, Regina Leader-Post, 3-1-34. Such charges were, of course, denied by the CCF.

<sup>26</sup>Regina Leader-Post and Regina Star, 23-2-33, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 24-2-33, etc.

denouncing socialism read from all pulpits and two students at Notre Dame College were forced to resign from the CCF. Later the text of a letter from the Archbishop of Regina to Coldwell, assuring him of the political neutrality of the Church, was published in the Leader-Post, but the damage to the left had already been done.<sup>27</sup> Even the United Church, strongly anti-capitalist in 1931, rejected socialization at a conference just before the election.<sup>28</sup> The United Church was the largest in the west and was composed in part by former Methodists who had supported the social gospel. Many prominent CCF candidates and supporters were members of the United Church, and rejection of their programme by the church must have been a severe blow to their hopes of success.

Faced with such odds it is remarkable that the CCF did as well at the polls as it did, winning nearly 25 per cent of the popular vote and five seats in the legislature. The Liberals won all the other seats (but with a minority of the popular vote) and so the Conservative administration of Dr. J. Anderson was completely wiped out. CCF supporters were distressed at the result, for they had expected to sweep the province. Coldwell, who had been defeated, described himself as bitterly disappointed and wrote, "I am feeling today both tired and sick."<sup>29</sup> This resounding defeat in 1934

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<sup>27</sup> Regina Leader-Post, 26-5-34.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 5-6-34.

<sup>29</sup> Coldwell to Eliason, 20-6-34, CCF papers, file No. 20/3, Archives of Saskatchewan.

marked the end of the socialist phase for the CCF in Saskatchewan.

Why did a socialist appeal fail in Saskatchewan? Unfortunately, we have no record of how the public perceived the different parties in relation to their voting decision, not even the ex post facto sample which Irvine provides for Alberta. Some clues are provided in Lipset's ecological analysis of support. The CCF vote was lowest in the small towns and villages, highest in the rural areas and in the working class districts of cities. In rural municipalities the CCF support was lowest among Ukrainians, French-Canadians and Germans.<sup>30</sup> Other than Scandinavians these are the largest ethnic groups in the province. However, since most of the French and Germans were Roman Catholic, the ecological analysis does not allow us to argue whether racial or ethnic prejudices were most influential in their voting. The CCF candidates were most successful in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian municipalities. Milnor also points out that not all Catholic areas went against the CCF; indeed, Ukrainian Catholic areas such as Wadena gave the CCF some of its highest support.<sup>31</sup> Table 6.1

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<sup>30</sup> Lipset, op. cit., pp. 197-220. The Canadian census gives a breakdown of statistics by rural municipality, which usually corresponds to the boundaries of poll districts. The municipalities with a high degree of ethnic and religious homogeneity were used by Lipset as the basis for ecological analysis.

<sup>31</sup> A.J. Milnor, "Agrarian Protest in Saskatchewan", Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1962, pp. 114-20. This may be influenced by the rivalry between the Ukrainian and the /

Table 6.1. Correlations of Census Data for Rural Areas of Saskatchewan with Political Party Vote, 1934.

Group	CCF	Conser- vative	Liberal	Assessment of Land	Tenancy	United Church	Roman Catholic	Anglo- Saxon
CCF	x	-.23	-.65	.25	-.11	.40	-.29	.44
Conservative	-.23	x	-	-.04	.20	.33	-.37	.35
Liberal	-.65	-	x	-	.03	-.43	.25	-.40
Assessment of Land	.25	-.40	-.20	x	.18	.57	-.27	.51
Tenancy	-.11	.20	.03	.18	x	.19	.14	.08
United Church	.40	.33	-.43	.57	.19	x	-.45	.85
Roman Catholic	-.29	-.37	.25	-.27	.14	-.45	x	-.50
Anglo-Saxon	.44	.35	-.40	.51	.08	.85	-.50	x

Source: S.M. Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", New York, revised edition, 1968, p. 202.

presents correlations between party vote and census data, indicating that a high CCF vote is most closely associated with areas of Anglo-Saxon population, United Church membership and high quality land. But these characteristics are all highly intercorrelated themselves, with the result that it is impossible to deduce which factor is the most important. CCF votes are most negatively correlated with Liberal and Roman Catholic areas.

Lipset also presents evidence that the CCF vote was lowest among poor farmers, those who lived in areas where land tax assessment was low and the incidence of tenancy highest (see Table 6.1). This is supported by qualitative evidence from the observations of several CCF candidates. Helmer Benson, candidate in Pheasant Hills, remembered that most of the down-and-out people voted Liberal - "It was like their religion."<sup>32</sup> George Hindley, who ran in Wilkie, said that "when you get people down so far they stop thinking. They lose their initiative, they lose their capacity to fight and they begin to accept things."<sup>33</sup> This is the complement to

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(Footnote 31 contd.)

the Roman Catholic Churches. Ukrainian Catholics were not under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Roman Catholic Church. More important Wadena was the well organized constituency of CCF leader, George Williams.

<sup>32</sup>H.J. Benson, Interview, 14-9-70, in Archives of Saskatchewan, file No. 15/45.

<sup>33</sup>George Hindley, Interview, 21-1-71, in Archives of Saskatchewan, file No. 15/60.



Lipset's statement that only after economic conditions improved did the poor farmers have the personal security which was necessary for them to engage in politics as CCF supporters.

The newspaper files suggest that socialism was the big issue of the 1934 election. It is therefore important to know how supporters of the different parties viewed socialism, but there is little evidence of a systematic nature. A review of speeches at conventions, public statements and letters in the farming journals suggests that those who supported the CCF saw socialism as Christian co-operation which would allow them to protect their way of life. Those in opposition tended to define socialism in terms of Soviet totalitarian rule, collective farms, and anti-religious attitudes - i.e., a threat to the small capitalist producer and the family farm. No party perceived in such a way, whether times be good or hard, could hope to win an election in a society whose people were committed to personal ownership of the land. The history of co-operative action does not provide grounds for changing this assessment of the people of Saskatchewan, since producers' co-operatives are defence mechanisms best described as "the joint entrepreneurship of individuals."<sup>34</sup> The farmers of Saskatchewan only accepted socialism when it was defined as co-operative organization.

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<sup>34</sup>J.W. Bennett and C. Krueger, "Agrarian Pragmatism and Radical Politics", in Lipset, op. cit., p. 351.

### 6.3. Pragmatism in Policy and Relations with other Parties

The Saskatchewan CCF was not a doctrinaire 'ideological' party, and being committed to winning power through the electoral machinery, participation and defeat in the 1934 election began a process of compromise in policy and attitude to other reform oriented parties. This conservative process accelerated after the CCF had its first encounter with Social Credit in the 1935 federal election, to which we shall now give some attention.

In the context of continuing depression the Conservative federal government of R.B. Bennett fought the election as a reform party,<sup>35</sup> but the reforms arrived too late to save his government. He had come to power with the promise to end unemployment, yet in the election month of October 13.3 per cent of the labour force still had no job. For these hard times Bennett and the Conservatives were held responsible, and the reforms were insufficient to restore confidence in the government. Among political leaders there was a mixed reaction, many Conservatives being frightened by the critique of laissez-faire capitalism, which was the

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<sup>35</sup>Earlier in the year Bennett introduced a Canadian new deal which included Acts to establish a comprehensive scheme for federal unemployment insurance; labour legislation to provide for weekly holidays, minimum wages, and a maximum number of hours per week; an Act to prevent the eviction of farmers; legal machinery to set up Dominion Marketing Boards; and several Acts to control industrial competition.

backdrop to Bennett's specific proposals, while the Liberal Party was content to shout that the 'New Deal' legislation was ultra vires because it violated the British North America Act, which gave jurisdiction to the provinces on matters of "civil rights and property". In this way the Liberals were able to oppose Bennett without appearing to be against the interests of the poor. CCF leaders had two main complaints about the reforms: they were stolen from the CCF platform and they were insufficient. Woodsworth promised support for specific legislation rather than vague ideas, and pointed out that the most important part of the 'New Deal', the unemployment insurance, could not help the plight of the hundreds of thousands already out of work. What was required, said Woodsworth, was a new system.<sup>36</sup>

For the purposes of this study the most important event of the federal election was the first appearance of Social Credit in Saskatchewan. Fresh from the summer's triumph in Alberta, the Social Credit League sought federal representation by contesting the seats in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Social Credit associations were formed throughout Saskatchewan and the League nominated candidates in all constituencies. Campaigning with the same anti-socialist, but reform platform, which had been so successful in Alberta, Social Credit was a strong competitor for votes among the dissatisfied

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<sup>36</sup> See reports of speeches by Woodsworth in Regina Leader-Post, 10-1-35, 11-1-35, 21-1-35 and 4-2-35.

people of Saskatchewan. Particularly, it could appeal to all those who wanted reform but were frightened by visions of totalitarian socialism under the CCF.

The CCF was campaigning on its immediate reform programme coupled with references to the new order which would emerge in the future. Those leaders in Saskatchewan who still believed in socialism feared the compromise and ambiguity of this position. In January, George Williams told Coldwell that there was no place for the CCF as a reformist organization, since there were already two of these. Instead:

"We...must convince the general public...that we are out and out socialists, and they are capitalist reformers." This might be unpopular and prevent a few people from being elected "but I do sincerely believe that by being outright Socialists, we will qualify ourselves for power when the Fascist experiment has run its course. It may be a long and weary road. My personal opinion is - the sooner we reconcile ourselves to out and out socialism and all the abuse that term means, the sooner we will be worthy of the crown of success. In this regard it might be wise to err on the side of being rather abrupt rather than err on the side of being too suave, and I feel that our immediate program adopted at our last Convention erred on the side of being too suave. However, that is past, and all we can do about it now is to go ahead and battle as out and outers, and in my humble opinion, this course will prove in the end to be the wisest course."<sup>37</sup>

Others in the party (notably Coldwell, Hugh McLean, Clarence Fines and Tommy Douglas) were more prepared to compromise and co-operate with Social Credit in order to prevent duplication of effort by opposition parties.

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<sup>37</sup>Williams to Coldwell, 30-1-35, CCF papers, file No. 20/4, Archives of Saskatchewan.

On the party executive Williams still had sufficient support to maintain a firm official stand against co-operating in any way with Social Credit, but he was unable to prevent several constituency associations co-operating at that level of organization. In Yorkton, Jacob Benson became a joint candidate (CCF and Social Credit) and was subsequently repudiated as a CCF candidate. Tommy Douglas, who was endorsed by Social Credit, had greater personal influence on the CCF executive and was treated less harshly. After several months of debate Douglas was retained as a CCF candidate and asked only to accept a motion of censure from the party. (By this time Douglas had actually been elected.) Less publicized troubles occurred in other constituencies, notably Saskatoon and Last Mountain.<sup>38</sup> This pressure for co-operation at the local level brings out the point that many people were prepared to co-operate with Social Credit because they wanted immediate action and tangible results. Pinard presents a similar general hypothesis:

"Given the fact that the masses are, by and large, neither sensitized nor interested in most facets of the movement's ideology, we claim that unincorporated masses, once faced with a crisis, will choose the movement most likely to be successful, whether it is conservative or progressive in the eyes of the

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<sup>38</sup>There is some evidence that Social Creditors were also seeking co-operation, but the CCF candidate in Prince Alberta rejected the suggestion first proposed by Social Credit, that he should stand down in order that Coldwell would be given no opposition in Rosetown Biggar. See correspondence in CCF minutes, Executive meeting, 30-9-35.



sophisticated observer."<sup>39</sup>

For the same reason the masses may see little reason for conflict among organizations with reform goals. Hence the pressure for a reform party to pursue pragmatic policies, in so far as it needs the support of the people.

This pressure towards pragmatism in politics was given another boost by the failure of the CCF in the election. In the country as a whole the Liberals won an overwhelming victory taking 171 of the 245 seats, but Lower describes the victory in negative terms:

"The victory was not a tribute to Mr. King, it was not a proclamation in defence of liberty, it was not even a pronouncement on the issues of the day. Liberalism, as it emerged in Canada after 1935, was the counterpart of Baldwin Conservatism in Great Britain, of Le Front Populaire in France, and of Rooseveltian Democracy: it represented the huddling together of frightened people uncertain of their way in a chaotic world."<sup>40</sup>

On 8.9 per cent of the total vote the CCF elected seven candidates to the House, but Social Credit on a smaller popular vote won 17 seats.<sup>41</sup> Winning 15 of Alberta's 17 constituencies Social Credit eliminated all the sitting United Farmers' members, which was a severe blow

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<sup>39</sup>Maurice Pinard, "The Rise of a Third Party", Englewood Cliffs, 1971, p. 95.

<sup>40</sup>A.R.M. Lower, "Colony to Nation", Don Mills, 1964, p. 523.

<sup>41</sup>Social Credit was able to do this because of the regional concentration of its support. For an excellent analysis of how the Canadian electoral system affects representation see Alan C. Cairns, "The Electoral System and the Party System in Canada, 1921-1965", Canadian Journal of Political Science, vol. 1, 1968, pp. 55-80.



to the CCF since these people had been the backbone of the party in Ottawa. In Saskatchewan the Liberals, with a minority of the popular vote, won 16 of the province's 21 seats. Social Credit took two, the CCF two and the Conservatives only one. In fact, Social Credit won 20 per cent of the vote, slightly more than the CCF, and was very strong in the west of the province. For the CCF leaders this was the second severe defeat in little more than a year and must have been a major cause in the dilution of socialism in the party programme.

At the provincial convention in 1936 a reform platform was adopted which made no reference to socialism. The constitution was also amended to allow for co-operation with any organization for the purpose of bettering the immediate conditions of the common people.<sup>42</sup> Having removed the socialism there could be little objection on ideological grounds to co-operating with Social Credit, a course which George Williams and his supporters now advocated. The main opposition now came from federal M.P.s, but they were only successful in having the co-operation proposals couched in more general terms. It was resolved that:

"This convention urge upon the Provincial Council the advisability of issuing a call to all progressive organizations, political, cultural and economic to meet in convention to seek to discover common ground upon which we may unite for action and a common goal to

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<sup>42</sup>CCF minutes, first annual convention, 1936, Archives of Saskatchewan.

which we may unitedly move."<sup>43</sup>

In using the words "unite for action" and "unitedly move" the resolution is probably misleading as to the degree of co-operation which the leaders intended. Unity implies coming together as one, but nothing more than coalition was intended (coalitions are temporary agreements between separate organizations which have certain common interests). My interpretation is based on a radio address by George Williams later in the year:

"When the CCF convention voted for cooperation, they just as emphatically turned down affiliation and made it quite clear that the CCF did not intend to sink their identity in a compromise party. They did not intend to give up any of their principles or platform nor do they suggest that other groups should do so.

"What we suggest is that the reform groups in Saskatchewan agree that there is a program on which all groups can unite, and that with this program in mind, we refrain from fighting each other by running five or six candidates in each constituency."<sup>44</sup>

Williams then went on to reject Social Credit theory, but added that Social Creditors should not be obstructed too much in their attempt to get a new deal. While assuring listeners that the CCF was not communist, he was careful to add that "some communists are only disgusted with the slowness of democratic reform." In this presentation Williams was trying to strike a delicate balance between retaining an image of the

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>George Williams, "Cooperation", radio broadcast, Weyburn, 9-12-36, CCF pamphlets, Archives of Saskatchewan.

specific, individual identity of the CCF and paving the way for a united front of reform parties. The ambiguity of Williams' attitude to Social Credit and the Communist Party also suggests that he was ill at ease with his new role as co-operator. Indeed, in private he still expressed a desire for socialism, but tempered by practical considerations. His reply to a farmer from Carrot River, who rejected the reformist tendencies of the party, is instructive:

"There comes a time...when we acquire a certain amount of worldly wisdom and a time when we find if we want to get a certain place and are continually shot down in frontal attack, you are wise to attack on the flank.... You fill your place by keeping socialism ever before the eyes of the people while some of the rest of us fill our places by getting the power to bring about Socialism."<sup>45</sup>

In the summer of 1937 Williams reported to the party on his attempt to get that power. He emphasized that the resolution of the previous convention to call a meeting of progressive forces was exploratory and did not involve affiliation. A CCF committee had devised an immediate programme for agricultural relief and approached the United Farmers' organization (which had withdrawn its affiliation with the CCF) in the hope of presenting a united front to the government. However, the United Farmers decided to make their own representations to the Liberals and, only if these failed, would they co-operate with the CCF. Eventually the United

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<sup>45</sup>M.O. Vineyard to Williams, 30-3-37, and Williams to Vineyard, 5-4-37, CCF papers, file No. 43, Archives of Saskatchewan.

Farmers' Board pronounced satisfaction with the government's attitude but not with existing conditions. Therefore, they resolved to call a conference of all economic, commercial and educational bodies for the purpose of developing an agricultural policy. Failing immediate satisfaction from the government the policy was to be submitted to the CCF. Williams argued that the minutes of this meeting showed the futility of conferences between diverse groups. Consequently, if the CCF wished to call a conference it would be best to invite only those organizations with the "same ideology" as the CCF.<sup>46</sup>

Also, in the spirit of the 1936 resolution, Williams and A.J. Macauley had visited William Aberhart. "No commitments were made, but the door was left open for further conversations and possible future co-operation."<sup>47</sup> Williams had tried to prepare the ground for this meeting by encouraging the leader of the CCF in Alberta to stop attacking Social Credit and even to begin a reconciliation process. It was clear to Williams that continued clashes in Alberta would make co-operation in Saskatchewan all the more difficult. However, William Irvine, leader of the Alberta CCF, was not prepared to compromise because he saw an early end to the Social Credit experiment and did not want to have the CCF

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<sup>46</sup>Williams' Report on Cooperation, CCF minutes, Provincial Council, 5/6-6-37.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

defined guilty by association.<sup>48</sup>

In September, 1937, the Saskatchewan CCF executive decided to approach the Social Credit League at its autumn convention in Saskatoon with the following message:

"Through the medium of this message of greeting, the Saskatchewan CCF desires to extend to your organization an invitation to meet a committee from the Saskatchewan CCF to canvass the possibility of cooperation, in order to prevent the forces of reaction again sweeping Saskatchewan by splitting the reform vote."<sup>49</sup>

At the Social Credit convention a motion to receive the CCF message was passed, but then Ernest Manning, visiting from Alberta, produced what seems to have been an instant rule that such a motion had to be unanimous. This determined opposition by Manning may be explained partly by his anger at the persistent attacks of CCFers in Alberta,<sup>50</sup> but it is also reasonable to suppose that Social Creditors retained hopes of a sweeping victory in Saskatchewan after their relative success in 1935, a success achieved with little time for organization. Therefore, the Alberta leaders may have felt that they had little to gain from any form of alliance with the CCF.

While these negotiations with Social Credit were going on, there is evidence that the CCF was itself being approached by both the Communist and Conservative Parties

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<sup>48</sup>Williams to Irvine, 15-12-36 and 23-12-36, and Irvine to Williams, 19-12-36, CCF papers, file No. 43, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup>CCF minutes, Executive meeting, 11/12-9-37.

<sup>50</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 144, gives this interpretation, but fails to point out that a majority of Saskatchewan delegates wanted to hear the offer.

to establish some form of alliance.<sup>51</sup> Most surprising was the new position of the Conservative Party, now led by John Diefenbaker. The Conservatives produced a reform platform that was little different from the CCF immediate programme, including as it did measures such as state medicine, unemployment and crop insurance, and increased social service benefits.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, a definite alliance with the Conservatives was rejected by the CCF provincial convention.

Following its rejection of CCF overtures in the fall of 1937, the Social Credit League of Saskatchewan announced that the aim of the League was to have a candidate in every constituency for the election expected in 1938.<sup>53</sup> Despite this announcement many in the CCF continued to work for some form of alliance. Responding to pressure in the constituencies for joint candidates, the CCF executive issued a press statement in which it was recognized that there was a popular demand for co-operation. The statement added that the CCF, as the strongest and best organized group, was the logical centre for this. Therefore, where the CCF was strongest it should not be opposed by others, but where it had little hope of winning it was only reasonable for

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<sup>51</sup>Williams' press statement, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 17-7-37. Apparently the approaches were restricted to the constituency level of organization. J.G. Diefenbaker to the author, 12-8-71.

<sup>52</sup>Regina Leader-Post, 8-11-37.

<sup>53</sup>Moose Jaw Times-Herald, 6-1-38.



CCF people to find a candidate from another progressive group whom they could support without compromising their principles. The decision whether to nominate or not was to be made in a properly called CCF convention. There was to be no compromise, no fusion party and no fusion candidates. In addition the aim of the CCF was still to elect enough candidates to form a straight CCF government.<sup>54</sup>

This proposal for limited "saw-off" arrangements could hardly satisfy Social Creditors, ambitious as they were for victory. Still the CCF tried to stem the invasion. In a letter to Aberhart, A.J. Macauley, a CCF executive member, promised that if the CCF won the election they would undertake some form of united provincial action,<sup>55</sup> and following this he went to meet the lion in his den. Aberhart apparently thought the request for co-operation was absurd and presumptuous, insisting that he would never co-operate with the CCF and, indeed, he would vote Liberal before he would vote CCF.<sup>56</sup> Even after this rebuff some members of the CCF did not give up:

"It may help you in your negotiations with Social Credit to know that even after receiving Mr. Macauley's report on Mr. Aberhart's blast, I personally went to Rosthern and kept our fellows out of the

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<sup>54</sup>CCF minutes, Executive meeting, 19/20-3-38.

<sup>55</sup>CCF minutes, Provincial Council, 16/17-4-38.  
Macauley's report.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

field, pointing out to them that they should back Social Credit. It is my opinion that actions speak louder than words."<sup>57</sup>

Shortly after his meeting with Macauley Aberhart announced that he was only waiting for an invitation before sending his forces into Saskatchewan. A prelude to intervention by the Alberta government was the formation of a national Social Credit organization. This would provide a mechanism for Aberhart to control the Saskatchewan members and would be some protection against charges of interference in the affairs of another province. To this end a conference of western Social Credit leaders was called by Aberhart.<sup>58</sup> A few days later it was announced in Regina that the Western Canadian Social Credit Association would control election activities in all western provinces and that Ernest Manning would organize in Saskatchewan. The association would approve all nominations in Saskatchewan before they were made official.<sup>59</sup>

Ever since co-operation had been rejected in the previous year, the Social Credit forces in Saskatchewan had been split. Early in May Manning arrived to heal wounds and direct the campaign, but his medicine was weak because it was reported that "from 32 constituencies has come strong disapproval of Mr. Manning's methods of

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<sup>57</sup>Williams to S. McArton, 27-4-38, CCF papers, file No. 43, op. cit.

<sup>58</sup>Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 29-4-38.

<sup>59</sup>Moose Jaw Times-Herald, 3-5-38; Regina Star, 3-5-38.

organizing constituencies and nominating candidates. In every case complaints state that the local Social Credit organization in Saskatchewan is being strangled and that an unscrupulous dictatorship has been set up."<sup>60</sup> Despite this internal conflict Social Credit candidates were selected in 41 of the 52 constituencies. Now Aberhart, Manning and several other cabinet ministers toured Saskatchewan propounding the familiar Social Credit doctrine. A federal government controlled by financial interests was blamed for the failure to introduce Social Credit in Alberta. Social Credit would fight on and purchasing power would be restored to the people, who could safely leave the details to experts. Social Credit was attractively defined as "the ability to buy goods and services without paying for them at the time,"<sup>61</sup> and Manning promised "when we get control of the money we will pay out dividends so fast it will make your head swim."<sup>62</sup>

It was widely recognized that the Saskatchewan election of 1938 was the crucial test of whether Social Credit could expand into a national force. Therefore, it came in for even more abuse in the Liberal press than did the CCF. Long letters were published which warned the people of Saskatchewan against repeating the "chaos"

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<sup>60</sup>Statement by Saskatchewan member of Western Canada Social Credit Board, quoted in Regina Star, 20-5-38.

<sup>61</sup>Aberhart, quoted in Moose Jaw Times Herald, 25-5-38.

<sup>62</sup>Regina Leader-Post, 28-5-38.

in Alberta and leading articles warned against the appearance of a new Hitler. In the western border riding of Kindersley-Kerrobert there was the remarkable spectacle of Liberals, Conservatives and CCFers combining to form a League for the Defence of Democracy as a response to Aberhart's intervention in Saskatchewan.<sup>63</sup>

1937 has been the worst crop failure year in the history of the province and now in the following summer all the parties were claiming to be parties of reform which could handle the effects of the crop disaster. The CCF abandoned any reference to socialism and concentrated on social planning and the protection of the family farm by better debt adjustment legislation, crop insurance, etc. Only the Liberals nominated a full slate of 52 candidates; the Conservatives put up 25, the CCF 30 and Social Credit 41. There were also several unity candidates. The result of the election is shown in Table 6.2, which shows that the Liberal Party was returned to power with a large majority in the legislature. Although the other parties did not contest all the ridings, there was enough duplication of opposition to allow the Liberals to carry 17 constituencies, which otherwise would have fallen to the reform forces. Thus the overwhelming dominance of the Liberal Party in the new legislature should not lead the reader to believe that the Liberals were wholeheartedly supported in the province.

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<sup>63</sup>Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 25-6-38.

Table 6.2. Number of Seats Contested, Number of Seats Won, and Percentage of Popular Vote for each Party, Saskatchewan, 1938.

Political Party	No. of Seats Contested	No. of Seats Won	Percentage of Vote
Liberal	52	38	45
Conservative	25	0	12
CCF	30	10	19
Social Credit	41	2	16
Other	6	2	8

Source: David E. Smith, "A Comparison of Prairie Political Developments in Saskatchewan and Alberta", Journal of Canadian Studies, vol. 4, 1969, p. 25; Saskatchewan Archives Board, "Elections 1905-1953", Regina and Saskatoon, 1954.

The CCF leaders were only moderately satisfied with their performance. Compared with 1934 the decrease in popular vote was the result of placing fewer candidates in the field and of the intervention of Social Credit as a competitor for reform votes. CCF representation in the legislature was increased from five to ten,<sup>64</sup> most of which came from east-central Saskatchewan where recent crops had been better than in other parts of the province. Indeed, neither the CCF nor Social Credit was strongest in the poorest areas; Milnor has

<sup>64</sup>This was quickly increased to 11 when Joe Burton won the Humboldt by-election, an important victory for the CCF in that with a Catholic candidate it showed the CCF could win votes in German Catholic areas such as Humboldt.

calculated that only one of the ten constituencies with the highest proportion of protest votes was in the area of greatest crop failure (the Palliser Triangle).<sup>65</sup>

The CCF did make major advances in the small urban districts, more than doubling its support, but it appears that this increase did not reflect support from small business men and professionals; rather it came from workers and farmers living in town. Business men and professionals either retained their old party identification or were converted to Social Credit.<sup>66</sup>

With regard to support Lipset concludes:

"The principal change in CCF support in the 1938 election from that of 1934 was that it tended to receive the support of many poorer Anglo-Saxon Protestants who had previously voted Conservative.... As in 1934, the CCF was opposed by the poorer non-Anglo-Saxon and Catholic areas. Catholic farmers either continued to vote for the Liberal Party or backed the Social Credit movement, which had more appeal to dissatisfied Catholics than did the socialist CCF."<sup>67</sup>

For Social Credit the election was a disaster, only two of its 41 candidates being successful. There were encouraging results only in the constituencies close to Alberta, especially in the north and central region where Cut Knife was won from the sitting CCF member. Given that the Roman Catholic Church had remained neutral towards Social Credit, it is not surprising to find that Social Credit was stronger than the CCF in

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<sup>65</sup>Milnor, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>66</sup>Lipset, op. cit., pp. 198-9.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 203.



Catholic areas, particularly those with French or German concentration.<sup>68</sup> However, we should note these relationships are very weak, certainly not strong enough to swing the constituencies away from the Liberals. Overall the poor showing of the Social Credit candidates must have been a severe blow to William Aberhart, because it suggested that national power, which was necessary to introduce Social Credit, was unattainable.

Why did Social Credit fail in conditions so similar to Alberta of 1935? Lacking data on voters' perceptions of Social Credit, any answer must be speculative. Several factors seem worthy of consideration. The Social Credit League was an imported organization, which had to build up from scratch in areas where the CCF had been organizing for years. Also, the authoritarian method of having candidates selected by an outsider was distasteful to the people of Saskatchewan, who had not experienced the failure of the United Farmers of Alberta experiment in constituency autonomy. Only those who lived close to the border with Alberta had been exposed over a long period to Aberhart's religious broadcasts and to the evangelists who poured over the countryside from the Bible Institute. Perhaps most important of all, there was no evidence after three years in power that Aberhart was bringing the promised utopia to

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<sup>68</sup> Milnor, op. cit., p. 150. Humboldt is an important exception. Note that the conclusion is based on quartile analysis because the relationships are too weak to show up in ecological correlations.

Alberta. Why should people then believe that he would succeed in Saskatchewan? It is also true that Aberhart and Social Credit received a very bad press and were the primary targets for Liberal propaganda, but this had not prevented Social Credit winning in Alberta and was probably a minor factor.

While Social Credit received a mauling, the CCF emerged from the electoral conflict of 1938 as the undisputed challenger to Liberalism in Saskatchewan. The earlier rejection by Social Credit of CCF approaches and the party's increased strength relative to Social Credit encouraged a new anti-coalition attitude on the part of the pragmatic CCF leaders. It was now recognized that there was no need to combine with Social Credit in order to win, and so the CCF took a hard line towards future unity proposals. Meeting a few weeks after the election the annual convention of the CCF passed a new statement on co-operation, resolving that the CCF should run a candidate in each seat in any forthcoming election, but also agreeing that, because of the damage done by vote splitting, all constituency organizations should "seek the cooperation of all former supporters of other progressive groups."<sup>69</sup> If these were former supporters they would not be involved in vote splitting and hence there would be no need to seek their co-operation to avoid duplication of effort.

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<sup>69</sup>CCF minutes, 3rd annual convention, 1938, Archives of Saskatchewan.

The confusing resolution passed in 1938 was to cause the leadership many headaches in the next few years. People interpreted the word "cooperation" according to their own desires. To some it meant combining in a united front, to others no more than an electoral saw-off, while others thought that even the latter had now been rejected. George Williams and most of the party council took the latter position, and so rejected a strong pressure in several constituencies to sanction a united front approach under such labels as United Reform, United Progressive, and New Democracy.<sup>70</sup>

It is important to realize that this rejection of co-operation with other reform groups did not mean the adoption of a more socialist position by the CCF. The party continued to emphasize social planning and social security; social ownership was to be restricted to the financial institutions, and some natural resources and public utilities (all of which was consistent with the agrarian populist tradition of North America). The few leaders who were still prepared to discuss socialism were careful to define it pragmatically - for example, George Williams in a pamphlet published in 1939 writes:

"This is not a treatise in Socialism according to Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Henderson, Bellamy or Engels. The writer does not pretend to be

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<sup>70</sup> Saskatchewan's small Communist Party was influential in several of these attempts to set up a united front. See especially correspondence in the Meadow Lake constituency files. Such approaches were now rejected by the CCF leadership as an attempt to destroy the party from within.

outlining a theoretical socialism.... The people of Canada are not interested in ascertaining whether a proposed economic system agrees with Marxism, or any other 'ism'; they want to be reasonably sure it will work."<sup>71</sup>

In its next test of popular strength, the federal election of April 1940, the CCF exhibited its growing popularity by winning 5 of Saskatchewan's 21 seats, 28.6 per cent of the vote, and only trailing the Liberals by 101,450 to 104,441 votes in the 15 seats which were predominantly rural.<sup>72</sup> Such support was heartening for the CCF members because the party had been weakened by conflicting attitudes to the Canadian participation in the war.

"During the campaign, some members of the CCF ran on an antiwar platform, some on an all-out support of the war, and still others on the party program of economic but not military aid to the Allies."<sup>73</sup>

Probably of greater importance to the farmers was that war had brought only a small increase in the price of wheat, although the crops were now much bigger. In 1941 the CCF continued to support the farmers in their demands for higher wheat prices. That year the Liberal federal government would only guarantee a price of 70 cents per bushel, while the farmers were demanding \$1, which they backed up by collecting 185,000 signatures on a petition and \$40,000 to send a delegation to Ottawa.

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<sup>71</sup>George Williams, "Social Democracy in Canada", 1939, CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>72</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

This pressure was enough to force the government guarantee up to 90 cents (still well below pre-depression prices).<sup>74</sup> As the only party to give complete support to the farmers in this struggle, the CCF benefited by having its membership more than doubled during 1941-42.

The other major event of 1941 was that Tommy Douglas was elected president of the Saskatchewan CCF in preference to a candidate supported by George Williams (who had now joined the army and was overseas).<sup>75</sup> Apparently some party members felt that Williams had held too much personal influence in the party, but the real significance of this event was that it consolidated the reformist, pragmatic direction of the party, and showed the influence of the urban middle class in the farmers' party (Douglas was a Baptist minister and early member of the Independent Labour Party).

In 1942 a record crop helped to fill the party treasury, which allowed more intensive organizational publicity. The CCF would probably have won any provincial election called at this time, but had to wait until June, 1944, because the Liberal government, fearing defeat, passed a special bill extending the life of the legislature. This probably added to the liabilities of the Liberals, of which:

"Undoubtedly the most serious was the identification with the big business, anti-farmer

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>75</sup>CCF minutes, annual convention, 1941, Archives of Saskatchewan.

interests that was seen by the farmers as connected with the national party.... Liberalism became a symbol of the depression and all that it connoted in relief checks, poverty and suffering."<sup>76</sup>

Emphasizing policies of social welfare the CCF now took 53 per cent of the vote and all but five seats in the legislature. As economic conditions improved the CCF was now better able to mobilize support in areas such as the Palliser Triangle to the extent that a block of constituencies in the centre of this region were now in the top quartile of CCF support. Similarly the poorest areas of the two cities were now among the strongest areas of CCF support.<sup>77</sup> Table 6.3 shows that the

Table 6.3. Ecological Variables and CCF Voting, 1934 and 1944.

	CCF Votes	
	1934	1944
Assessment of land	.25	-.08
United Church membership	.40	.10
Roman Catholic	-.29	-.10
Anglo-Saxon	.44	.04

Source: S.M. Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", New York, revised edition, 1968, p. 204.

<sup>76</sup> Sanford Silverstein, "The Rise, Ascendancy and Decline of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation Party of Saskatchewan Canada", Ph.D. thesis, Washington University, 1968, pp. 77-8. It is true that this liability had always operated against the Liberals to some degree, but the educational work of the CCF and the party's support for higher wheat prices in 1942 combined to increase agrarian distrust of the Liberal Party.

<sup>77</sup> Lipset, op. cit., p. 206, Table 18.



spread of CCF support had the effect of cancelling out the major ecological-political correlations of 1934. The apparent reduction of Roman Catholic opposition may be connected to the fact that in 1943 the church became officially neutral towards the CCF by announcing that it was no longer unacceptable for Catholics to support it. However, Roman Catholic areas did remain the main source of Liberal votes.

#### 6.4. The Land Policy and its Implications

It has been suggested in the chapter that the CCF had only a brief courtship with socialist ideology and that this period ended with the electoral defeat of 1934. Also, in that year the national party adopted an "immediate programme" of reforms as the base for the 1935 federal election campaign. In Saskatchewan the editor of the Melville Canadian perceptively described this change:

"The C.C.F. program of action calls for nothing else but repairs to capitalism.... It is pointless to answer that there is a difference between the C.C.F.'s immediate action and ultimate goal. Its proposed repairs to capitalism are not steps to socialism if that's what it wants. They are steps in the opposite direction, steps towards making capitalism more efficient and more satisfactory to the public."<sup>78</sup>

In this section I shall examine the move away from socialism with specific reference to land policy. The long struggle against the mortgage companies indicates

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<sup>78</sup>Melville Canadian, editorial, 8-8-34.

that Saskatchewan people have a strong attachment to the idea of personal ownership of land (i.e., the institutions of private property). Therefore, if the Saskatchewan CCF has been a pragmatic agrarian dominated party, committed to electoral institutions, we would expect to see land policy moving towards consistency with local cultural attitudes.<sup>79</sup> In this crucial area we find conservative modifications being made even before the 1934 election.

I have recorded that the socialists in the United Farmers' organization were able to persuade the membership to adopt a programme which included the nationalization of land. Farming would be carried on under a "Use-Lease", which would allow the individual farmer to operate as before, except that he would now lease the land from the state. The plan was devised to ensure security of tenure, since the individual farmer would no longer be subject to evictions caused by default on mortgage payments. Opponents were assured that there was no intention of introducing collective farms as in the Soviet Union. "Use-Lease" was adopted as the policy of the new Farmer-Labour Party (CCF) in 1932. The policy generated great opposition in the rural areas among those farmers who rejected state ownership because they wanted to hold personal title to the land. This attitude prevailed among not only Liberal supporters but

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<sup>79</sup>For an excellent review of how other aspects of CCF policy changed see Lipset, op. cit., pp. 160-196.

even the active Progressives. For example, S.N. Horner, who had been elected to the legislature in 1929 as a Progressive, states that he did not go directly to the Farmer-Labour Party, because "each should own his own home and the farmer's home is on his land. Therefore, if this land is leased, his home is leased."<sup>80</sup>

As early as 1932 opposition to land nationalization produced a change of wording. The policy became known as "Use-Hold" to emphasize the security of tenure aspect rather than the state ownership content. In July, 1933, a motion was tabled by the political directive board that the land policy should be amended "so that occupants be granted the privilege of exchanging their "Use-Lease" for clear title any time after their indebtedness had been paid in full."<sup>81</sup> A pamphlet from this period states that the policy aims to preserve "freedom, individual rights, and dignity of race." The policy is described in detail. All lands being opened for settlement would be held by the state and "Use-Hold" titles would be issued. Lands which had reverted to the municipalities because of failure to pay taxes would be returned to the original occupant under a "Use-Hold" title after the government had settled with the municipality. Lands on which the occupant could not meet his debts would be made secure for the farmer on

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<sup>80</sup>S.N. Horner, Interview, 2-1-71, in Archives of Saskatchewan, file No. 15/55.

<sup>81</sup>CCF minutes, political directive board, 8-7-33, Archives of Saskatchewan.

voluntary application for "Use-Hold" title. This would occur after debt adjustment and revaluation of the land by an Arbitration Board. Bonds would be issued on the equities agreed. Those who held a clear Torrens title (a deed of ownership) and were not embarrassed by creditors could carry on as they were or apply for "Use-Hold" title if they so wished.<sup>82</sup> Another pamphlet issued in 1933 stated that "despite criticism from the old parties it is not a system of government farming or collectivization...use hold title gives every power of the Torrens except that of mortgage."<sup>83</sup> It could be willed and participation was voluntary. The alternative was perceived to be corporation farming by the finance companies. Thus we can see that the earlier programme to nationalize all natural resources had been modified.

By 1934 the official CCF declaration of policy was advocating security of tenure but gave no details of the land policy; rather it contained an extended statement on CCF support for religious freedom and a quote from the Archbishop of Westminster to the effect that Catholics could vote for non-violent social democratic parties.<sup>84</sup> The policy for the nationalization of land

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<sup>82</sup>"Agricultural Land Policy", Saskatchewan Farmer-Labour Group, Saskatoon, approx. 1932, CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>83</sup>"Is Your Home Safe?" CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>84</sup>Official Manifesto of the Saskatchewan Farmer-Labour Group, 1934, CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan.

was officially dropped in 1936. In the budget debate of 1937 Williams did not mention "Use-Hold" but advocated protection of the Torrens title by limiting the power of the mortgage companies. For example, he suggested that no payments should be made in poor crop years and that the government should proclaim a moratorium on debt when necessary.<sup>85</sup> Thus the CCF position in Saskatchewan had become similar to what the Social Credit government was actually doing in Alberta.

From the middle thirties until the victory of 1944 CCF land policy changed very little. In its land policy the CCF promised to:

- "1. Protect the farmer from unjust foreclosure and eviction.
2. Protect from seizure that part of a farmer's crop that is needed to provide for his family.
3. Use, if necessary, the power of moratorium to compel reduction of debts to a figure at which they can reasonably be paid with prevailing prices of farm products.
4. Prevent the growth of debt by placing a crop failure clause in all mortgages and agreements of sale."<sup>86</sup>

Another pamphlet stated that "the CCF believes in the family farm as the basis of rural life" and that it would protect the family farm by increasing farm income through guaranteed minimum prices, encouraging the development of co-operatives, crop insurance, and pressing for the abolition of the Winnipeg Grain

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<sup>85</sup>Williams, Budget Debate, 24-3-37, CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>86</sup>"CCF Land Policy", 1944, CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan.

Exchange.<sup>87</sup>

This process of conservative development provides another example of a familiar dilemma for parties which propose social revolution but are also committed to gaining power by popular election: should ideology be compromised for immediate reformist gains or should the original goal be explicitly retained and energy be diverted into educating the electorate?<sup>88</sup> If such a party fails to provide what the people will accept, it must become reconciled either to taking power by force or remaining a powerless educational organization; to win power quickly by election it must compromise and adopt a reformist rather than a revolutionary programme. In the latter case revolutionary rhetoric will be abandoned. Thus, urging the Social Democratic Party of Imperial Germany to adopt a programme of immediate reform:

"Bernstein promised Social Democracy the support of a large sector of the bourgeoisie - but to win that support the party 'must find the courage to emancipate itself from a revolutionary phraseology which is in fact out of date, and be willing to appear as what it really is: a democratic-socialist party of reform.'"<sup>89</sup>

The pressures towards revisionism seem to be especially

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<sup>87</sup>"The Farmer and the CCF", CCF papers, 1944, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>88</sup>See especially the great debate between supporters of Bernstein's revisionism and revolutionary socialism in the German SPD. E.g., Peter Gay, "The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx", New York, 1952.

<sup>89</sup>Carl E. Schorske, "German Social Democracy", Cambridge, Mass., 1955, p. 19.



great in rural dominated areas such as Saskatchewan, where people tend to be strongly committed to existing property institutions. Again the German Social Democratic Party provides an interesting comparison. While the party as a whole was officially committed to a policy of total opposition to capitalism (the 1891 Erfurt programme), unindustrialized southern Germany became a centre of revisionism, as the party tried to win support among the peasantry and artisans.

"The southern Social Democratic leaders were inclined from the outset to tone down the revolutionary aspects of the party's ideology. The efforts of party agitators to work among the peasants led to the first attempt to revise the Erfurt program's Marxian thesis that the independent peasantry was doomed to be crushed by large-scale agriculture. To tell a prosperous peasant that he was fated to lose his holding was no way to convert him to Social Democracy. Bavarian party leaders raised the demand for a policy designed to protect and defend the interest of the peasant, while southern theorists developed an analysis showing that small holdings, far from being doomed, were more efficient than large ones for certain types of agriculture."<sup>90</sup>

The land issue in Saskatchewan never did involve such an extreme process of compromise within the CCF because almost nobody in the party adopted a doctrinaire position which would have required abandoning the ideal of the family farm as the basis of rural life. In Saskatchewan the adjustment of the party to a pragmatic reformist position was relatively painless because the party leadership had strong agrarian roots. An early commitment to winning elections also meant an early

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-9; also pp. 192-30.

adjustment of the culture of the party to that of the society (or more accurately to what the leadership perceived that culture to be).

In concluding this chapter, it is worth noting that the development of a large, careerist, party bureaucracy (another well known source of conservatism in party development<sup>91</sup>) had practically no bearing on the conservative trends in the CCF, because such changes were well under way when the party had only the most meagre permanent staff - one full time secretary in 1934. However, the leadership, once in power, did develop characteristics of oligarchy - self-perpetuation and a decline in contact with the rank and file members - which contributed to the party's defeat in 1964. I shall want to consider this question in parts of the next two chapters.

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<sup>91</sup>Michels' classic study is still of major importance. R. Michels, "Political Parties", English edition, Glencoe, Illinois, 1947.

## Chapter Seven

### Industrialization and the Transformation of the Agrarian Parties 1944-1971

In this chapter it is proposed to indicate how the process of economic change affected the policies and sources of support of Social Credit and the CCF. The chapter is important to the thesis in that it suggests the conditions which lead to the decline of populist politics, and thus it complements the main emphasis of the research on populism and the conditions which produce and sustain it. First, a brief overview of the economic changes since 1945 will be presented; then the history of each party in power will be reviewed up to 1971.

#### 7.1. The Urban, Industrial Transformation<sup>1</sup>

Since the Second World War the impersonal force of economic development has gradually eroded the numerical predominance of the petit bourgeois class in Alberta and Saskatchewan. As rural and small town areas suffer a relative decline in population, the parties, which seek power and have depended on support from people in these areas, have been forced to adjust to changed circumstances. The new developments of industrialization and urbanization have brought a new way of life to much of

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<sup>1</sup>Except where otherwise noted, this summary is based on statistical material presented in Appendix A.

the west. As rural electrification programmes advanced, the mass media, now dominated by television, invaded the countryside and spread the urban culture of mass consumption living.<sup>2</sup> New desires were manufactured and new deprivations experienced. But most important to political life, a diversified economy brought a rise in the proportion of the population in the labouring classes and in white collar occupations. Wage labour replaced farm ownership as the main source of personal income.

As long as the economy continued to expand in the fifties and sixties, increases in real income allowed many people to satisfy their growing desire for material products. Even the farming population profited from higher prices and increases in scale of operation, although annual income remained unstable. However, the small farmers, those with insufficient capital to expand and profit from large scale production, experienced a relative decline in their standard of living. Many of these contributed to the flow of people from country to city. Worst hit of all were the native people who had not yet learned to cope with the white man's culture; they festered on the reservations where the federal agents made all important decisions and the men lost

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<sup>2</sup>An excellent report on the impact of electrification on rural life is the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, vol. 11, "Rural Electrification", Regina, 1956.

their dignity.<sup>3</sup> Yet the plight of the poor white farmers and the Indians has only recently been forced to the attention of political leaders. Only when they disturb the peaceful lives of the more affluent, can the poor hope to escape the conditions to which even their unborn children are condemned. This statement of the existence of severe deprivation among certain minorities has been made to emphasize that the overall increases in prosperity, which are referred to in this chapter, have not been equally distributed. When we discuss such prosperity we are excluding small scale farmers, most of the Indians, and sections of the urban labouring class. Nevertheless, a majority of people experienced an increase in their material standard of living and that majority dominated thinking in the legislatures of the provinces. New prosperity, while it made many innovations financially possible, discouraged change because it made change seem unnecessary, and change has never been valued for its own sake in the Canadian west.<sup>4</sup>

Both the Albertan and Saskatchewan governments recognized that this new found prosperity of their provinces could not be assured as long as they were

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<sup>3</sup>See the poignant descriptions of poverty in Canada in the present day in Ian Adams, "The Poverty Wall", Toronto, 1970. Using conservative figures approximately 20 per cent of Canadians are classed as poor.

<sup>4</sup>See John Bennett on the conservative effects of farm prosperity in "Social Adaptation in a Northern Plains Region: a Saskatchewan Study", in C.C. Zimmerman and S. Russell, "Symposium on the Great Plains", Fargo, N.D., 1968.

subject to the market circumstances of a single product. Thus diversified economic development was encouraged. This included both diversification within agriculture (away from wheat to other grain crops and livestock) and a decline in the importance of agriculture relative to other sectors of the economy. With the built-in advantage of Alberta's geography, the Social Credit government has been consistently more successful in achieving these aims. Agriculture has regularly accounted for less of the total provincial product than it has in Saskatchewan, and Alberta has developed more industries that are not based indirectly on agriculture. Yet, even in Saskatchewan, the changes in the structure of the economy have been startling. For example, in the ten years, 1948-58, agriculture as a source of wealth declined from 71 per cent of the total value of production to 37.4 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Mining, construction and manufacturing industries have shown the greatest growth.

Alberta's expansion took off from the development in 1947 of a large oilfield south of Edmonton:

"The oil and gas industry provided the major impetus to the economic development that has taken place since 1947. The increase in population has stimulated the construction industry, made viable many manufacturing industries which are related to servicing the needs of the consumers not connected with the

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<sup>5</sup>Stanford Research Institute, "A Study of Resources and Industrial Opportunities for the Province of Saskatchewan", Menlo Park, California, 1959. Figures such as these must be treated with caution because the value of agricultural production shows large yearly variations (Appendix A, Table 9).



oil industry, and generated the needs for service industries."<sup>6</sup>

The search for oil was also indirectly responsible for the development of Saskatchewan's glamour industry - potash - which has lost much of its sparkle in the current world recession in potash prices.

"Exploration for oil led to the discovery of potash, and the initiation of new major industry. Other important developments took place in sodium sulphate, natural gas, and clays. The net value of mineral output in 1958 was \$164 million, 19.4% of the provincial total. These resource based industries, in turn, provided a market for products that could not have been manufactured profitably in Saskatchewan in the past."<sup>7</sup>

New industries in Saskatchewan and in Alberta further promoted the dramatic growth of urban population in both absolute and relative terms (i.e., relative to the proportion in rural areas). This growth created sufficient consumer concentration to allow the setting up of manufacturing enterprises, which are oriented to the local market. The development of urban amenities acts to attract further population, which leads to the economies of large units and brings about greater concentration of employment opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

In agriculture the trend towards larger farms and a decrease in the numbers employed in agriculture have

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<sup>6</sup> Alberta Bureau of Statistics, "Alberta. Industry and Resources", Edmonton, 1964, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Stanford Research Institute, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> John Richards, "The Decline and Fall of Agrarian Socialism", in S.M. Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", revised ed., New York, 1968, p. 366.

accelerated. Because of technological innovations in agricultural production, the larger farm units do not require increases in the labour force proportionate to the increase in farm size. The labour force has declined despite an increase in the total area of land in productive use. Farm income continues to fluctuate and is usually below the national average for per capita personal income. Although the economy is changing rapidly, the latest census figures still show that agriculture provides the largest single source of employment in both provinces.

The lower density of rural population, in conjunction with improved transportation, has accelerated the decline of small distributing centres. Today the prairie countryside is dotted with small towns (defined as those with less than two thousand people), where a large proportion of the small businesses have been abandoned and where the homes that remain often have a run-down appearance.<sup>9</sup> Young people, in particular, have flocked to the cities in a migration which repeats the pattern so familiar to students of industrialization. Saskatchewan remains well behind Alberta in the proportion of her people living in urban areas, but the cities of Saskatoon and Regina have been among the fastest

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<sup>9</sup>These comments are based on press reports reinforced by my travels in Saskatchewan. E.g., the road from Saskatoon to North Battleford passes by numerous small declining villages, which are spaced out at 7 to 12 mile intervals. The researcher is both rewarded and saddened by making the small detours which are necessary to visit them.

growing in Canada during the last decade. Saskatchewan also lags behind in the rate of population growth, and there is some evidence that out-migration has reached such proportions that the population is now declining slightly.<sup>10</sup> An upswing in economic activity will probably change this as it has in the past.

Perhaps the most important consequence of the urban, industrial transformation in Saskatchewan and Alberta is that the mass apathy of a mass consumption society seems to have descended on the population. Except for small groups of student and union activists the urban people seem content to demand only that what they have should be preserved. In rural areas the co-operative organizations have become conservative parts of the establishment.

"...the major, once pro-CCF, non-capitalist economic institutions (Wheat Pool, consumer co-ops, etc.) followed the conservative path that Lipset suggests is common for all purely economic reform organizations during good times.... The depoliticalization of co-operative Saskatchewan may have sharply weakened the CCF organizationally, since this process implies a decline in the overlap of leadership between the party and other organizations...."<sup>11</sup>

If these speculative comments are accurate then we should expect an increase in political conservatism, whatever the actual party labels might be, because the apathy in the west today is not the product of

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<sup>10</sup>This out-migration is probably the main reason why Saskatchewan had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada during 1970-71.

<sup>11</sup>Richards, *op. cit.*, pp. 371-372. He also reports that the editor of the main farm paper, the "Western Producer", was a conservative.

destitution; rather it is a product of satisfaction with what exists. Since what is defined as good there is no need to work to change politics. Those who promise to conserve the good life are entrusted with public office.

Against this background of a rapidly changing society we will consider the recent political history of Alberta and Saskatchewan. How did Social Credit and the CCF adjust to the processes which they helped to bring about? How do populist reform parties respond to success?

## 7.2. The Saskatchewan CCF in an Age of Prosperity

The CCF came to power in 1944 and survived as a government for twenty years. Its history since 1944 to the present may be divided into five main periods - a period of innovation, 1944-48, which set the tone of the administration; consolidation and expansion, 1948-60; the medicare election and its aftermath, 1960-63; the Liberal interlude, 1964-71; and the revival of the NDP<sup>12</sup> in 1971.

7.21 Innovation. When the new CCF government entered office in 1944 it was committed to a programme of widespread innovation in the areas of agriculture,

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<sup>12</sup>The CCF allied with the Canadian Labour Congress in 1961 to form the New Democratic Party. See Walter D. Young, "The Anatomy of a Party: the National CCF", Toronto, 1969; and Gad Horowitz, "Canadian Labour in Politics", Toronto, 1968.

public ownership, labour legislation, health and welfare, and education. Tommy Douglas did not greet his victory with revolutionary fervour, commenting, "We must go forward cautiously but resolutely."<sup>13</sup> Yet, in comparison with any other administration the province had experienced, the first two years of the first term were ones of intense innovation.

An agricultural policy intended to provide security of tenure and stability of income was pursued. The Farm Exemptions Act gave the farmer the right to retain enough of the proceeds from his crop to keep his family, cover operating expenditure, and have sufficient seed for the next planting before paying out to the finance corporations. The Farm Securities Act banned evictions from the quarter section where the farm house was situated. Most important the farmer was also allowed to postpone interest payments and have the principal reduced by the equivalent of one year's interest during crop failure years.<sup>14</sup> This was bitterly opposed by the finance companies, which had defeated the attempts by Social Credit to introduce similar legislation in the thirties. Again the financial interests won, because the Supreme Court declared that the offending clauses on reduction of interest and principal were ultra vires. In other respects the CCF promoted stability by

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<sup>13</sup>Quoted in A.W. Johnson, "Biography of a Government: Policy Formulation in Saskatchewan, 1944-1961", Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1963, p. 179.

<sup>14</sup>Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1944.

establishing seed and fodder banks as an insurance against poor years, pressed for a continuation of the wartime Wheat Pool agreements, and increased the agricultural extension services.<sup>15</sup>

There was no attempt to socialize agriculture, although the left wing did encourage the setting up of collective farms. Enabling legislation was passed in 1945, but only 29 farms were subsequently established (excluding the Hutterite religious communities). In these farms the land is owned or leased by the group as a whole, work is planned at regular meetings, and the men draw equal monthly wages regardless of the specific jobs they do. Family units live in separate houses which are owned collectively. After investigating these collective farms, Cooperstock concluded that most of them have suffered because the members are unable to adjust to the principle of property sharing. They are unable to do so because they have been socialized in a society where the individually owned and operated farm is the ideal. Membership in co-operative associations does not alter this because so few members are actively involved. "...much of the loyalty to the co-operative movement may be based on rational calculation of the

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<sup>15</sup> Sanford Silverstein, "The Rise, Ascendency and Decline of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation Party of Saskatchewan, Canada", Ph.D. thesis, Washington University, 1968.



economic gains to be derived from membership."<sup>16</sup> Most of the surviving farms are, in fact, large scale family enterprises. "Except for one or two of the earliest farms, there is no indication of any important ideological motivation in their organization."<sup>17</sup> Collective agriculture is outwith the dominant prairie farming culture.

Except for the gesture towards collective farming, Lipset's assessment is correct that the CCF was conservative in its rural policy. It did "nothing to change the comparative position of tenant farmers or to equalize the economic status of the poorer and smaller farmers."<sup>18</sup> Any attempt to limit the size of individually owned farms has been resisted by the CCF leadership. It also seems that the expansion of co-operatives under the CCF has benefited the larger farmers disproportionately, because the poor cannot afford to wait until dividend time for cash income. They must often accept the prices offered by the private elevator companies, which are higher on the date of delivery to the elevator.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Henry Cooperstock, "Prior Socialization and Co-operative Farming", in B. Blishen et al., eds., "Canadian Society", Toronto, 1968, p. 339. Cooperstock notes that, unlike the socially isolated Hutterites, the absence of barriers between co-operative farmers and the local communities reinforces the individualist values of those on the farms.

<sup>17</sup>J. Bennett and C. Krueger, "Agrarian Pragmatism and Radical Politics", in Lipset, op. cit., p. 355.

<sup>18</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

When challenged on the lack of socialism in their government, CCF supporters are proud to point out the state owned industries set up by the CCF. In 1945 a Crown Corporation Act reached the statutes. This Act permitted the government to purchase existing businesses, to establish new ones and to borrow in order to finance them. In short time the government was operating an Electric Power Commission (later the Saskatchewan Power Corporation), a province wide telephone system, a bus company to replace Greyhound services, an airline to serve the north, an insurance office to provide all kinds of service (but especially the cheap and compulsory auto insurance), fur and fish marketing services, two fish filletting plants, a lumber marketing board, a seed cleaning plant, liquor stores, a printing plant, woollen mill, shoe factory, tannery, sodium sulphate plant, a brick yard, and finally the Prince Albert box factory. The box company was taken over after a protracted labour dispute. Lipset stated that the overriding justification for these government enterprises was a concern to use them as a source of income in order to extend social services, but Johnson points out that this end could be achieved by increasing corporation taxes and controls. He agrees that a few ministers were motivated by revenue considerations, but claims that the most important reason for the government's action was that leading CCF members did recognize the need for economic diversification in the province, and were afraid that it would not

be carried out at all unless by the government.<sup>20</sup> This opinion is mirrored by a report from the Stanford Research Institute. Apart from the control of public utilities and transportation services (long a part of populist platforms), it concludes that:

"...the primary direction of the extension of public ownership has been toward the utilization of resources and elimination of gaps left by private enterprise. The government has undertaken such enterprises only when private sources of investment have felt that the particular enterprises were too risky. In certain cases this has proved true, as demonstrated by the failure of three Crown Corporations in the late 1940s. However, it is worthy of note that, as a whole, Crown Corporations have been profitable ventures."<sup>21</sup>

The CCF was generally cautious and pragmatic. It did not reject private enterprise. The provincial budgets under the direction of Clarence Fines were orthodox, balanced ones, which was partly a result of the province's need to improve its poor credit standing on the financial markets.<sup>22</sup> Oil, the most promising area for future development, was left to private industry. Although speakers at CCF conventions regularly favoured public ownership of the oil industry, the Douglas policy of development by private industry prevailed. A system of land rental and royalty payments was established as in Alberta, and so the CCF

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<sup>20</sup>Johnson, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>21</sup>Stanford Research Institute, op. cit., p. 68. Silverstein's conclusion that almost all government enterprises failed to survive market conditions is false, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>22</sup>Johnson, op. cit., p. 289.

lost its only chance of fulfilling, in Saskatchewan, the goal of socializing monopoly industries. Reviewing his time in power Douglas said that he would have preferred government ownership of oil, but the investment requirement was out of the range of a provincial government. He was forced to compromise:

"When the companies came in to explore for oil, the agreement was that when we declared an area to be what we called a proven area, it was checkerboarded. That meant that the black squares belonged to them. They could take the oil out of the black squares and pay the royalty and pay the ground rent. But the white squares belonged to the Crown. We didn't do what Alberta had done, we didn't turn the white squares over to the companies by putting them up for bid. We took the squares that were left. We turned over to the co-operatives a lot of these areas on a farm out basis, in which we shared the cost and we shared the return."<sup>23</sup>

As the early enthusiasm among the government ministers for public ownership waned in 1947, an industrial development fund was established to assist private industry by granting loans. Planning rather than public ownership was emphasized as more conservative forces prevailed in government councils.<sup>24</sup> Thus, apart from developing small scale industries based on local products, the CCF did not depart to any significant degree from the policies on public ownership, which were already operating in Canada. Part of the power industry, part of the telephone system, and the liquor

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<sup>23</sup>T.C. Douglas, Interview in Canadian Dimension, vol. 7, April, 1971, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup>Johnson, op. cit., p. 295.

stores had, in fact, been inherited from the Liberals. The CCF differed only in the speed and scope of its action.

"Public ownership of corporations is not new in Canada. Certain fields are viewed by Canadians as natural ones for public ownership. The dominion government has long owned one of the railroads and the largest domestic air transportation system in Canada. Several provinces own their own telephone systems. Electric power generation and distribution have also been placed under provincial ownership in other provinces. Thus public ownership in itself does not constitute a radical innovation in the Canadian organization of industry."<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, for Saskatchewan the CCF took important new steps towards a more prosperous future.

Somewhat surprising in a rural province was the legislation sympathetic to labour which the CCF passed. But this is explained by the pressures on the CCF to make a good impression on labour organizations at a national level, and by the unionist/I.L.P. origins of several of the provincial leaders. Anyway, the Trade Union Act encouraged union organization by establishing collective bargaining as a worker's right, by making such bargaining compulsory for employers, and by granting the closed shop to unions which were supported by the majority of workers in government supervised elections. Anti-union practices were outlawed and provision was made for the expropriation of factories if employers persisted in disobeying the terms of the

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<sup>25</sup>Stanford Research Institute, op. cit., p. 66. My emphasis.

Act.<sup>26</sup> This was how the government came to control the box factory. New wage laws gave Saskatchewan workers one of the highest minimum wages in Canada in 1947 (\$18.50 per week), two weeks paid vacation each year, workmen's compensation at 75 per cent of previous income (the best on the continent); and a 44-hour work week.<sup>27</sup> To appease the farmers, farm employees were exempt from the legislation.

It is important to record that encouraging good labour legislation did not mean that the CCF accepted anything that smacked of workers' control. Those workers who expected at least to be consulted in the running of the government enterprises, found themselves out in the cold. All demands for participation in decision making were resisted. The managers, most of whom had been running private industry before, adopted a paternalistic approach, which estranged those of the workers who had expected changes in the social relations of industry and an increase in personal dignity.<sup>28</sup> Managers were concerned only with making the government enterprises operate at a profit. There developed a social vacuum between workers and management, and workers tended to translate all grievances into overt conflict.

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<sup>26</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 279; Silverstein, op. cit., pp. 122-3.

<sup>27</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>28</sup>Silverstein, op. cit., pp. 124-5. Lipset, op. cit., pp. 281-6; esp. p. 283. "Though most of them (the managers) think of themselves as being friendly to labor, they cannot conceive of sharing authority with the worker. The worker is someone to be helped rather than consulted."



After visiting one Crown Corporation, Lipset concluded:

"This executive was unaware of any desire on the part of his workers for participation in management. It is interesting to note that the employees in this plant complained that the management did not consider their feelings, but interpreted their grievances purely on an economic dollars-and-cents level. The same pattern recurred in other government factories."<sup>29</sup>

In education, Woodrow Lloyd, a former head of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation, introduced the policies of the organized teachers. The most important changes were a consolidation of school districts in order to reduce costs, and, by spreading the burden more widely, to increase standards in the poor areas; the provision of free textbooks; and an increase of \$500 in the minimum salary of teachers bringing it up to \$1200. In the thirties the CCF had strongly advocated teaching socialism in the classrooms, but curriculum revisions directed to this end were kept to a minimum.<sup>30</sup>

The greatest innovations were in the areas of health and welfare. Tommy Douglas considered these were his greatest achievements. No sooner had the government taken office than the first steps were taken to bring in the plans to which the party was committed. Within months free access to the complete range of medical services (including dentistry) was available to all old age pensioners, those receiving mothers' allowances, and the blind. At the same time those

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<sup>29</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 283.

<sup>30</sup>Silverstein, op. cit., pp. 148-154.

suffering from tuberculosis, cancer, venereal disease, or mental illness were provided with free care. Saskatchewan was also the first province to provide a supplement (\$5 per month) to the federal old age pension.

Legislation was passed in 1946 to bring into being Canada's first provincial medical insurance scheme, which provided for free hospitalization at a premium of \$10 per person per year. The original CCF scheme involved a change in the class position of doctors from independent practitioners to salaried employees of the state. This was bitterly opposed by the organized medical profession, despite the fact that fully one third of rural municipalities, 60 villages and 11 towns were already employing doctors on this basis, and had done so for decades.<sup>31</sup> The Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons, while unopposed to health insurance in principle, rejected the CCF programme because health would be under the direct control of the government and doctors would be paid by salary. The government's advisors felt that, if the doctors were conceded their demands, the ills of private medicine would be continued. Health insurance, they argued, would be inadequate as long as it was accompanied by fee-for-service payment. Such a system would perpetuate the concentration on curing illnesses rather than emphasize prevention of disease.<sup>32</sup> However, the

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<sup>31</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 288.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

pressure of the medical interest group was so great that the government backed away from its original plan. The government's greatest fear was that the doctor-patient ratio, already poor compared with other provinces, would get worse if the plan was pressed and the doctors carried out their threat to abandon the province. In the compromise settlement, insurance was limited to hospitalization and control was to be exercised by an independent planning board, but one on which the doctors expected to dominate. The fee-for-service form of payment was adopted.

The province was also divided into health regions, into which the CCF intended to introduce fully socialized medicine. As a beginning complete medical and hospital services were provided free to residents in the health region which centred on Swift Current, in the south-west. This was considered an experiment, which would be evaluated and extended if it worked. Even here the CCF compromised with the doctors, since they would be paid on a fee basis. The doctors won most of the concessions they wanted, but so did the public. People did not understand the basis of the quarrel behind fee or salary payment; they wanted a relief from the financial burden of being ill, and that they got. It was perhaps the greatest single reason for the CCF staying in power.

7.22 Consolidation, 1948-1960. The first term was the period of most innovation, and the next twelve years found the CCF, buttressed by prosperity, able to consolidate the advances that had been made in reforming the social structure. In 1948 the CCF party was returned with an easy majority but somewhat chastened by a loss of 16 seats and a decline in the popular vote. (Perhaps the changes introduced were more extensive than some 1944 supporters wished.) This result probably decreased the pace of innovation, because the party was oriented to staying in power and many members thought the election was a warning not to go too far, too fast in public ownership or other unpopular policies such as school unit reorganization.<sup>33</sup> It was quickly evident that the second term of office was going to bring no further experiments in state owned industries. Some of the ones already started were in financial trouble and ridiculed by the opposition. In the social services Douglas announced, "We have now gone as far as we can go in terms of social security until we put a better economic base under (it)."<sup>34</sup> The focus was now on building a diversified economy with the help of private enterprise. To this end an Industrial Development Office was established in 1950, which provided a "focus of energy and a symbol of policy which previously had

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<sup>33</sup>Johnson, op. cit., pp. 359-360.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 365. Douglas was speaking in the legislature, 1949.

been lacking."<sup>35</sup> By 1951 oil development had begun in earnest with 136,000 square miles being explored at a cost of \$25 million a year.<sup>36</sup>

Increasing prosperity in agriculture and other industries, together with the CCF's efficient election organization, produced a record vote for the government in 1952. The population decline had been reversed, but there was now evidence that country people were becoming urbanized in the sense that they wanted the physical amenities of urban life.<sup>37</sup> The CCF then concentrated on bringing these to rural areas. The government promised to bring electricity to 40,000 additional farms, to engage in a huge market road improvement programme, and to co-operate with the federal government in building the South Saskatchewan dam. All these tasks were undertaken and achieved, although the great dam had to await the election of John Diefenbaker's Conservative administration. Targets for rural electrification were easily achieved. Road building and natural gas distribution expanded rapidly.<sup>38</sup>

The era of "continue and extend" was not without problems for the CCF in the areas of public ownership,

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 370. Mineral production worth \$51 million in 1951, rose to \$123 million in 1956, and \$212 million in 1960.

<sup>37</sup> Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, vol. 7, "Movement of Farm People", Regina, 1956, pp. 82-114.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, op. cit., pp. 481-484.

local government organization, and the continued fluctuations in farm income. The shoe factory and tannery were closed in 1949, to be followed by the woollen mill in 1953 (Saskatchewan sheep produced low quality wool). Finally the ill-fated box factory was closed in 1957. These failings tended to obscure the overall success of the public corporations in terms of profit making, but public ownership had not expanded since the first term of office. "A decade after assuming power, the business done by the eighteen government-owned enterprises constituted less than four per cent of the total business within the province."<sup>39</sup>

In local government the CCF wanted to reorganize the municipalities into larger cost saving counties, but met with such opposition from incumbent councillors that it was agreed to set up an investigation commission. Not until 1962 was the problem resolved, when the government agreed that it would only reorganize on the basis of a popular vote in each area designated for reconstruction.<sup>40</sup>

The abnormally high farm prices of the early fifties did not last, and the 1956 election was fought during a temporary decline in personal income of farmers and other indicators of economic well being. Johnson suggests that the CCF had become "less sensitive to the

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<sup>39</sup>Evelyn L. Eager, "The Government of Saskatchewan", Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1957.

<sup>40</sup>Johnson, op. cit., p. 591.



people's perspective."<sup>41</sup> The CCF was also under attack for alleged associations with the Communist party, for encouraging "creeping bureaucracy" and the consolidation of school units.

"Many rural areas were notorious for the low salaries paid to teachers and refusal to pass increases in local taxes designed to support education. These areas were most inclined to oppose the loss of local educational control and to object to the consequences of education centralization in terms of high costs."<sup>42</sup>

All of these factors may have contributed to the decline in popular support for the CCF in 1956, a decline in which the CCF share of the rural vote fell from 52 to 42 per cent of all rural votes. It had only fallen another two per cent by 1964 when the Liberals took over.

It was the resurgence of Social Credit which was most responsible for keeping the CCF in power in 1956 and 1960 on a minority vote. The opposition was so divided in those years that the CCF remained the dominant party in the legislature. Social Credit reappeared in strength in 1956, not as a radical inflationist party, but as a replica of the Alberta party's new style conservatism. In theory under local control, the Saskatchewan Social Credit League was, in practice, manipulated by two professional organizers imported from British Columbia and Alberta. In the

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 518.

<sup>42</sup>Silverstein, op. cit., p. 182.

absence of a party leader they directed the campaign.<sup>43</sup> Like the Manning government, the Social Credit League appealed equally to city, small town, and rural people in Saskatchewan. In 1956 Social Credit speakers promised to bring to Saskatchewan the good times they had brought to Alberta and British Columbia. Although attacking "welfare giveaways", they also offered a hospitalization plan with no premiums but charges of \$1 per day to a maximum of \$20 per person.<sup>44</sup> Social Credit won over 20 per cent of the vote but only three seats in Regina's Assembly building. The broad based appeal of Social Credit took away votes from each of the other parties. A 9 per cent decline for the CCF was accompanied by a similar fall for the Liberal Party and the virtual disappearance of provincial Conservatives.

7.23 Medicare and the Doctors' Strike.<sup>45</sup> In December, 1959, Premier Douglas announced plans for an extension of the province's medical scheme. He proposed

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<sup>43</sup>Eager, op. cit., pp. 410-411.

<sup>44</sup>Silverstein, op. cit., pp. 177-189.

<sup>45</sup>Medicare is the popular name for the Medical Care Insurance Act. In this section I have drawn on the numerous accounts of the medicare crisis which are now available: R.F. Badgely and S. Wolfe, "Medical Care and Conflict in Saskatchewan", Millbank Memorial Fund Quarterly, vol. 43, 1965; J. Gouldner, "The Doctors' Strike: Change and Resistance to Change in Saskatchewan", in Lipset, op. cit., pp. 393-404; Johnson, op. cit., pp. 599-687; C. Krueger, "Prairie Protest: the Medicare Conflict in Saskatchewan", in Lipset, op. cit., pp. 405-434; F.B. Roth, "Medical Care in Saskatchewan", in Canadian Annual Review, 1962, pp. 312-318; Silverstein, op. cit., pp. 190-202; and E.A. Tollefson, "Bitter Medicine: the Saskatchewan Medicare Feud", Saskatoon, 1963.

a compulsory, comprehensive, state insurance scheme to provide a high quality service administered by an organization responsible to the legislature. A committee was set up to investigate the detailed problems of introducing such a plan. As the reader might expect, the College of Physicians and Surgeons led the conservative reaction to the government's policy, and they were quickly followed by the Liberal Party. The election of 1960 was fought exclusively around this issue. Again the CCF was victorious, increasing its majority by two seats, although the CCF share of the popular vote fell to 41 per cent. Nevertheless, the leaders decided that they had a mandate to go ahead with the plan.

In September, 1961, the government's investigating committee produced a majority report which favoured a medical programme providing for universal and comprehensive coverage, financed mostly through tax increases, with payment on a fee-for-service basis, and the whole to be administered by a commission responsible to the Department of Public Health. No person was to be excluded on grounds of his inability to pay the small premium which would be asked. The Saskatchewan Assembly quickly passed the Medical Care Insurance Act to bring the proposals into effect.<sup>46</sup> Now the fervour of the opposition increased. The doctors threatened that they would refuse to co-operate with the scheme, and were supported by several vociferous protest groups,

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<sup>46</sup>Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1961.

the most prominent being the Keep Our Doctors Committee.<sup>47</sup> The CCF government, now led by Woodrow Lloyd on Douglas' departure to lead the national NDP, would not give in. Some concessions were offered and the date of introduction was set back some four months in the hope of reaching agreement with the doctors. When the legislation came into effect on 1 July, 1962, the doctors carried out their threat to go on strike. Although, at first, some panic was reported among the people, the strike did not prove an effective weapon. It was ineffective because the doctors themselves agreed to provide emergency services (otherwise they would lose popular support); they were never completely united in their opposition;<sup>48</sup> the government imported doctors on a temporary basis from Britain and other parts of North America, which meant that assistance was available to any community in the province which requested it; and the Keep Our Doctors campaign withered away within a few days. The upshot was that the doctors agreed to negotiate with the government. On July 23rd, the strike ended with only minor concessions to the doctors,

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<sup>47</sup> See Krueger, op. cit. The KODC was started by four Regina housewives but later taken over by professional leaders. A petition started by KODC got 46,000 signatures; full page advertisements appeared in the press; and demonstrations were organized. But all in vain.

<sup>48</sup> Specialists had most to preserve in the old system and were most against medicare. Rural doctors were less enthusiastic about the strike and some were financially embarrassed by it. A minority actually approved of the new scheme and worked as usual.

who were now given options on how they could practise. If they did not accept the plan to bill the Medical Insurance Commission directly, the doctors could receive payment indirectly by first billing patients who would be covered by the province, or they could practise outside the Act, or participate in several approved private assurance plans. However, the main features of the Act remained unchanged, and all but the last concession had been offered before the strike began anyway. To their surprise the doctors found that their earnings and conditions improved rather than deteriorated, with the consequence that several years after the crisis those who responded to a questionnaire survey were mostly in favour of continuing the Act.<sup>49</sup>

The CCF had been in office 16 years when it introduced the plan for medicare, and 18 when it came into effect. Why this "highly controversial medicare program" should have been introduced by a government so long in office was defined by Lipset as "perhaps the most intriguing question...in the history of the Saskatchewan CCF as a government."<sup>50</sup> He is not alone in suggesting that medicare was partly an attempt to recover popular support which had been lost in 1956. It is also a challenge to the theory that parties become

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<sup>49</sup>Reported in Gouldner, op. cit., p. 403. Fears that doctors would leave the province proved unfounded. In the first ten months of 1963 the number of practising doctors rose from 765 to 821. Canadian Annual Review, 1963.

<sup>50</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. lxxi.

conservative in office. Yet if medicare legislation was the outstanding event of the latter day history of the CCF, it was, for all that, a part of the "continue and expand" policy of the second period. It was in no sense revolutionary. In fact, medicare was the extension of a policy already carried out in the Swift Current health region. The main novelty of medicare was its universal, compulsory coverage. Furthermore, the fee-for-service system of payment was less radical than the 1945 proposals for salaried doctors. State medicine has always been a safe issue for any innovator in Saskatchewan. Even the Liberal Party advocated a complete system in the thirties and introduced a mild health insurance act two months before being turned out of office. Medicare was a programme to which Douglas and the CCF had been constantly committed, and in 1960 it was felt by the government that the province was financially able to expand the existing services.<sup>51</sup> Also, medicare was no longer a policy which set Saskatchewan apart in ideology from the rest of Canada. The federal Liberal Party, for example, had become interested in a national insurance plan. These words are not intended to detract from the achievement of the CCF in being the first government in North America to defeat the medical profession's lobby, but only to emphasize that it was not the revolutionary event that some commentators would have us believe. In the words

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<sup>51</sup>Douglas, op. cit.



of T.C. Douglas himself, "This was the culmination of our medical program. It didn't come all at once. We built up to it gradually."<sup>52</sup>

7.24 The Liberal Interlude, 1964-71. Given what I have said about the long history of support for state medicine in Saskatchewan, it is highly unlikely that Krueger is correct in assigning the basic reason for the fall of the CCF government in 1964 to the medicare dispute.<sup>53</sup> By that time state medicine was sweet tasting to most people. Organizations such as the Keep Our Doctors Committee had floundered, and the Liberal Party did not propose to set the clock back. 1960 had been the medicare election and the CCF showed a decline of only 0.5 per cent from its popular vote of that year. The 1964 election was fought on other issues, although how far these entered into the deliberation of the electors we cannot be certain. The primary reason for the defeat of the government must have been the collapse of the Social Credit League, from whose former support the Liberals gained enough to take over in a photo finish decision. (This assumed that other voters remained consistent in their party choice between 1960 and 1964.)

The CCF failed to regain the popularity of the early fifties. Why? The answer should include the issue of

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Krueger, op. cit., p. 431.

the development of the economy, the deterioration of the CCF party organization, and the formation of the NDP. The Liberals under Ross Thatcher attacked slow population growth, the relative lack of industrialization and high taxes.<sup>54</sup> Although Saskatchewan was experiencing an unprecedented economic boom, and although steps had been taken to diversify the economy (most notably in potash mining), the province still lagged behind Alberta's hot pace. Liberal speakers were constantly quoting statistics to show how Saskatchewan lagged behind other provinces, while the CCF candidates chose to emphasize improvements compared with the past.<sup>55</sup> The Liberals complained that the "socialist" policies of the CCF were driving the corporations away from the province. A Liberal government, it was argued, would be better able to attract corporate investment and prosperity for all would follow. If the Liberal campaign had an impact, it was less because people paid much attention to the jungle of economic statistics, but more because the standard of living which the people experienced was below what they saw on trips to other provinces, below what migrant friends reported, and below what the mass media implied they should have.

Perhaps more important than any one political issue

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<sup>54</sup>Norman Ward, in *Canadian Annual Review*, 1964, p. 160.

<sup>55</sup>Silverstein surveyed the election speeches of 30 persons, members of all parties, and found that all spoke about industrialization, even in the remotest areas, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

was the combination of a strong Liberal door to door campaign and a decline in the activism of CCF organization members (although there were more members than ever before). The annual convention is the heart of the CCF and its state is summed up by Richards:

"The influence of the convention waned because nobody in the CCF, from top to bottom, knew what to do with a rich Saskatchewan, or how to make explicit what was valuable in their party processes, so that it could be defended from apathy and professionalism."<sup>56</sup>

In addition, it is possible that many rural people thought that the party had deserted them, when in 1961 the NDP was formed. The decision of the national CCF and the Canadian Labour Congress to unite in support of a new party had been manipulated by the leadership of both groups, and was imposed on the membership. The CCF had become a moderate, labour party dominated by eastern Canadians. When Douglas left Saskatchewan to lead the NDP his vacant seat in Weyburn was won by the Liberals, and he failed to be elected from Regina in the 1962 federal election. Some regarded this as a repudiation of the NDP in western Canada rather than a vote against medicare.<sup>57</sup> Economic development, party organization, and resentment at the formation of the NDP may have had some impact but the basic damage to the CCF power position had been done in 1956 and the impact of these factors was mostly to keep former Social Credit

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<sup>56</sup>Richards, op. cit., p. 381.

<sup>57</sup>E.g., Canadian Annual Review, 1961, p. 65.

supporters away from the CCF rather than to cause the CCF to lose its existing support.

7.25 NDP Revival. The NDP (the old name had now been dropped) did not remain very long on the opposition benches. Thatcher survived his first general election in 1967, but with a reduced majority. The CCF won back some of the support which had been lost to the Conservatives, who had staged a brief revival in 1960 and 1964. The Liberals and the CCF gained fairly equally from Conservative defections, leaving the balance much as before. Unfortunately for Thatcher, his government was met in 1970-71 by the effects of a nation wide recession. He had also made his party unpopular by attacking important occupational groups. The Liberals took a hard line on teachers' pay and reduced the number of teachers in the schools (to improve standards!). Heavy-handed control of the provincial university led to a crisis centring on the concept of "academic freedom". Much publicity was given to the setting up of labour courts, which would take away from labour many of the rights won from the CCF in 1945. As pollution became a big issue, the Liberals were accused of presiding over the destruction of the environment by private enterprise in the north. They also increased medicare premiums and introduced "deterrent" fees. Most important the farmers suffered a loss of approximately 50 per cent of their income in 1970-71, for which the provincial Liberal Party took the blame, although it did not decide

federal policies which caused the slump.<sup>58</sup> Agrarian populist government may be disappearing under the concrete blocks of urban Canada, but it is still not possible to win Saskatchewan without rural support. In 1971 the "vote Liberal to save private enterprise" approach no longer worked and the NDP won 45 of 60 seats with 55 per cent of the popular vote.<sup>59</sup>

The NDP that was returned to power in June 1971 was not the populist government of old; rather it was a party led by lawyers and intellectuals,<sup>60</sup> oriented to labour, moderate in its policies, and making concessions to agriculture in a province with many rural seats. The Saskatchewan NDP still showed signs of its populist heritage in the party's democratic organizational structure, and in leader Allan Blakeney's comment that "we will put the province once again in the hands of the people."<sup>61</sup> The NDP also promised to preserve the family farm by setting up a land bank commission, which would enable retiring farmers to pass on their farms to young people rather than sell out to the corporations. (Many of the farmers' children had no wish to stay on the land.) Deterrent fees would be removed from the

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<sup>58</sup>Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 30-6-71.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 24-6-71.

<sup>60</sup>The leader and deputy leader selected in convention in 1970 are both lawyers. Such a possibility would have been abhorred by the party members in the thirties and forties.

<sup>61</sup>Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 24-6-71. Note also the campaign slogan, "New Deal for People".

health service and contracts for the exploitation of resources would have to be renegotiated. Perhaps the election was best summed up by the editor of the Winnipeg Tribune, who stated that the "election results underline once again Prairie disenchantment with the centralist policies of the federal government and Ottawa's inadequate consideration for the western agricultural community."<sup>62</sup>

### 7.3. From Social Credit to Social Conservative:

#### Alberta

The Manning era began when the Alberta Social Credit caucus elected him to lead the party on the death of Aberhart in 1943. Ernest Manning had always been the heir apparent. He dominated the party until his retirement in 1968. It was an era of entrenchment in power and a growing conservatism of philosophy.

The continued economic difficulties, which nearly caused the Social Credit government to be uprooted in 1940, were reversed by an expanding war economy:

"The fundamental conflict between debtor and creditor in a contracting economy, which the Social Credit party had exploited as a means of gaining and retaining power was exorcized by the wartime recovery of the western economy."<sup>63</sup>

Verbal assaults on financial corporations and anti-finance legislation were markedly reduced by the

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<sup>62</sup>Quoted in Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 30-6-71.

<sup>63</sup>J.R. Mallory, "Social Credit and the Federal Power", Toronto, 1954, p. 154.



government, although the Social Credit Board, shorn of its power, took up a right wing extremist position. Socialism and international finance were seen as one and the same thing, both combining to bring about a centralized "world slave state".<sup>64</sup> The association of the Jewish race with international finance was so compelling to the Social Credit Board members that they reproduced the late Douglas policy of anti-semitism. The combination of anti-semitism and isolationism was so embarrassing to the Social Credit government that the Board was dissolved in 1948. The government, now presiding over an expanding economy, did not want to be associated with such sentiments. In fact, by 1945, with private debt well under control, the government had concluded a settlement of the public debt. The Alberta Bondholders Committee agreed to the following:

"...the holders of matured securities...were offered the principal amount in cash, together with a cash adjustment in respect of interest unpaid in the nine years from June 1, 1936. Holders of unmatured securities were offered in exchange new serial 3½ per cent securities and an equal principal amount, dated June 1, 1945, and maturing from 1961 to 1980, together with an adjustment in respect of the higher contract interest rates to the original maturity or call dates."<sup>65</sup>

By this time socialism was perceived as the chief enemy by Social Creditors. Their landslide victory in the 1944 provincial election is widely regarded as a

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<sup>64</sup>Report of the Alberta Social Credit Board, 1944, Edmonton.

<sup>65</sup>Mallory, op. cit., p. 162.

vote to defeat the CCF. Paradoxically this was also the election when the CCF won 25 per cent of the vote, a figure it has not since approached. But coming, as it did, only two months after the great victory in Saskatchewan, this is not surprising. There may have been some transference of popularity as the CCF victory was widely reported in Alberta. In 1944 Saskatchewan politicians began what became a tradition of campaigning in Albertan elections, but just as Aberhart failed in Saskatchewan in 1938, Tommy Douglas could not produce success for the CCF in Alberta. The Alberta CCF was at this time more radical in its policies than the Saskatchewan section of the party, and the CCF was too closely associated with the failings of the United Farmers government.

In 1944 both the CCF and Social Credit produced some anti-monopoly and anti-finance propaganda. For example, Manning promised he would "continue to fight against finance until the battle is won", and a CCF advertisement read, "Smash the Oil Monopoly", because the oil monopolists are the "Big Shots" who really control the banking system.<sup>66</sup> For the most part Social Credit ignored the old foes and concentrated on presenting the CCF as a socialist organization which would destroy private enterprise and individual freedom. S.D. Clark suggested that Social Credit was now getting finance from big business:

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<sup>66</sup>Calgary Herald, 2-8-44.

"In the election of 1944 many prominent Alberta business men - and, there is reason to believe, a number of large business firms outside - lent their active support to the party which nine years earlier had advocated a radical programme of monetary reform."<sup>67</sup>

The assertion is undocumented, but the attitude of Social Credit official, Solon Low, suggests it may have been true:

"...If Alberta could demonstrate to the world it could set the socialist movement 'back on its heels', support would come from quarters which had opposed it in the past, such as the heads of important businesses in eastern Canada, who would make their contributions to Social Credit with 'no strings attached'."<sup>68</sup>

It is difficult to understand why the attack on the socialism of the CCF should have had any more effect on voters than had the Liberal attacks in Saskatchewan. The Social Credit government could combine these attacks with an appeal to the success of their administration of the province. Among other things, they had supported the war effort, fought against monopolies, reduced the provincial debt, reorganized the educational system, provided free treatment for tuberculosis, cancer and polio victims, and free hospitalization for maternity cases. On a smaller scale some of the welfare reform programme of the CCF had been introduced.<sup>69</sup>

The campaign established the pattern for the post

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<sup>67</sup>S.D. Clark, "The Religious Sect in Canadian Politics", in "The Developing Canadian Community", Toronto, 1962, p. 140.

<sup>68</sup>Edmonton Bulletin, 2-8-44.

<sup>69</sup>Calgary Herald, 5-8-44.

war years. It was so dull that it seldom made the front pages of the newspapers. It was waged, to the extent that it was fought at all, on the issues of opposition to socialism and the government's record.

Mallory states that the conciliatory attitude of Social Credit leaders towards finance was connected to the need for capital to develop the resources of the province, especially oil. (The same constraint influenced the budgeting policy of the CCF government of Saskatchewan.) Manning tried to create a suitable climate for investment by setting up Social Credit as the business man's best friend; he would be protected from socialism. The disbanding of the extremist Social Credit Board was consistent with this policy. At this time Social Credit leaders still had to be careful to maintain their populist appeal through support for co-operatives, credit unions and anti-finance rhetoric. Part of Manning's 1945 budget speech could well have been delivered by a CCFer in the Regina legislature, not perhaps this early sentence - "I regard every citizen of this province as a shareholder in Alberta as a corporate state" - but the following:

"The Alberta government has always fostered and encouraged the formation and development of Co-operative Associations.... We have felt that such organizations can do much to ameliorate some of the undesirable effects of the present financial system as it applies to our prairie economy. We also believe that co-operatives have a very important function to fulfill in the control of combines, cartels and monopolies." He supports credit unions but warns that, "the most they can do

is to provide limited means for co-operative self-help within the narrow and restricted confines of the monetary system under which we are compelled to operate in Canada today."<sup>70</sup>

Part II of the Alberta Bill of Rights Act (1946) provided for the licensing and control of banks and credit, but it was not to be put in the Statutes until the courts had ruled on its validity. Thus it was nothing more than a political move to raise interest among the people, because organization members were becoming apathetic. The government obviously expected the law to be declared ultra vires, which it duly was by the Supreme Court. Part I of the Bill offered Social Credit dividends to the people, but this now meant nothing more than social security benefits, based on a means test, and calculated to bring incomes up to a subsistence level. There were no promises of a universal dividend.<sup>71</sup>

Even as late as the early fifties, the leadership of Social Credit still talked in terms that smacked strongly of populism. During the 1951 budget Premier Manning said:

"...defects in our internal economy which curtail production, inflate and deflate prices and necessitate oppressive taxation stem primarily from private monopoly control over the money and credit of the nation and cannot be corrected merely by the imposition of government regulations and controls in the field of industry and labour.

"The solution lies rather in the intelligent

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<sup>70</sup>E.C. Manning, Budget Speech, 1944, Edmonton, pp. 4-9.

<sup>71</sup>C.B. MacPherson, "Democracy in Alberta", Toronto, 1953, pp. 208-9.

reform of our national monetary system to the end that money and credit will be made the servants rather than the masters of our economy. It requires further the progressive removal of all hindrances to maximum production and to the equitable distribution of the entire output of which Canadian industry is capable."<sup>72</sup>

But this populist attack on finance and inequality was always tied to a financial practice that was completely orthodox. Just as in Saskatchewan, the government followed a pay-as-you-go policy and set about retiring the provincial debt. This was called making the best of the existing system. Capitalist business men were not put off by the juxtaposition of conservative financial action and occasional radical statements. Already by the middle forties the business community had stopped fearing Manning's pronouncements and investment in the industrial potential of the province poured in.

The preference of Social Creditors for private capitalist development was clearly expressed in the 1948 election. The government proposed no policy changes and the only issue of note was only indirectly a part of the election. As well as electing MLAs, the public was being asked to vote on whether rural electrification should be carried out by private or public enterprise. At first Manning expressed no preference but soon came out in favour of private enterprise, because private corporations "seem to be doing a more efficient job" than publicly owned utilities in generating and

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<sup>72</sup>E.C. Manning, Budget Speech, 1951, Edmonton, p. 23.



distributing electricity. He also emphasized the high cost to the province of going into the business.<sup>73</sup> The CCF wanted only rural voters to decide the issue, but this was rejected by Manning on the grounds that all the electorate should decide on the expenditure of public money.<sup>74</sup> He probably knew that urban votes would be necessary to defeat the rural support for public ownership. In the end, that is what happened because the urban majority (who already had electricity) in favour of private development was enough to defeat a rural vote in favour of public ownership. Under private enterprise in Alberta the proportion of farms hooked up was similar to Saskatchewan under government control (1956), and the rates charged were similar, but in Saskatchewan "farmers bear about one-half the initial cost of power lines while, in Alberta, farmers pay the full cost of power lines." To do this farmers adopted their traditional procedure of forming co-operatives.<sup>75</sup> The campaign itself was of such little interest to the public that, "the hustings were poor crowd raisers throughout the month-long campaign. One Edmonton meeting was cancelled because no one turned up except the speakers."<sup>76</sup> Everyone expected Social Credit to win as it did, indeed, turn out.

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<sup>73</sup>Calgary Herald, 11-8-48.

<sup>74</sup>Calgary Herald, 4-8-48.

<sup>75</sup>Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, vol. 11, "Farm Electrification", Regina, 1957, p. 84.

<sup>76</sup>Calgary Herald, 18-8-48.

As the oil industry expanded, promoted secondary development in manufacturing and service industries, and filled the coffers of the provincial treasury, so the policies of Social Credit became more and more focussed on preserving the good life by making reforms such as extending educational facilities and improving standards, reducing municipal debt (which remained among the highest in Canada), building better roads, and encouraging the further economic development of the province. Even the press grew kind to the Manning government. The fiery protest which was nourished on the hungry bellies of the thirties was gone, and in its place a localist smugness. Albertans sailed along in the fifties and sixties on the crest of growth which was transforming their society into an urbanized, industrial state. Elections were almost non events as the opposition parties conceded defeat by arguing that what Alberta needed was a strong opposition. Most who went to the polls signed up for another four years of Manning medicine.<sup>77</sup>

Social Credit's popularity was dented only in 1955. An election was called following allegations that government members were profiting by having privileged access to the loaning facilities of the government treasury branches. Although there was no evidence of illegal activity, the Social Credit League lost 15 seats. According to the Edmonton Journal "public confidence"

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<sup>77</sup>For documentation of urbanization and industrialization see Appendix A.

had been "shaken by irregularities in finance."<sup>78</sup>

The trend towards conservatism in Alberta did not miss out the CCF, which was constrained by having to appeal to an electorate with a rapidly rising standard of living. The once radical Alberta CCF was stating by 1959 that it had a "radical plan of reform and would install competitive free enterprise. The gas, oil and electric monopoly in the province must be broken."<sup>79</sup> The CCF was offering to "increase royalties on our natural resources."<sup>80</sup> Gone were the days of nationalization. The opposition parties, including the CCF, were offering no more than what the Social Credit League was visibly providing - orthodox administration of an expanding economy with a little social welfare thrown in to help keep the poor quiet. Manning was able to avoid confronting issues which other parties tried to build up. He would simply say that Alberta owed her prosperity to the Social Credit policies of industrial development in the interests of the people. So stick with tradition. "Good government is never out of date. Albertans are accustomed to the best. Why change it?"<sup>81</sup>

It is noteworthy that, although farm income continued to be unstable and the costs of production were rising steadily, the structure of the province had

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<sup>78</sup>Edmonton Journal, 30-6-55.

<sup>79</sup>Edmonton Journal, 2-6-55. My emphasis.

<sup>80</sup>Edmonton Journal, 12-6-59.

<sup>81</sup>E.C. Manning, quoted in Edmonton Journal, 13-6-59.

so changed that the conditions of farm life never became a major election issue in the fifties or sixties. This prompted seven Social Creditors to run as independents in 1963 because they felt that the government was not paying enough attention to farm problems. Two others ran as independents because the Social Credit government was Social Credit in name only.<sup>82</sup> The party had grown so conservative that the annual convention in 1961 condemned fair employment legislation as opening the door to Communist infiltration. At the same meeting the minister of education was forced to deny that the theory of evolution was being taught in the schools.<sup>83</sup> In this we see the persistence of fundamentalist beliefs among Social Creditors. Ernest Manning, while premier of the province, continued to broadcast sermons every Sunday afternoon.

By the sixties everyone recognized that the Social Credit label was meaningless. Even the old Douglas maverick, Earl Ansley, had disappeared from the legislature. Social Credit had adjusted its ideology and tactics by transforming itself into a conservative party supporting the free enterprise version of individual freedom and development. In 1967 the process of ideological transformation culminated in the publication by Ernest Manning of a new philosophy for the right in

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<sup>82</sup>Edmonton Journal, 3-6-63. Only one of the independents was successful.

<sup>83</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1961, p. 66.

Canada. These ideas continued proposals which he and Robert Thompson, the federal leader, had been putting forth in 1964, when it was rumoured that secret amalgamation talks were in progress between Social Credit and the Conservatives.<sup>84</sup> Although Manning's statement is a proposal to reform the federal party system, it contains the principles which guided his Social Credit government until he retired in 1968, to be succeeded by Harry Strom.

The basic problem to Manning is the public disenchantment with political parties, which do not offer a clear choice to the electorate. He regrets the disappearance of principle from politics and argues the necessity of philosophical guidelines for increased political stability. Policies and institutions change but basic, fundamental values should be conserved.<sup>85</sup> In a "rationalized two party federal political system" Manning advocates the Social Conservative position, to which he hopes to draw all those on the right. The new ideology was to combine the goals of humanitarian socialism with liberal-conservative economic doctrine.<sup>86</sup> This was summarized in an Alberta white paper (17-3-67) which committed the government to:

"...do everything within its power to facilitate the harnessing of an economy based on

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<sup>84</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1964, pp. 88-90. Several Social Credit MPs did join the Conservative Party.

<sup>85</sup>Ernest Manning, "Political Realignment", Toronto and Montreal, 1967, pp. 25-26.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-61.

the principles of freedom of economic activity and private enterprise to the task of achieving objectives stemming from humanitarian values and a social concern based on the concept that the individual human being is a supremely important unit of consideration."<sup>87</sup>

In his rather vague expansion of the Social Conservative position, perhaps the most important section, and certainly consistent with the recent history of the Alberta Social Credit government, is the one which deals with his attitude to the state. The state is to be relegated to a supporting function in the development of society:

"The primary rights and responsibilities for the development of the human resources of a nation should reside with the individual citizens and associations with responsible government performing a supporting function."<sup>88</sup>

The development of natural resources was to follow the same pattern.

Manning was looking for a vehicle which could win in Ottawa with this philosophy. He rejected his own Social Credit League because it was too weak at a national level.<sup>89</sup> Having rejected the Liberal Party because of its welfare state policies, this left the Conservative Party as the best available organization for gathering the forces of Social Conservatism.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-63.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>89</sup>Social Credit had been split because the Quebec section followed the Douglas teachings and formed the Ralliement des Creditistes led by Real Caouette, whereas the western section advocated conservative policies.

<sup>90</sup>Manning, op. cit., p. 72.



As yet nothing has developed from this initiative. In Saskatchewan a merger of the Social Credit and Conservative Parties, projected for February 1971, fell through, but some Social Creditors did defect to the Conservatives.

In 1971, one of the most surprising political events in Canada was the fall of the Alberta Social Credit government in August. The government had looked impregnable (holding 55 of 65 seats in the legislature) but fell to a revitalized Conservative Party, led by Peter Lougheed, a Calgary lawyer.<sup>91</sup> What is most perplexing is why, during the worst recession since the thirties, the Alberta voters did not switch to the NDP in the wake of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Many who voted Social Credit in provincial elections had been supporting the Conservatives in federal elections. There may have been some tendency for people to conclude that it would be advantageous to have a provincial party which was also strong federally. However, in Saskatchewan, where the federal Conservative Party was strong, the provincial Conservatives won 2 per cent of the vote in June. It is, at least plausible that the electorate

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<sup>91</sup>In the election, the Conservatives won 49 seats to 25 for Social Credit and 1 for the NDP. Social Credit support held firmest in the areas of original strength around Calgary; it was weakest in the cities and north of Edmonton. Only 4 of the 29 seats in Calgary and Edmonton went to Social Creditors, and only 2 of 12 seats north of Edmonton. Conservatives were strong where Social Credit was weak. The only area of significant NDP strength was in the north-west - the Peace River region. Liberals contested only 20 seats. "Returns: Alberta Provincial Election held on August 30, 1971", Edmonton, 1971.

had grown too conservative to support the NDP, rejected the Liberals because of their federal policies, and turned to the Conservative Party, which may still be identified on the prairies with the mild anti-establishment policies of John Diefenbaker. The federal Liberal Party under both Pearson and Trudeau has alienated the West. Peter Newman writes:

"What the Ottawa Liberals never seemed to realize was that the Western Economy had become broadly based, with petroleum, potash, pulp, and power rapidly displacing agriculture as the main source of income. Even in Saskatchewan by the mid Sixties farming was providing less than 50 per cent of the gross provincial product.

"Wheat sales didn't have that much to do with the West's alienation. The citizens of the Western provinces had a gut feeling that the Liberals just didn't care about their particular problems, and they were right."<sup>92</sup>

The Conservative Party, which was once the main enemy of agrarian interests, became identified under John Diefenbaker with opposition to domination by the "big interests". Diefenbaker had divided the party and was hated by the leaders of business and finance in the east, but he was popular with the rural and small town folk in the west. Newman captures his appeal in the 1965 federal campaign:

"It was the presence of John Diefenbaker more than his words that excited the people. Here was a communion of instinct that no other politician could fully understand, much less duplicate. John Diefenbaker was the

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<sup>92</sup>Peter C. Newman, "The Distemper of Our Times: Canadian Politics in Transition: 1963-68", Toronto and Montreal, 1968, p. 80.

political poet who in his very being could evoke the pioneer virtues and the glories of a simpler past....

"Out of his passion for the homely, awkward and shattering small truth came Diefenbaker's rapport with the people of these small, flat prairie towns, slanting across time. Here he could feel again the only role he had ever played well: the champion of society's down-trodden, assaulting the proud fortresses of the nation's various Establishments. He soaked up the mood of rural Canada and gave it off, like a hot swift fire that burns away the scrub of a hidebound life."<sup>93</sup>

The remnants of the Diefenbaker appeal may have helped Social Credit, when, in 1971, the people of Alberta finally became disillusioned with Social Credit government. It cannot explain support for Conservatism in the expanding cities of the province.

Alberta is rapidly completing its transformation into an urban, industrial, capitalist society in which the importance of agrarian populist politics will continue to decline. Saskatchewan lags behind in this process. Its resources are such that it will probably remain one of Canada's most rural provinces. In the foreseeable future, any party of the left in Saskatchewan will have to delicately balance its appeal between the rural populists and the urban working class. The NDP in Alberta has never been established in rural areas. Its hope for the future must lie in harnessing the growing disenchantment of the young and the urban labour force.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 350.

## Chapter Eight

### Leadership, Charisma and Party Organization

In this chapter we turn from focussing analysis primarily on Social Credit and the CCF as parties in relation to their social environment to a study of the internal relations of the parties, primarily the legitimation of leadership and its influence on the patterns of social control in the parties.

#### 8.1. Leadership and the Problem of Charisma

It is no doubt a platitude to say that an understanding of the relationship of leaders to followers is a necessary part of the observer's interpretation of any social group, but what are we to mean by leader and follower? Can we have a concept of one that does not imply the other? Sociologically speaking, I want to argue that we should discuss leaders and leadership as a social relationship in which the exercise of power in a group is given legitimacy by the members. I am saying, then, that a leader is any member of a group who has authority; leadership is not based on coercion, it requires a voluntary submission on the part of the led. French and Snyder give a formal definition which is consistent with this interpretation, except that they do not distinguish between power and authority:

"Leadership is the potential social influence of one part of the group over another. If

one member has power over another, then he has some degree of leadership.... Those who are popularly called 'followers' are members with less leadership.... In a formal organization, the influence of the followers and of the leaders is partly determined by the legitimate authority of the positions they occupy.... In this case the study of leadership involves the study of role relationships...."<sup>1</sup>

After about 1945 the new approach to leadership as a social relationship developed out of the failure of earlier studies to establish the determinants of leadership by trying to demonstrate that leaders have particular physical and personality traits which distinguish them from followers. If we see leadership as a social relationship in which some people have authority over others, then the basis of the legitimation of the power becomes an important question, both to understand the persistence of the relationship and because different modes of legitimation are associated with different group processes. This I shall try to show with regard to our political organizations. We will have to recognize that elements of different grounds for legitimacy may appear in a single relationship.

Closely related to the problem of understanding leadership as a social relationship is the further difficulty of how charisma has been used to explain the domination of leaders and even as an explanation of the

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<sup>1</sup>J.R.P. French and R. Snyder, "Leadership and Interpersonal Power", in C.W. Backman and P.F. Secord (eds.), "Problems in Social Psychology", New York, p. 248.

rise of social movements. Recent years have seen a growing revival of the concept of charisma both in the popular press and in the academic world of sociology and political science. There has been an unfortunate tendency to equate the charismatic with any leader who seems especially dramatic, emotional or popular. If not completely tautological, this approach is at least misleading. In the first place the 'popular' usage of charisma completely ignores its original religious connotation as a divine 'gift of grace'; but even among those who are familiar with the source of the concept in Weber's writing, charisma has been used uncritically and ambiguously. (Recent work by Friedland and Worsley provide the most notable exceptions.<sup>2</sup>) The ambiguity derives from a tendency to use charisma to refer both to attributes of the leader's personality and to the legitimacy of the leader's commands in the eyes of his followers. We have noted that leadership itself has a history of similar conceptual ambiguity. To provide an example of inconsistency relevant to the present investigation we need only to refer to John Irving's interpretation of the development of Social Credit and William Aberhart's contribution to it:

"Aberhart's imposing physical presence, his performance as orator and organizer, his resolute and inflexible will, his infinite

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<sup>2</sup>William H. Friedland, "For a Sociological Concept of Charisma", *Social Forces*, vol. 43, 1964, pp. 18-26; Peter Worsley, "The Trumpet Shall Sound", London, 1968, 2nd ed.



resourcefulness, his ability to hypnotize people by his voice, his contagious belief in himself - all these characteristics combined to produce in many people the attitude that 'Here is the LEADER'.... Charismatic leadership gave singular unity and additional drive and momentum to a movement that already maintained, on the philosophical side, the inevitability of the realization of Social Credit in the world."<sup>3</sup>

He goes so far as to state that "...it is doubtful if the movement would have won political power in Alberta without his leadership," yet, in the same paragraph, we are told that Aberhart was the product of the society:

"He was the product of the life of his people, and his power lay in his offer to lead in a direction in which those people wished to go, to resolve a difficulty for which no other man had so good a solution."<sup>4</sup>

Thus Aberhart's charismatic qualities (as defined by Irving) make him and only him a leader, yet it is also recognized that he cannot lead except where the people want to go. Probably Irving's use of the term 'charismatic' was an afterthought because it is not explicitly analysed or emphasized; but its appearance highlights an ambiguity in Irving's analysis, an ambiguity that is present in Weber's original use of charisma.

In Weber's classic definition charisma refers to:

"a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically

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<sup>3</sup>John A. Irving, "The Social Credit Movement in Alberta", Toronto, 1959, p. 340.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a 'leader'."5

However, Weber also writes that it is the recognition from those subject to authority which is vital to the validity of charisma.<sup>6</sup> There is, therefore, confusion as to whether charisma is to refer to personal qualities of an individual or whether it is a quality conferred on an individual by others when they accept the claims of that individual or when they define his acts as based on superhuman, mystical powers. Mommsen's brilliant analysis of Weber's political sociology suggests the former position because charisma, as a creative, revolutionary and individual force, was Weber's way of accounting for fundamental change of social structures.<sup>7</sup> The individual and his ideas make history, but individual ideas only bring about change indirectly:

"Interests (material and ideal), and not ideas, directly govern the acts of men. Nevertheless, 'views of life' created by ideas, have frequently as pointsmen, indicated the lines along which the dynamic power of interests propels action. The 'view of life' will determine from what and for what one wants to be or - be it said - can be 'saved'...."8

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<sup>5</sup>Max Weber, "Economy and Society", edited by G. Roth and C. Wittich, New York, 1968, p. 241.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>7</sup>Wolfgang Mommsen, "Max Weber's Political Sociology and His Philosophy of World History", International Social Science Journal, 17, 1965, pp. 23-45.

<sup>8</sup>Max Weber, quoted in Mommsen, ibid., p. 30.

There remains ambiguity as to how much charismatic, individual, revolutionary qualities do bring about social change independently of particular social contexts. However, when Weber treats charisma as a base of authority, he recognized that legitimacy depends on the belief of others that the individual is inspired (although he still places emphasis on the qualities of the individual). This provides the basis for the retention of a distinctly sociological concept of charisma, which can have empirical referents. Charismatic authority defines a social relationship wherein subordinates accept the personal rule of an individual as legitimate because they believe his claim to possess supernatural or extraordinary powers. The ontological status of the powers, sociologically speaking, is irrelevant, since what is important is how the individual is defined by significant others. The prophet's power depends on his being accepted by others, after which he has wide powers of decision making provided he can show evidence (signs) of success, or at least rationalize failure in some way which is acceptable to the followers. Again it must be stressed that as an individual the leader's physical and personality characteristics are unimportant.

Since charisma has such an ambiguous conceptual history and places such great emphasis on individual qualities, it might well be argued that it should be abandoned as a concept in sociology; but charismatic

authority, which is a more limited concept, defining a social relation, would seem to me to be of value in political sociology.<sup>9</sup> Yet even this limited usage in empirical research requires great care. For example, in a critical article Ake rejects Runciman's analysis of Nkrumah's charismatic legitimacy because "the qualities on which he capitalizes are peripheral, not crucial for distinguishing charismatic leaders... What alone gives validity to charisma is that followers perceive their leader as possessing it."<sup>10</sup> In fact, the evidence that such a relationship existed was tenuous at best; this being emphasized by the lack of sorrow when Nkrumah was deposed (although this does not prove that he did not once possess charismatic legitimacy).

If the conception of charismatic authority as a social relation is accepted, then attention should be focussed less on the individual who claims authority and more on his message. It is common knowledge that there are many prophets with little or no following.

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<sup>9</sup>E.g., see the use of the concept by Claude Ake, "Charismatic Legitimation and Political Integration", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 9, 1966, pp. 1-13; Richard R. Fagen, "Charismatic Authority and the Leadership of Fidel Castro", *Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 18, 1965, pp. 275-84; and R.S. Perinbanayagam, "The Dialectics of Charisma", *Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 12, 1971, pp. 387-402. All these writers recognize the need to have evidence of how the leader is perceived.

<sup>10</sup>Ake, op. cit., p. 10. The Runciman paper is "Charismatic Legitimacy and One-Party Rule in Ghana", *European Journal of Sociology*, 4, 1963, pp. 148-65. See also Worsley, op. cit., p. liii.

Therefore, we should give particular attention to the social conditions which encourage the development of particular kinds of message and create receptivity by the people to such messages. This suggested emphasis for sociological research on the conditions conducive to the acceptance or rejection of a claim for charismatic authority, serves to highlight a deficiency in Weber's analysis - the origins of charismatic authority are not grounded in historical analysis.<sup>11</sup> This, of course, is a result of Weber's emphasis on the qualities of the individual. Dow falls into the same problem area when, in his defence of Weber, he argues that the social context in which charisma develops is relatively unimportant, the exceptional individual and his ideas being relatively independent of the social context.

"...one cannot view history as a parade of equally qualified charismatic pretenders, one of whom is validated eventually because the time is 'right'. A better representation would be that of an individual who can inspire belief in his message not because of particularly facilitating conditions, but in spite of tremendous odds."<sup>12</sup>

It seems that Dow is asking us to accept something very close to a great man theory of history. For Dow the only way to explain the failure of a claim for charismatic authority would be that the individual had

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<sup>11</sup>On this point see Worsley, op. cit., Friedland, op. cit., and Peter Blau, "Critical Remarks on Weber's Theory of Authority", American Political Science Review, vol. 57, 1963, pp. 305-16.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas E. Dow, "The Theory of Charisma", Sociological Quarterly, vol. 10, 1969, p. 315.

insufficient exceptional powers, since the relation of the message to the social context (which includes the characteristics of the audience) is unimportant in his theory.

The import of this discussion for an understanding of Social Credit in Alberta is that it is futile to 'explain' its rapid growth by referring to the personal qualities of Aberhart and other secondary leaders. This is the failing of Schultz's paper and a partial failing of Irving's otherwise excellent study.<sup>13</sup> Aberhart's personality was only important in so far as he influenced the content of the Social Credit doctrine and how it was communicated to the people. That he claimed to have a divine plan for salvation and the inspiration to carry it through, is no explanation of the growth of Social Credit. Alberta, since it was first settled, has had a history of frequent sectarian activity. Many preachers with engaging and 'powerful' personalities have claimed that they held the key to salvation for the people of Alberta,<sup>14</sup> but only Aberhart, by combining relevant religious and economic messages, could establish his claim to charismatic legitimation of authority. In chapter five I analysed the content of the doctrine and how it was

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<sup>13</sup>Harold J. Schultz, "Portrait of a Premier: William Aberhart", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 45, 1964, pp. 185-211; Irving, *op. cit.*, See also Denis Smith, "Prairie Revolt, Federalism and the Party System", in H. Thorburn, (ed.), "Party Politics in Canada", Scarborough, Ont., 1967.

<sup>14</sup>W.E. Mann, "Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta", Toronto, 1955.



perceived by the people as broadcast by Aberhart, while the social conditions which favoured the granting of charismatic legitimation were considered in chapter four. The quotations (in chapter five) from supporters of Aberhart emphasize their belief and trust in Aberhart's divine ability to solve the depression. Although this data is unsystematic, it does provide reasonable grounds for claiming that the authority relationship between leader and followers in Social Credit was charismatic. In the next section I shall try to show the influence of this form of legitimation on the structure of the Social Credit League.

In contrast to Social Credit, there is no evidence to justify an interpretation of the CCF, which would describe the main quality of the relationship between leaders and followers as charismatic legitimation. I would hold that neither the influence of social gospel theology nor the oratorical skills of Tommy Douglas is sufficient to change this assessment. No Saskatchewan CCF leader to the present day (Coldwell, Williams, Douglas, Lloyd and Blakeney) has tried to legitimate himself by the claim to mystical or superhuman powers; on the contrary the CCF leaders presented a secular, 'rational' interpretation of the world. Thus I cannot agree with explanations of the power of the CCF, which rely on a vague use of charisma.<sup>15</sup> Even Young's more careful assessment of the national leader, J.S. Woods-

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<sup>15</sup>See in particular Denis Smith, op. cit.

worth, as a charismatic leader must be questioned.<sup>16</sup> Although Woodsworth, the 'prophet in politics', came closer than any other in the CCF to establishing charismatic authority, yet, whereas Woodsworth was honoured and respected, Aberhart was worshipped. In limiting the label of charismatic legitimation to the relationship between Aberhart and his followers there is support from Roger Graham's recent essay, in which he concluded that Aberhart was the only charismatic figure in Canadian history.<sup>17</sup> Legitimation in the CCF was primarily legal in the sense that it was conferred on office holders in so far as they appeared to conform to the CCF norms of office holding, i.e., in so far as the leaders performed as executives acting for and subject to the control of the membership.

### 8.2. Organizational Structure: Decision-Making and Control

Legitimation is closely related to the control structure of Social Credit and the CCF, which will be examined in this section, bringing out the authoritarian structure of the Social Credit League, in contrast to the ideal of decentralized, grass roots control in the CCF. I shall concentrate on the party organization up

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<sup>16</sup>Walter D. Young, "The Anatomy of a Party: the National CCF", Toronto, 1969, pp. 157-62.

<sup>17</sup>Roger Graham, "Charisma and Canadian Politics", in J.S. Moir (ed.), "Character and Circumstance", Toronto, 1970.

to 1944.

Given the charismatic authority which Aberhart had developed in relation to his following prior to the formation of the Social Credit League, the authoritarian qualities of the organization were predictable. Clark claims that:

"The religious evangelist escaped the checks upon leadership secured through an elaborate denominational organization and an accepted ritual. His relationship to the convert was a purely personal one; it was he rather than any church that offered the means of salvation. The result was that the religious evangelist came to assume a very considerable dominance over those whom he converted."<sup>18</sup>

Charismatic legitimation confers personal power on an individual and those who act in his name. It makes intelligible the acceptance by Aberhart's supporters of the authoritarian organizational structure of the League, a remarkable contradiction to the practice of grass roots democracy attempted by these same people in their cooperative organizations and in the early years of the United Farmers' government. In spite of Weber's description of the typical charismatic organization as an irrational, non-bureaucratic community of disciples,<sup>19</sup> there seems to be no reason why administration which is based on charismatic legitimation of power cannot take a highly structured, centralized form, while remaining non-bureaucratic in the sense that whatever rules exist are

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<sup>18</sup>S.D. Clark, "The Religious Sect in Canadian Politics", in "The Developing Canadian Community," Toronto, 1968, pp. 143-4.

<sup>19</sup>Weber, op. cit., pp. 243-5 and p. 1119.

subject to arbitrary change. What does seem certain is that the structure will be authoritarian, those subject to the rules having little to say in their construction.

During 1934 Aberhart and his chief disciples had been successful in getting local Social Credit study groups set up all over the province. In rural districts these groups were often the United Farmers' locals under a change of name. All study groups were kept in close contact with the Bible Institute and formed the base for Social Credit constituency associations when the movement established a formal political organization in 1935. By April of that year constituency associations had been formed for every seat in the province. From the Bible Institute each one was sent a circular containing a draft platform, the procedure to be followed in local conventions, and an announcement of two forthcoming central conventions. Each study group of 20 or more could send three certified delegates to the constituency convention. A polling division in which there was no study group could send one delegate who had to be accredited by another official delegate. At the first constituency conventions local officials were elected, the draft platform discussed, and seven constituency delegates to the central convention were selected. At the request of Aberhart no candidates were nominated. A general convention for the south of the province met on April fourth and fifth amid great enthusiasm. Here the draft platform was duly approved,

and Aberhart was requested to lead the movement but not to contest a seat at the general election. In the event of a Social Credit victory, however, he would be expected to lead the government. The reasons for this unusual arrangement were that Aberhart would not have to risk the loss of prestige which would follow if he were personally defeated, that Aberhart would be free to campaign anywhere in the province, and that he could now back up his claim to having no personal interest in political action. It was also agreed that constituency associations would not select their own candidates, but, at a second convention, would compile a list of three or four from which Aberhart and an advisory committee would make a final selection. The main justification for this procedure was that Social Creditors feared infiltration by opponents and opportunists. However, this was the one issue that was warmly debated at the convention and the only motion to which Aberhart spoke - he threatened to resign unless he had his say in the composition of his support in the legislature. In a closing address Aberhart asked for "perfect discipline" from his supporters and demanded their "absolute confidence in their leader's judgement". Shortly afterwards the northern convention in Edmonton passed the same resolutions.<sup>20</sup>

Shortly after these general conventions the constituency associations selected their list of

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<sup>20</sup>Irving, op. cit., pp. 125-34.

candidates. A further task at the constituency conventions was to build intermediate zone organizations in order to co-ordinate the election activities of the many study groups in a constituency. However, the main task was the selection of a list of preferred candidates, after which Aberhart received a report on the qualities and past political activities of each nominee. This was followed by an interview of all nominees in a constituency. In most cases Aberhart chose the person who was favoured at the constituency convention, but occasionally he substituted others. In Calgary he even included three persons who had not been proposed at the constituency convention.<sup>21</sup> Exactly the same procedure was followed at the 1940 election. It is interesting to note that the British Labour Party, so similar to the CCF in much of its structure, is closer to Social Credit in the crucial area of candidate choice. Selection of a parliamentary candidate is not by open constituency convention but by the constituency's general management committee in consultation with and subject to the approval of the National Executive Committee. Although the NEC rarely reject a constituency nomination, the Labour Party, like Social Credit, does have this major mechanism of centralized control built into its formal structure.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 137-43.

<sup>22</sup>R.T. McKenzie, "British Political Parties", London, 1963, rev. ed., pp. 549-57.



This brief account of the establishment of the Social Credit political organization brings out the fact that the direction of effective control was from Aberhart downwards through the hierarchy. In its centralized structure the Social Credit League was radically different from the constituency autonomy ideal of the United Farmers of Alberta, but:

"The assumption of a general will required, as it generally has done, the assumption of an inspired and omniscient leader, with a corresponding reduction in the importance of the intermediate delegate bodies."<sup>23</sup>

The reverse of authoritarian control is authoritarian submission - a "submissive, uncritical attitude toward idealized moral authorities of the in-group."<sup>24</sup> Irving presents many statements by Social Credit followers which illustrate that Aberhart's powers were freely and submissively conferred on him. For example, with regard to his choice of three un-nominated men to run in Calgary:

"Mr. Aberhart picked these three men as candidates because he needed them. If he gave them his stamp of approval, that was good enough for me. If they were satisfactory to him, it was sufficient for us working men in Calgary to stand firmly behind the candidates he had chosen."<sup>25</sup>

The quotation above suggests what was the main basis for the maintenance of centralized control. Probably the most effective way of exercising power is for the

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<sup>23</sup>C.B. MacPherson, "Democracy in Alberta," Toronto, 1953, p. 162.

<sup>24</sup>T. Adorno et al., "The Authoritarian Personality," New York, 1950, p. 228.

<sup>25</sup>A Calgary worker quoted in Irving, op. cit., p. 144.

"controller" to persuade others of his right to decide and lead. If power is the capacity to achieve ends despite resistance from others, then power is most easily attained by removing sources of resistance. In social relations the most efficient way to do this is to establish a claim to legitimacy such as Aberhart was able to do. The major mechanism for the maintenance of this control within the Social Credit League was the socialization of the membership. Unfortunately, there is very little information on the recruitment and training of Social Creditors; what information is available is of a qualitative, unsystematic nature. We know that recruitment to Social Credit was the result of the joint impact of Aberhart's radio broadcasts and the speaking tours, in which lieutenants from the Calgary Bible Institute addressed mass meetings and picnics all over the province. Such meetings always ended with a call to establish Social Credit study groups, a suggestion which was nearly always taken up immediately. Each new group was advised to listen to the Sunday radio show and to write to the Institute for literature, speakers and help.<sup>26</sup> There is no information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the Social Credit members recruited in this way, other than the general knowledge that the study groups were composed mainly of farmers, small business men and teachers. In the absence of any data to the contrary it would seem

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

reasonable to assume that Social Credit members in the rural areas would be less likely to hold positions in the co-operative organizations than would members of the United Farmers of Alberta, which was closely linked with the co-operatives. If this was true it would help explain the acquiescence of the Social Creditors to authoritarian control.

The recruitment process was itself part of the socialization which continued in subsequent training. As I have noted new study groups were kept in close contact with headquarters via the radio broadcasts from the Institute. Of these perhaps the most famous and most successful were the mid-week "Man from Mars" plays, in which an observer from Mars saw the ills of the world and constantly advocated Social Credit as the only solution.<sup>27</sup> Another important component in the socialization process was the distribution of hundreds of thousands of study pamphlets, such as the Social Credit Manual, and from the summer of 1934 the Alberta Social Credit Chronicle became a highly successful weekly, the major organ of publicity apart from the radio. After one year a readership of 60,000 was claimed.<sup>28</sup> All this exposure to public speakers, literature and radio broadcasts did not mean that the people understood what Social Credit was in technical terms (James tells us that even the elected MLAs were

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 110-1.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

unsure<sup>29</sup>); but it did serve to reinforce the charismatic legitimacy of Aberhart's personal power. Indeed, the mystery of the doctrine contributed to the mystique of the prophet.

The Social Credit League, openly against the idea of party, still acted like a political party by trying to form a government by winning an electoral majority. Therefore, central control of the parliamentary party was an important issue for Aberhart. This he attempted to achieve by controlling the nomination process as I have outlined already.

In keeping with the theme of centralized control, we find that throughout the Aberhart period there was strong pressure to restrict the powers of constituency associations and the annual convention. The domination of Aberhart and his lieutenants quickly reduced any tendency for the League organization to become anything more than an election winning machine. Having won the election there was nothing more for the study groups to do.

"Although attempts were made from time to time to revive group discussion of social credit economic theory, which had been dropped during the 1935 election campaign, the locals could not live by stale 'A + B' in its simple form, and the complexities of the general theory were generally beyond their grasp."<sup>30</sup>

Constituency associations, by accepting the theory of

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<sup>29</sup>N.B. James, "Autobiography of a Nobody", Toronto, 1947.

<sup>30</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., pp. 194-5.

government by experts, were placed in the same position. There was nothing to do except nominate a panel of candidates before every election and make sure that Aberhart's final choice won. Similarly, the annual conventions were diverted by Manning from debating specific policies. Instead, delegates were instructed to listen to what the experts had to say and then to distribute this knowledge among the faithful. Informational and inspirational speeches came to occupy two-thirds of the convention's time. Thus the Social Credit convention was a passive institution, "a secular revival meeting, with carefully provided adult education admixed."<sup>31</sup>

The only concession towards an institutional control of the leadership was the Recall Bill of 1936 (see chapter five), but this was not like the recall provisions of the United Farmers and the CCF, in that it did not provide for recall by the constituency associations. Instead, a sitting member of parliament could be recalled on receipt of a petition signed by two-thirds of all voters in his constituency. As MacPherson points out this was quite in keeping with the political theory of Social Credit, in that Social Credit represented the general will of the community as a whole.<sup>32</sup> Of course, the law was repealed when it became a threat to Aberhart himself.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

Whereas Social Credit exhibited a form of centralized, authoritarian control, the CCF was oriented to delegate democracy or mass membership control of the party institutions. Where the Social Credit leaders have been free from institutional constraints on their autonomy, the CCF leaders have been surrounded by such controls. The ideological commitment of the CCF to popular control of decision-making is another way of expressing the populist ideal that political organization must be consistent with the general will of the common people. (At its peak in 1945 CCF membership was 31,858, about 8 per cent of the electorate.) Reference here will be to the Saskatchewan provincial structure only, although it should be remembered that the autonomy of provincial sections has tended to decrease over time.

The decision-making structure of the CCF was a conscious attempt to guard against an uncontrollable oligarchy, an attempt to avoid the elitist structure of the Conservative and Liberal parties. M.J. Coldwell stated the CCF concept of democracy in the introduction to a CCF handbook:

"It is my profound conviction that a political party which is itself undemocratic - whether its policy is formulated by the large corporations as in the Liberal or Conservative parties, or is controlled by a small clique at the top as in the Communist Party - can never build a really democratic society. In the one case we have political rights without economic justice, and in the other ostensibly economic justice, certainly without political rights. Real democracy is a balanced combination of both these rights; either without the other is a negation of democracy.



This is, I believe, a fundamental principle of the CCF. We apply this principle by safeguarding jealously the democratic processes within our own movement."<sup>33</sup>

There is some variation among provinces in the details of trying to apply the above principles. In Saskatchewan, despite changes of detail over time, the supreme body in the CCF organization has been the annual convention, whereas in the Social Credit League the supreme authority has been the party leader. The CCF convention was composed of up to 10 delegates elected from each provincial constituency, all MPs, all MLAs, and all members of the Provincial Council.<sup>34</sup> Each year the convention elected the party leader and three members to the new Provincial Council. Policy resolutions might originate at any level of the organization, but were not considered binding until judged by the annual convention. Proposals from the 1936 executive to restrict the powers of the convention by removing its right to elect the leader annually were opposed and defeated by Tommy Douglas.<sup>35</sup>

Below the annual convention was the constituency association, which was further subdivided into polling divisions. Each poll organization could send three delegates to the annual constituency convention. There

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<sup>33</sup>M.J. Coldwell, in D. Lewis and F.R. Scott, "Make This Your Canada", Toronto, 1943, pp. vi-vii.

<sup>34</sup>This description of the CCF provincial organization for Saskatchewan is based on the 1944 constitution in CCF papers, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>35</sup>Douglas to Williams, 20-5-36, CCF Papers, file No. 103, Archives of Saskatchewan.

an executive was elected to run the everyday affairs of the constituency, such as fund raising, campaigning, organizing membership drives, sending resolutions to the annual provincial convention, and selling the "Saskatchewan Commonwealth". The constituency convention was also responsible for selecting its own candidate for the legislature, one delegate to sit on the provincial council, and ten delegates to represent the constituency at the provincial convention. This number has been sufficient to ensure a majority of elected constituency representatives over ex officio delegates at all annual conventions.

The Provincial Council was intended as an executive to carry out the party policy as determined by the convention. In 1944 it was composed of one delegate from each constituency, three elected by the provincial convention, the president, vice-president and political leader, two MLAs and one MP elected by their respective caucus. Meetings were held at least twice annually. The Council elected an executive each year to run the affairs of the CCF between meetings of the Council. These have been the main features of the formal institutional structure of the CCF, an attempt to ensure in practice the CCF ideal of membership control as compared with oligarchy in the Liberal and Conservative parties. The most important aspects of the constitution in this respect were the provision for the annual election of all officers (except the small salaried

bureaucracy) and the formal commitment of these officers to accept the policy decisions of the annual convention. Although it was never used, all CCF members of the legislature had to sign an agreement to resign their seats if asked to do so by a properly called CCF constituency convention.

As with Social Credit, there is no systematic data on the socialization process or the social composition of the CCF mass membership. Socialization was no doubt a product of being recruited by the enthusiastic CCF campaigners during membership drives and the subsequent participation in the activities of the organization. Of major importance in perpetuating the belief in membership control was the involvement of so many CCF people in other voluntary organizations or municipal offices, in which office holding was subject to popular election. If, on occasion, leaders lost contact with the wishes of the people on crucial issues, then they were swept aside by grass roots action. For example, conservative Wheat Pool leaders were unable to prevent a "march on Ottawa" by dissatisfied farmers in 1941.

"Political participation by the ordinary citizen in Saskatchewan is not restricted to the intermittently recurring elections. Politics is organized to be a daily concern and responsibility of the common citizen. The relatively large number of farmers' organizations, cooperatives and other civic-interest organizations encourages common citizens to share in the government of their

communities as a normal routine of life."<sup>36</sup> Analysing the 1946 convention, Lipset found that three-quarters of the rural delegates held at least some position in a co-operative, 79 per cent were members of a farmers' educational organization, and 70 per cent had been involved in such organizations before the CCF was founded. Nearly as many also held some kind of public office.<sup>37</sup> He was able also to show that most directors of the co-operatives were CCF members or supporters. (We should note, however, that such data tells us only about the community involvement of the leadership of the party, not the mass membership.)

Ever since Michel's "iron law of oligarchy" was proposed, it has been a foolish student who would ignore the possibility that even those organizations committed to membership control would come under the domination of an internally generated elite. The Saskatchewan CCF had some initial protection in that it never developed a large bureaucracy to run the routine affairs of the party. Both Lipset and Engelmann have reported a strong tendency for the party members, especially in rural areas, actually to make use of the party forums to discuss policy and occasionally to criticize the leadership.<sup>38</sup> However, the longer the CCF remained in power,

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<sup>36</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 265. The same could be said of Alberta but we have seen that this could not prevent the widespread support for the centralized Social Credit League.

<sup>37</sup>Lipset, op. cit., pp. 222-4.

<sup>38</sup>F.C. Engelmann, "Membership Participation in the C.C.F.", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. 22, 1956, pp. 164-6; Lipset, op. cit., pp. 254-60.

the more cabinet members dominated the proceedings of the annual convention, although, even in the sixties, ministers were occasionally under strong attack. (I shall look in more detail at the party in power in the next section.) Even before the CCF formed the government, party leaders could exert strong influence by controlling the final form and number of resolutions, which appeared before convention, and most of all, because they were concerned with the day to day running of the organization. This involved deciding how to respond to issues requiring immediate action, thus committing the party as a whole to a position. Yet the leaders derived their legitimacy from annual election by the convention, and could be voted out of power by dissatisfied delegates. This did not occur but the possibility kept the leaders (who were committed to party democracy anyway) receptive to the opinions of the membership. Certainly it seems safe to conclude that the degree of oligarchy was much less in the Saskatchewan CCF than in the Social Credit League; conversely membership participation was greater in the CCF.

### 8.3. Party, Cabinet and Legislature

The nature of legitimation in both Social Credit and the CCF has for different reasons generated problems in the relationships between leader and cabinet, legislature, and party. In both Alberta and Saskatchewan the people's party has been considered the true source

of decision-making rather than the legislature. Aberhart, the autonomous, charismatically legitimated leader, tended to pass over the legislature and speak directly to the people; only twice in his first five year term did he contribute to parliamentary debate, and then only because his legitimacy was under challenge. What debate there was took place in the Social Credit caucus:

"Long and frequent caucuses produced virtually unanimous agreement.... This was to be expected in view of the members' indoctrination.... Also, they were dependent to an unusual extent on the person of Aberhart. They were mindful of the fact that he had chosen each of them as the social credit candidate. And if some of the social credit members of the legislature did not regard him as their inspired leader, at least they were aware that his prestige was an essential asset of the party, while many, perhaps most, of the members had submerged their wills in his and needed to keep up their faith in his leadership."<sup>39</sup>

After going through caucus, Social Credit legislation was assured of safe passage when introduced to an assembly completely dominated by Social Creditors.

The legislature's loss of function was not as great as would be expected from conventional Douglas theory of government by experts:

"...a government was not to have the responsibility of deciding on legislative and executive policies in the ordinary sense, but would confine itself to hiring, exhorting, and firing experts who would have the responsibility and the power of deciding all particular legislation and executive policies."<sup>40</sup>

In practice, Aberhart quickly reduced the appointed

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<sup>39</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 161.



expert to the status of an adviser, rather than a controller of policy, and did so on the grounds of the premier's responsibility to the people for any mistakes - a negation of Douglas Social Credit theory.<sup>41</sup> Yet there always remained a tension in relations between a Social Credit government and the legislature, because to Aberhart and Manning the legislature was a necessary evil which delayed action; the will of the people was realized in Social Credit (especially in the person of its leader) and not in the legislature. No doubt this attitude seemed realistic to Aberhart because of the overwhelming majority of Social Credit MLAs; a stronger opposition would have forced him to give more attention to the legislature.

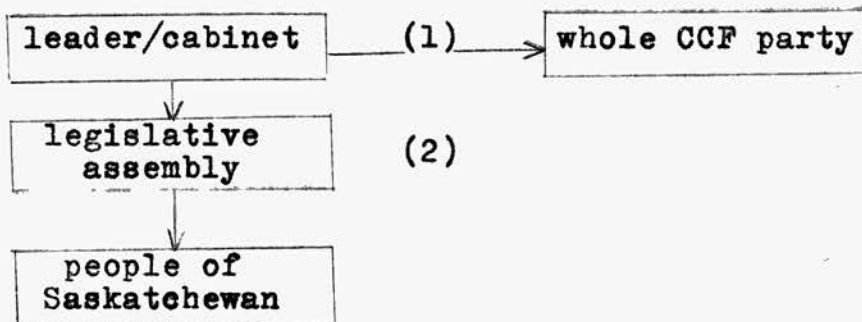
Except during the insurgents' revolt, Aberhart and Manning were able to dominate and largely ignore the irritation of parliamentary institutions. They were also in the position of not being answerable to their party organizations for the specific policies which they adopted. In the CCF there was a grudging recognition of responsibility via the legislature to the people as a whole, but this was complicated for the leaders by the additional responsibility of the cabinet to follow the policy directions of the CCF party convention (Figure 1). This tension derived from the fact that the CCF leadership was only legitimate to the extent that it acted as the executive for CCF policy. This creates a situation of role strain for the premier and cabinet members if

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

Figure 1. Responsibilities of CCF Leader and Cabinet.

Arrows represent direction of responsibility.



and when the demands of party conflict with their personal opinion on policy. A CCF government was obliged by the party constitution to seek the guidance of a committee of the Provincial Council on matters of policy and the appointment of ministers:

"An Advisory Committee composed of three members appointed by and from the Provincial Council, shall from time to time advise the members of the Legislature concerning the implementation of the program of the Association.

"Whenever appointments to a Cabinet are being made, the Political Leader shall submit the names of his proposed Cabinet Ministers to this Committee, which shall act in an advisory capacity, realizing that final responsibility for Ministerial appointments must rest with the Premier."<sup>42</sup>

The final clause leaves ultimate responsibility with the premier. The government has also been obliged to defend its policies before the full annual convention. Fortunately for CCF governments, there have seldom been great issues to divide cabinet and party, at least in part because Tommy Douglas was a master at consultation

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<sup>42</sup>CCF Constitution, CCF Papers, Archives of Saskatchewan.

and conciliation. On two major occasions the government did reject convention demands, one for the public ownership of the oil industry, the other for the CCF to clean out the civil service and replace dismissed officials with committed CCF supporters. On the other hand, the government occasionally reversed a policy commitment on the advice of convention,<sup>43</sup> but this was a rare occurrence because the initiation of policy quickly became the prerogative of the cabinet, which used the parliamentary caucus as a sounding board for the popular reaction to policies.<sup>44</sup> The party convention gradually became a place where government policy was explained, analysed, publicly criticized, but eventually supported - except in the rare cases I have mentioned. Cabinet members were now legitimated not only by virtue of their election to office in the CCF but also on account of their claim to special knowledge as members of the government. Over time the influence of the convention waned, although it could never be ignored, nor did the cabinet members wish to ignore it. The cabinet was always open to advice and influence but never to the erosion of its policy making and implementing powers.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Lipset, op. cit., p. 258.

<sup>44</sup>Albert W. Johnson, "Biography of a Government", Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1963, pp. 247-8.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., chapter 15; also Richards, op. cit., and Evelyn Eager, "The Paradox of Power in the Saskatchewan CCF, 1944-1961", in J.H. Aitchison (ed.), "The Political Process in Canada", Toronto, 1963, pp. 118-35, in which how the CCF resolved the dilemma of party democracy and parliamentary government is reviewed.

Nevertheless, to the extent that the CCF cabinet worked in the conventional way, the direct democracy ideal of the CCF was rejected, and to this extent the history of the Douglas administration is the history of the decline of Saskatchewan populism.

#### 8.4. Types of Factionalism

It would be misleading to close this chapter on party organization leaving the reader with the impression that both the CCF and Social Credit League were internally homogeneous at nearly all times. In both parties there have been periods of factional conflict, although taking somewhat different form in each. Social Credit, we know, was controlled by a powerful authoritarian leader. Now one of the chief characteristics of authoritarianism is an intolerance of opposition both inside and outside the political organization. Thus I would expect that factions in the Social Credit League would be minor and undercover, particularly during the period when Aberhart's power was at its height; furthermore, remembering his call for "perfect discipline", I would expect the exposure of opposition to lead to expulsion of the offender(s). However, the history of disputes in the League gives only partial support to this proposition.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere Joseph Nyomarkay points out that Hitler was a charismatically legitimated leader and that factionalism was of minor importance in the Nazi Party compared with socialist and communist movements. He records /

During the first two years of the League there seems to have been almost no opposition to Aberhart and Manning from within the party, but the case of A.F. Keys, president of the Drumheller Social Credit Association, is important. In 1935 he publicly accused Aberhart of "dictatorship", which prompted the leader to appeal for unity and loyalty. Subsequently Social Credit groups in the Drumheller valley held a convention in which resolution after resolution deplored Keys' action, after which he was expelled. "Proclaiming the infallibility of the prophet," Social Creditors in Drumheller accepted all further rules from Calgary without question.<sup>47</sup>

There is no further evidence of opposition within the League until the insurgents' revolt of 1937 (see chapter five). This opposition was the product of a crisis in legitimacy. Since charismatic legitimation is derived from the acceptance by the mass of the leader's claims, it follows that the leader will lose power if his claim becomes defined as invalid. (On occasion power may be retained by coercion.) The leader is, therefore, under pressure to demonstrate his

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Footnote 46 contd.

records that Hitler only tried to prevent the development of factions if they began to threaten his personal position, and, having destroyed the faction, he then tried to be reconciled with the members; "Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party", Minneapolis, 1967. Possibly this "permissive" attitude stems from the necessity for a German mass movement to appeal to a wider range of social interest groups than was the case of Social Credit in Alberta.

<sup>47</sup>Irving, op. cit., pp. 139-40.

success. Failure to do so may lead to a loss of legitimacy and a reaction against authoritarian control. Thus we may interpret the revolt of Social Credit backbenchers in 1937 as a response to Aberhart's failure to show signs of success. The backbenchers were responding to the conventional Douglas doctrine that their function was to demand results. By attempting to introduce Social Credit legislation, Aberhart was able to silence his opposition. Yet there was no attempt to expel the insurgents from the party, or even to hinder their re-election in 1940:

"No noticeable retaliations against the 1937 party insurgents were to be found in the selection of candidates. At least fourteen known insurgents were again approved by Aberhart...."<sup>48</sup>

At face value this provides good evidence that the Social Credit League was less authoritarian than I have suggested, but possibly Aberhart did not feel secure enough to get rid of them at this time.

The insurgent affair was the beginning of a split between a minority group, which followed Douglas Social Credit philosophy, and the majority, who were content with the Aberhart-Manning version. The former group was concentrated in the Social Credit Board, established during the 1937 revolt, but this group was quickly isolated by the leadership. First the Board's power was reduced to that of a publicity organ. Finally,

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<sup>48</sup>Harold J. Schultz, "A Second Term: 1940", Alberta Historical Review, vol. 10, 1962, p. 22.



when the Board adopted the post-war Douglas position of interpreting the war as a great Jewish conspiracy, rejecting the idea of majority rule, and denouncing the secret ballot,<sup>49</sup> Manning disbanded it completely in 1948. Similarly control of the Canadian Social Creditor was wrested from the Douglasites, and one cabinet minister, who supported them, was fired.<sup>50</sup>

Thus up to 1948 there were at least two occasions when the powerful leaders of Social Credit were able to expel public opposition from within the movement. While the defeat of the Social Credit Board meets my approval on personal, moral grounds, it brings out the dangers of intolerance of opposition within a party, when that party dominates the legislature of the society for many years. Democracy requires the representation of minorities as well as majorities, and this is possible within a single party, provided that opposition is legitimate. Factions may then act as pressure groups within the party,<sup>51</sup> but apparently this was not possible in the Social Credit organization, as long as the leader's overall power was not in doubt.

In contrast to Social Credit, the ideology of the Saskatchewan CCF actually encourages open discussion and

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<sup>49</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., pp. 179-92.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 211-2.

<sup>51</sup>For a theoretical review of this issue with particular reference to Communist parties see J.J. Wiatr and Adam Przeworski, "Control Without Opposition", in Government and Opposition, vol. 1, 1966, pp. 227-39.

dissent, and frequent conventions provide a forum for such debate. Particularly during the early years of the party, there were such open discussions on major questions of ideology and tactics, but much of the conflict was conducted off stage. Because opposition is legitimate in the CCF, we would expect factionalism to produce power struggles and compromises, rather than the expulsion of opposition. This has generally been the case, except that known Communists have not been tolerated, because they were thought to be trying to destroy the movement. Opposition is tolerated, but only in so far as it does not threaten the organizational structure itself.

The best example of factionalism in the CCF was the battle between the small group of farmer socialists (led by George Williams) and the urban reformers from the old Independent Labour Party (led by M.J. Coldwell). At the founding of the Farmer-Labour Party (Saskatchewan CCF) in 1932, Williams was advised not to stand for leader because his recent visit to Russia would make him unpopular in the country. Coldwell (from the urban, labour group) was then elected to the leadership, but failed to win his seat at the 1934 election. This brought a personal and ideological conflict to a head. While Coldwell was on a recuperation holiday, Williams arranged a meeting of elected members at which he was selected leader in the House. Coldwell had not been invited, or even informed, although he had already

stated that he was prepared to contest any seat that was made vacant for him.<sup>52</sup> Thus the first round went to Williams and his small group of socialists.

The dispute continued into 1935, when T.C. Douglas, of the Coldwell group, was threatened with expulsion for co-operating with Social Credit (see chapter six). The executive meeting at which Douglas presented his defence proved to be a battle royal between the factions. Old radicals from the Farmers' Union now struggled with the city men. Andy Maccauley and Tom Johnson, who could not be present, had letters of protest read into the minutes. Johnson rejected any candidate, who departed from principle, because:

"Compromise will mean ultimate defeat. We have told the people that socialism is the only way out. Any departure from that principle will brand us as a party that wants to get to office and will grasp at any straw to do so."<sup>53</sup>

In the investigation, Douglas stated that socialism and Social Credit were compatible. This statement is important when we consider that it was Douglas who was later to lead what Lipset calls a "mass socialist movement". Williams argued that while endorsement was permissible, alliance was another matter, and that Douglas had entered into an alliance by agreeing to support Social Credit legislation. Dr. Hugh McLean

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<sup>52</sup>Farmer-Labour Group minutes, 1934, CCF Papers, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>53</sup>CCF minutes, Executive meeting, 9-10-35, Archives of Saskatchewan.

defended Douglas by saying that he would have done the same, as at least four other candidates.<sup>54</sup> A few days earlier McLean had talked in the central office of fusion with Social Credit and had been warned by one of the staff, who confided to Williams that:

"He couldn't see it that way at all and his whole ambition is to get elected by hook or by crook. There is no doubt about it he and Fines were seriously considering the move and thought Benson did the right thing to get elected to Ottawa. Neither one of them have any political sense. P.S. Fines is heartily in accord with the fusion idea and apparently has no regard for the socialist movement."<sup>55</sup>

The product of this meeting with Douglas was an open split in the leadership. A majority report recommended repudiation of Douglas, but a minority report, signed by Coldwell, argued that Douglas should be accepted if he would undertake to withdraw the offending posters and promise to follow the CCF manifesto.<sup>56</sup> Only Coldwell's threat to resign from the CCF in the middle of the campaign prevented the public rejection of Douglas as a candidate. A further meeting after the election did produce a majority for a definite resolution to reject Douglas, but the right wing was strong enough to have it referred for final decision to the Political Directive

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<sup>54</sup> Transcript of the Meeting between the CCF Executive and T.C. Douglas, CCF Papers, file No. 9, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>55</sup> Miss E. Mathers to Williams, 28-9-35, ibid.

<sup>56</sup> CCF minutes, Executive meeting, 9-10-35, Archives of Saskatchewan.

Board.<sup>57</sup> Two months later Douglas accepted a motion of censure from the Board and the incident was closed.

It was clear that the pendulum of power was beginning to swing towards the urban reformers. The final outcome was that George Williams was squeezed out of the party leadership in 1941 and replaced by Tommy Douglas, now recalled from the federal parliament for a new task. Paradoxically, by this time Williams had mellowed considerably and the party had long taken on its reformist colours, so that the rise of Douglas was the culmination of a long process.<sup>58</sup> To show the tolerance of opposition in the CCF, Williams, returned from the war, reappears as Minister of Agriculture in the first Douglas government.

In this chapter I have tried to bring out the contrasting organizational characteristics of leadership and organization in the Social Credit League and the Saskatchewan CCF, the former authoritarian, the latter more democratic. I began by suggesting the importance of looking at leadership as a social relationship, and this had the consequence of focussing attention on the nature of the legitimation of leadership. Much of the final sections was concerned to bring out the close

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<sup>57</sup> CCF minutes, Executive meeting, 21-10-35, Archives of Saskatchewan. The vote was five to two.

<sup>58</sup> The party papers after 1948 were not available to the author. Without such access it is difficult to speculate about factionalism during the life of the CCF government.

association between legitimacy and organizational processes (particularly government-party relations and factionalism).



## Chapter Nine

### Social Credit and the CCF as Populism

In this chapter I shall draw mostly on material already presented in order to give an overall assessment of Social Credit and the CCF as types of populism. This will be followed by an explanation of why populism in Alberta and Saskatchewan took different forms. Finally I shall consider the rise and decline of populism in western Canada in relation to other aspects of the social structure.

#### 9.1. Social Credit and the CCF: Authoritarian and Democratic Populism

An attempt was made in the introduction to review the discussions about the concept of populism and to abstract the main characteristics of populism as a type of political movement. Now we are in a position to reconsider Social Credit and the Saskatchewan CCF in terms of the elements of populism outlined in the introduction.

1. A response to the impact of capitalism. Populist movements develop when large scale capitalism brings about a reduction in the standard of living of the small producer and those who depend indirectly on his prosperity. In chapter two we saw how the western agrarian frontier regions were created, in part, to

promote the capitalist development of eastern Canada. During periods of economic contraction, the prairie farmer has suffered disproportionately to other classes in the society (see, e.g., chapter 4, Table 4.1); equally important, farmers also saw themselves relatively worse off than others during periods of prosperity. Thus protest has been endemic in the west, the protest parties of the depression period being a continuation of earlier prairie reaction. Social Credit developed as a mass movement during the world depression of the thirties as an explicit attempt to solve the problem of mass poverty by reforming financial institutions. Similarly, the Saskatchewan CCF was a response to the impact of capitalism, in particular to the financial and monopoly industries, which threatened the viability of the family farm. The CCF was born of the depression and came to power when the memory of those days of disaster was still strong.

2. Directed against outsiders. Populist anger is directed against some group outside the local society, the out group being defined as exploitative. This is the basis for the nationalist or isolationist emphasis of much populism. Supporters of both Social Credit and the CCF turned in their frustration against the "Big Interests" from the metropolitan east and against their representatives in the west, the "old party" people in the towns and villages - especially the bankers. In attacking the eastern controlled banks, railway,

mortgage companies, grain companies and industrial corporations, supporters of both Social Credit and the CCF were continuing a long tradition of such agrarian protest (see chapter 3). Emphasis in Social Credit was mostly on the financial institutions, leading in its most extreme development to a theory of world Jewish conspiracy aiming to dominate the common people. There is no evidence of such scapegoat theorizing in the CCF, but there was a recognition that the party stood for the west against the east. Early in the nineteen-sixties, when the CCF appeared to be losing ground in the country, McCrorie found that in the district of Biggar (for years the riding of M.J. Coldwell) 20 per cent of the farmers defined the CCF as a socialist party; the others, calling it a farmers' party, stated "that it stood for western rather than eastern industrial interests; that it had built roads, hospitals, etc., for the rural population."<sup>1</sup>

3. Populism emphasizes the worth of the common people and advocates their political supremacy. Reports of Aberhart's speeches emphasize the emotional commitment he made to the plight of the common people. For example, a small town business man said of him, "above all, he had an absolutely great love for the sufferings of the common people. This is what drew me

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<sup>1</sup>J. McCrorie, "In Union is Strength", Saskatoon, 1965, p. 42.

to him."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, a farmer reported, "He took up our problems and made them his own. That's why I worked for him."<sup>3</sup> By explaining to the unemployed how depression was not their fault, and by convincing them of their personal worth, Aberhart restored a lost dignity.<sup>4</sup> In more abstract terms Social Credit theory argued that the "general will" of the people must be realized and this could be done within the Social Credit movement under the inspired leadership of Aberhart. Thus the Social Credit League was to represent the will of all the people in one organization as against the corrupt, class dividing parties of the old political system. Within the CCF there were also many statements rejecting the idea of traditional parties and identifying with the common people, for example, Tommy Douglas in 1943:

"This is more than a political movement, it is a people's movement, a movement of men and women who have dedicated their lives to making the brotherhood of man a living reality."<sup>5</sup>

But, whereas in Social Credit populist emphasis on the worth of the common people is shown mostly in the paternalistic concern of the leadership for the suffering of the people, in the CCF it is most evident

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<sup>2</sup>John A. Irving, "The Social Credit Movement in Alberta", Toronto, 1959, p. 266.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>T.C. Douglas, CCF minutes, 8th annual convention, 1943, Archives of Saskatchewan.

in the ideological commitment to popular control of the political organization, which brings us to the next major point.

4. Direct relationship between mass and leaders. Ideally, populism involves a rejection of intermediate associations between the mass and leaders. The structure of the political organizations which nevertheless do develop is influenced by the populist ideal of a direct relationship between mass and leadership, although this relationship can take different forms. Indeed, we can see from the detailed presentation of the last chapter, that there are major differences between Social Credit and the CCF in organizational structure. In Social Credit Aberhart claims to speak for the people as a whole, is charismatically legitimated, and has personal control of decision-making, which he periodically reaffirms by talking directly to the people. It is the voluntary submission of the mass of Social Credit supporters to the personal rule of Aberhart that justifies interpreting Social Credit as an authoritarian populism. On the other hand, in the CCF the populist emphasis on the people took the more usual North American form of emphasizing the need to control "leaders" from the mass base. Therefore, the CCF developed a form of delegate democracy in its organization, which required the leaders to act as delegates of their constituents in the organization, and which provided institutional

mechanisms for the mass membership to exercise control over their delegates. Thus the relationship between mass and leadership is in contrast to that of Social Credit. For want of a better term it seems reasonable to label the Saskatchewan CCF as democratic populism.

5. Reformist programme. Populism demands the reform of existing capitalist structure, not revolution; it is liberal in the economic sense of the term. Social Creditors emphasized that they did not threaten private property, savings, or the principle of free enterprise. Social Credit doctrine emphasizes that by reforming the monetary system of capitalism, the individual freedom of the people could be restored in a humane, capitalist society. The panacea of monetary reform, a common demand of North American populism, meant relatively less emphasis on other favoured techniques of populist defence. Thus in Social Credit we find relatively little attention to things such as promotion of co-operatives, state control of monopolies, and state welfare provisions. All such solutions would be unnecessary after the financial system had been reformed.

Although the CCF did not follow the same programme as Social Credit, I have presented enough data in chapters six and seven to bring out the reformist character of the Saskatchewan CCF after 1934. The elements of socialism that remained in the CCF programme did not challenge the dominant form of the organization



of production in Saskatchewan (small scale private enterprise in the form of the family farm), but rather sought to protect and provide for its future. That such a policy might involve government control, and in some cases public ownership, of the forces which affect the farmer is consistent with populism, because innovation is accepted provided the intent of the innovation is to make life more bearable for the ordinary people under capitalism. The CCF leadership rejected Social Credit monetary reform and so fell back on the staples of North American agrarian populism - support for the co-operatives, control of the banks and industrial monopolies, state medicine, etc. The Saskatchewan CCF was also influenced by the labour origins of some of its leaders and by its association with the national party, which was not agrarian dominated. Therefore, we find the rather surprising appearance in an agrarian province of legislation protecting the rights of industrial labour, but again within the context of the existing capitalist system.

In assessing the Saskatchewan CCF as populism, it is necessary to come to terms with the evidence that many leaders of the CCF saw it as a socialist party in opposition to capitalism. But when we understand the meaning of capitalism and socialism in Saskatchewan, there is no longer any reason to change the populist label. When CCF leaders attacked capitalism, they were not attacking the idea of private ownership of property

or private profit accumulated from the control of the means of production. As an example of the CCF attitude to property, we may take George Williams' speech to win the votes of small business men. Williams argued that they had nothing to fear from a supposed attack on profits because:

"From an economic point of view, a profit is something over and above a fair and just reward for a service rendered.... But the small margin our retail merchants receive is not in that class at all."<sup>6</sup>

To be against capitalism in Saskatchewan meant to be against monopoly exploitation; it did not mean to be against private enterprise, because this would have meant challenging the whole way of life of prairie farmers. The meaning of capitalism is made clear in a speech by Tommy Douglas in reply to a challenge that his proposals in 1947 to help private enterprise were in contradiction to the official CCF policy of eradicating capitalism.

"Premier Douglas said 'private enterprise' and 'capitalism' were not synonymous terms. The reference to capitalism meant monopoly capitalism where a small group of men were able to control the whole economy of a community...the Government recognized three types of enterprise, public, co-operative and private, and all had a place in the province's economy. It was the government's intention to encourage private enterprise wherever it did not interfere with the welfare of the people."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>George Williams, "Problems Confronting the Retail Merchants of Western Canada", transcript of radio broadcast, 4-1-39, CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan.

<sup>7</sup>T.C. Douglas, as reported by Regina Leader-Post, 1-4-47.

Socialism also developed a peculiar meaning within the CCF. In the late thirties public reference to socialism was usually avoided in CCF speeches and literature. When Douglas replaced Williams as party leader, the concept of socialism reappeared in party literature, but it was now defined as social ownership through the extension of the co-operative movement. In this policy the CCF continued the traditions of pragmatic agrarian populism under another label. Co-operation differs from socialism because:

"...the cooperative movement does not advocate a basic change in capitalistic institutional structure. It accepts profits and private entrepreneurship; indeed, it seeks to extend the benefits of these institutions to a larger number."<sup>8</sup>

Thus it is misleading to accept the CCF's own statement that "their fundamental principles and objectives are the same."<sup>9</sup> The stigma of earlier socialism having been forgotten, the CCF was able to win support as a farmers' party committed to reform and co-operation. I am forced to conclude that both Social Credit and the CCF were basically examples of populism, advocating innovation wherever necessary to protect or restore the way of life of the petite bourgeoisie, which was the

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<sup>8</sup>J.W. Bennett and Cynthia Krueger, "Agrarian Pragmatism and Radical Politics", in S.M. Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", rev. ed., New York, 1968, p. 351.

<sup>9</sup>"Socialism and Cooperatives", 1944, CCF papers, pamphlet collection, Archives of Saskatchewan. See also the Douglas attitude to socialism as expressed in an interview published in Canadian Dimension, vol. 7, No. 8, 1971, p. 32.

backbone of their support. This interpretation only begins to break down under the impact of post war industrialization, a process which so far has had greater effect on Alberta and Social Credit.

## 9.2. Why there were Two Types of Populism in the West

In order to understand why an authoritarian populism developed in Alberta, we must look again at the historical process, which led up to the rise of Social Credit. Social Credit emerged out of the failure of earlier agrarian populism, the United Farmers of Alberta government. In chapter three the political organization and philosophy of the United Farmers were described, showing that this was what I have defined as a democratic populist movement. Indeed, the United Farmers organization was directly involved in establishing the CCF.

In power since 1921, the United Farmers' government had grown increasingly conservative in policy and its leadership was out of touch with the rank and file membership. When the economic depression of the thirties struck, the government proved incapable of producing legislation to protect the interests of the petit bourgeois population. The townspeople were already alienated from the government in that they were barred from membership in the United Farmers' organization. Now the farming population also found themselves rejecting their democratic populist organization because it had proved insufficient to protect them in the

economic disaster. Yet they could not turn to the Liberal and Conservative parties, since these were both associated with the forces of exploitation, especially the banks and mortgage companies. With all the existing political organizations discredited for some reason, this created a political vacuum in Alberta. It could not be filled by a revolutionary movement because of the commitment of the petite bourgeoisie to existing property institutions. Any new mass movement would have to be consistent with the interests of the petite bourgeoisie. The situation in Alberta in the thirties had the potential for the development of a different kind of populism, one in which allegiance would be given to a "strong", mystical, personality, who claimed divine inspiration for a simple plan to solve the unsolvable. Such a personality was William Aberhart and the panacea was Social Credit. From the conjunction of economic crisis and failure of democratic populism Social Credit was able to develop as a powerful authoritarian populism.

Why was there no repetition of Social Credit or a similar authoritarian populism in Saskatchewan? Again the answer lies in earlier Saskatchewan history. Saskatchewan had been governed by the Liberal Party for all but five years since 1905, when the first depression election occurred. Fortunately for the Liberals, 1929-34 was the period when they were out of office. It is true that the provincial Liberal Party had absorbed many of the most able farming leaders and had

been receptive to many demands of the organized farmers; but it was equally true that the Liberal Party remained associated for many people with the monopolies of eastern Canada. What is most important for our purposes is that the Liberal Party, no matter how many farmers it absorbed, could never be described as a democratic populist party like the CCF. Thus Saskatchewan had never had a democratic populist government equivalent to the United Farmers of Alberta; democratic populism had not then been discredited in Saskatchewan by failure to control the effects of depression. Furthermore, the CCF was already being organized in Saskatchewan before Aberhart and Social Credit appeared as an alternative. There was also no provincial election in Saskatchewan during the period of Aberhart's maximum popularity in Alberta, 1935-37. The first opportunity to test the strength of Social Credit in Saskatchewan provincial politics was the summer of 1938, but by then the CCF was well organized as a plausible democratic populist alternative, while Aberhart was suffering a crisis of legitimation, having failed to introduce Social Credit monetary principles to Alberta. It should also be noted that parts of Saskatchewan were so depressed that neither populist party made much headway.

Although it is untestable speculation, I would like to suggest that had the Liberal government of Saskatchewan delayed the date of the 1921 election until



after the Grain Growers' Association convention of that year, then the Saskatchewan farmers' organization would have taken power as the United Farmers of Alberta did in the same year. The Saskatchewan government would then have been discredited in the same way, and it could be expected that an authoritarian populism would have developed in Saskatchewan as well as in Alberta.

Perhaps in Saskatchewan the upsurge would not have been as dramatic because of the inhibiting destitution of the Palliser Triangle, although the religious qualities of Aberhart's politics did prove effective in the Alberta section of the Triangle. I have introduced this speculation to suggest the basic similarity of the populations, who supported in the one case a democratic populism, in the other an authoritarian populism. In this context, it is worth repeating a comment by Pinard presented earlier:

"Given that the masses are, by and large, neither sensitized nor interested in most facets of the movement's ideology, we claim that unincorporated masses, once faced with a crisis, will choose the movement that appears to them most likely to be successful, whether it is conservative or progressive in the eyes of the sophisticated observer. The ideology of the existing movement at that point is of little relevance to them."<sup>10</sup>

A similar process of the development of authoritarian populism out of the failure of an earlier democratic populism occurred in the United States of the nineteen-thirties. Sometimes, perceiving superficial

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<sup>10</sup>Maurice Pinard, "The Rise of a Third Party", Englewood Cliffs, 1971, p. 95.

resemblances to European fascism, students have labelled the Coughlin, Long, Winrod and Pelly inspired movements as American fascism.<sup>11</sup> Ferkiss has summarized the main features of American fascism as follows: an economic programme appealing to the farmer and small business man by attacking big business, especially finance, and advocating monetary reform; a policy of isolation based on a fear that international co-operation was a conspiracy to destroy the freedom of the people; a despair of liberal, democratic institutions, such as parties and the press, coupled with theories of plebiscitarian rule by strong leaders; and the interpretation of history as a world plot by international finance, controlled by Jews, and working through all opposition groups including communists.<sup>12</sup> In important respects such as all out opposition to big business (in Europe there was an uneasy alliance between business and fascists against communists) and the adoption of an isolationist rather than an imperialist policy, American "fascism" differs from the European phenomenon; indeed, the American movements are more comfortably included in the category of authoritarian populism. Certainly, Social Credit, so similar to these American movements, was rejected by fascists. Ezra Pound, the noted American poet, who had adopted Douglas'

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<sup>11</sup>E.g., Victor C. Ferkiss, "Populist Influences on American Fascism", *Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 10, 1957, pp. 350-73; S.M. Lipset, "Political Man", London, 1959, p. 167; R.G. Swing, "Forerunners of American Fascism", New York, 1935.

<sup>12</sup>Ferkiss, op. cit., pp. 352-7.

monetary theory, subsequently abandoned the English Social Credit movement for Italian fascism, because he saw Social Credit as too weak to introduce the needed reform.<sup>13</sup> In Canada, the German dominated Canadian Union of Fascists thought Social Credit was an incipient fascism, but that Aberhart had not realized the need for a corporate state to make it work.<sup>14</sup>

All of the American movements are best known by the name of their leaders, which is appropriate given the authoritarian manner in which the leaders directed their activities. The most interesting for our purposes are the ones which were most popular in the wheat states - Reverend Winrod's Defenders of the Christian Faith and Father Charles E. Coughlin's National Union for Social Justice. Both were at once more extreme and less popular than Alberta's Social Credit. Winrod had his main support in the wheat state of Kansas, particularly among those of low income in the small towns and rural areas. Winrod, like Aberhart, was a fundamentalist preacher, but one who showed rather more extreme tendencies. He was anti-communist, anti-Jewish, anti-Negro, anti-Catholic and pro-Nazi, and even attacked Roosevelt as an agent of communism and Jews. The magazine in which he spread these views had a circulation

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<sup>13</sup>Victor C. Ferkiss, "Ezra Pound and American Fascism", *Journal of Politics*, vol. 17, 1955, pp. 173-97.

<sup>14</sup>Harold J. Schultz, "Portrait of a Premier: William Aberhart", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 45, 1964, pp. 185-211.

reaching 100,000 in the period 1936-40, most of it in Kansas, where, as Republican candidate for the Senate in 1938, he got 53,140 votes (22 per cent of total).<sup>15</sup>

Of all the extremist groups, that led by Coughlin had the widest support, mostly among Irish Catholics of New England and in the west-central states. Statistically, the most likely Coughlin supporter would be Catholic, middle aged, of low socio-economic status, and live in the country or in a small town.<sup>16</sup> Like Aberhart, Coughlin depended on the radio to build a mass following based on his attacks against international bankers, big business and the communists. Coughlin was also similar to Aberhart in advocating the issue of credits as a solution to the depression, but he also adopted a strong isolationist position and supported fascist Italy. In 1936, Coughlin handpicked William Lemke, US Senator and well known for his activity in the Nonpartisan League,<sup>17</sup> to run as Union Party candidate for the presidency. When the crunch came Lemke took only 900,000 votes and made a significant impression only in his home state of North Dakota. After this failure, Coughlin became more extreme, supporting in 1938 the corporate state and the abolition of political parties,<sup>18</sup> a response to failure

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<sup>15</sup>S.M. Lipset and Earl Raab, "The Politics of Unreason", New York, 1970, pp. 160-62.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>17</sup>On Lemke see Edward C. Blackorby, "William Lemke: Agrarian Radical and Union Party Presidential Candidate", Mississippi Valley Historical Review, vol. 49, 1962, pp. 67-84.

<sup>18</sup>Lipset and Raab, op. cit., pp. 167-71.

which was mirrored in Douglas' rejection of majority rule. Coughlin's movement was finally suppressed during the Second World War.

"...while Coughlin served as a kind of prototype of American fascism, the 15 or 25 per cent of the population who in 1938 and 1939 supported him did not actually believe in fascism."<sup>19</sup>

Like Social Credit, the Winrod and Coughlin movements are best classified as authoritarian populism developing when the depression brought home the failure of earlier democratic populism. Had not war intervened, or had not prosperity quickly followed the war, then Social Credit may well have joined the Coughlin movement in degenerating from authoritarian populism to something very close to an indigenous North American fascism.

### 9.3. Populism and the Social Structure of Western Canada

In the introduction I examined existing studies which tried to link prairie politics to the social structure by some form of class analysis. I was most impressed by MacPherson's analysis of the relation between the ambiguous class position of the petite bourgeoisie and the politics of Alberta. Populism, both in authoritarian and democratic form, has been the political expression of petit bourgeois radicalism in Saskatchewan as well as in Alberta. If the interpretation of populism as the radical side of the oscillating

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

politics of the petite bourgeoisie is accepted, then it follows that changes in the class structure of the provinces should lead to changes in the dominant form of politics. Industrialization eroded the numerical importance of the petite bourgeoisie, especially the rural segment, and so produced a concomitant decline in populist politics. This was especially true in Alberta where industrialization was earlier and quicker. However, the time has come to modify the class theory and destroy its attractive simplicity.

While it is common knowledge that the class of petite bourgeoisie has been split in western Canada by the division between town and country to which I have frequently referred, it has been argued that there have been relatively homogeneous sections, which have developed concerted action based on the recognition of common interests. However, although both provinces have been the base of large scale, populist organizations, the image of a unified, class conscious group of farmers fighting an external metropolitan elite needs much qualification. It is doubtful whether "agrarian class unity was emerging out of economic conflict"<sup>20</sup> to the extent that we can talk of united class action. And the "vigorous consciousness of common interests" to which MacPherson refers in Alberta was never experienced by all at any one time.<sup>21</sup> The illusion of agrarian

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<sup>20</sup>Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>21</sup>C.B. MacPherson, "Democracy in Alberta", Toronto, 1953, p. 226.



unity has been encouraged by the overall preponderance (until recently) of the agrarian petite bourgeoisie in the populations of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Enough of the farmers have combined with urban labour (in Saskatchewan) or other sections of the petite bourgeoisie (in Alberta) to maintain populist reform governments in the provincial legislatures. In federal elections they have been more divided between parties of the status quo and parties of reform. Although the agrarians have so much in common by virtue of their common subjection to a metropolis of large scale capitalism, there has been no united radical protest. Why not?

Among the major reasons why the unity of agrarian class position has never been fully translated into united, class conscious action are those based on cultural associations of ranching as compared with grain production. Bennett's anthropological study of southwest Saskatchewan brings this out most clearly. Farmers are stratified by the scale of their enterprise, but more important are differences based on type of agricultural production.<sup>22</sup> The ranching tradition, as compared with grain farming places greater value on remoteness from the urban world and stresses the ideal of individualism. Bennett emphasizes that among those of European or American origin, the type of agriculture, farming or ranching, divides the people more clearly

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<sup>22</sup>Bennett's work is summarized in "Northern Plainsmen: Adaptive Society and Agrarian Life", Chicago, 1969.

than ethnicity. For ranchers the extensive scale and remoteness of livestock production reinforces a cultural tradition emphasizing independence and the romance of open spaces. In politics, the ranchers are highly individualistic and opposed to government controls in everything but water development in this semi-arid region. Such attitudes have been fostered by the relative economic security of ranching compared with grain growing. As I emphasized in chapter three, the problems of insecurity in wheat production encouraged grain farmers to develop a powerful co-operative movement, culminating in the CCF government.<sup>23</sup>

"Ranchers are intensely local people; they show little, or very selective interest in the outside world, and dislike city life. They are not inclined to enter politics in the sense of campaigning for political parties or candidates, although their political preferences are conservative.... Farmers, on the other hand, are less localized in their orientations, enter Provincial and national politics freely, and attempt to exert their influence in the political sphere more commonly than ranchers."<sup>24</sup>

The orientation of the rancher makes the reformism of Social Credit more attractive than the co-operative emphasis of the CCF, although in Saskatchewan the ranching areas of the south-west have tended to remain

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<sup>23</sup>John W. Bennett, "Social Adaptation in a Northern Plains Region: A Saskatchewan Study", in C.C. Zimmerman and S. Russell, "Symposium on the Great Plains", Fargo, N.D., 1968.

<sup>24</sup>John W. Bennett, "Ecology, Economy and Society in an Agricultural Region of the Northern Great Plains", in Bennett, ed., "Social Research in Moisture-deficient Regions", New Mexico State University, 1968, p. 48.

Liberal strongholds. In Alberta, where ranching is more widespread, ranchers have probably been an important source of Social Credit support. In Saskatchewan, the CCF government encouraged the development of mixed livestock-grain farming in order to give greater security of income. Paradoxically, the success of this policy contributed to the downfall of the CCF in 1964 because:

"With greater balance of income, and increased prosperity, the grain-livestock farmer is more selective of government interventions because he is more concerned over taxation for welfare measures."<sup>25</sup>

Although Bennett found that type of agriculture was the source of most social divisions in south-west Saskatchewan, elsewhere religious-ethnic divisions seem to have been important, especially in the depression years. However, all the analyses, which support this statement, are ecological, and a warning to beware the ecological fallacy must be stressed again. At best the data is suggestive, at worst misleading, but there is nothing else available.

The ambiguities of a class position, which lead the petite bourgeoisie to have uncertain political affiliations as a class, have been accentuated in western Canada by the historical patterns of immigration, which have resulted in a diversity of religious and ethnic groups on the prairies (Appendix A). Milnor has gone

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<sup>25</sup>Bennett, "Social Adaptation in a Northern Plains Region", op. cit.

so far as to suggest that the interpretation of Social Credit and the CCF as movements of economic protest must be modified by recognizing that they were movements of ethnic protest.<sup>26</sup> This argument is based on weak ecological correlations between protest votes and areas of non-Anglo-Saxon settlement from 1934 to 1948 in Saskatchewan. He rejects the thesis that economic depression was the basic cause of this ethnic voting because the areas of central and east European settlement were not the ones hardest hit, but gives no acknowledgement to theories of relative deprivation, which can account for this finding. Nor were the protest parties created by the ethnic groups referred to, although Lipset shows that the CCF was probably more open to East Europeans than were the older parties.<sup>27</sup> Milnor argues that both old parties became identified with policies of legal discrimination against East Europeans in the matter of citizenship rights and separate schools. They also became associated with the social rejection of the East European immigrant; hence such groups were drawn towards the new parties, which promised a commitment to policies of social justice. Furthermore:

"...the period of strongest ethnic reaction would be that period when the minority ethnic began to move out of his ethnic enclave into

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<sup>26</sup>A.J. Milnor, "Agrarian Protest in Saskatchewan", Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, chapter 10.

<sup>27</sup>Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", op. cit., p. 235.

the world of established (and counter) mores, there to encounter social as well as political discrimination."<sup>28</sup>

As a crude indicator of this process of out migration and subjection to discrimination, we are presented with data on the decline of illiteracy and the increase in knowledge of English between 1921 and 1941, by when less than nine per cent of the East European population could not speak English. Milnor notes how this was related in time to the upsurge of the CCF.<sup>29</sup>

However, Milnor makes no attempt to come to grips with the implications of ecological analysis by Lipset at the rural municipality level, which suggests that the highest level of CCF support was among Anglo-Saxons. Of the major non-Anglo-Saxon groups only the Ukrainians (in 1938) appear from ecological analysis to have given the CCF greater support than average. Reaction against discrimination may have brought some disenfranchised minority ethnics to the CCF or Social Credit, but not in large enough volume to justify an interpretation of either party as grounded in ethnic protest.

In general, Silverstein's post war data support the trends in the Lipset data. Usually, the support for the CCF from strongest to weakest is areas with population of mostly British origin, next Scandinavian, then Europeans, among whom Germans and Dutch give very low support. When Social Credit run candidates they tend

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<sup>28</sup>Milnor, op. cit., pp. 205-6.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 206-7.

Table 9.1. Per cent Deviation from the Mean CCF Vote  
in Rural Areas.

	CCF Votes		
	1934	1938	1944
Average CCF vote in all rural areas	29.6	36.3	58.1
CCF vote in all rural areas -			
CCF vote in municipalities with high proportion of ethnic groups			
French	- 5.4	- 4.6	- 8.5
Scandinavian	+10.4	+ 8.7	+ 0.5
Mennonites (Dutch)	-10.2	- 4.4	-13.1
Ukranian	- 8.5	+ 6.4	+ 1.5
German	- 5.6	- 1.8	- 4.1

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Source: Calculated from S.M. Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", rev. ed., New York, 1968, Tables 19 to 23.

to get considerable German and especially Dutch backing.<sup>30</sup> Thus relatively low CCF support does not mean a preference for the Liberal Party in areas of European origin. Between 1952 and 1964 the French Catholic areas appear to have given more support to the Liberals than the CCF only once; and in no group of rural municipalities analysed by Silverstein (except those occupied by native Indians in 1964) did the Liberal Party win a majority of votes.

Most of the ethnic-political correlations are weak,

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<sup>30</sup> Sanford Silverstein, "Occupational Class and Voting Behaviour", in Lipset, "Agrarian Socialism", op. cit., pp. 435-79.



as are those between religion and voting. Here the firmest relationships are between Roman Catholicism and the Liberal Party, the United Church and the CCF (at least until 1964 when United Church areas went equally to the Liberal Party). Elsewhere I have recorded the official opposition of the Roman Catholic Church to the CCF, which was perceived as unacceptable socialism. The Catholic hierarchy preferred the Liberal Party, which had supported the Catholics' wish for a separate school system in the "religious" election of 1929. But after 1934 the Church did not have sufficient influence on the everyday lives of people to prevent them from supporting the CCF in sufficient numbers to destroy the significant negative correlation between Catholic areas and the CCF vote, which had been established in 1934. This is not surprising since Roman Catholic conservatism only prevents working class Catholics in the urban areas of the United States and western Europe from identifying with major parties of the left, when they are committed, practising church members.<sup>31</sup> Social Credit was associated as we have seen with the sectarian protestant fundamentalism of its leaders, and so was in opposition to the theology of Catholicism, but at least Social Credit was not officially attacked by the Church. Thus some of the committed Catholic voters, who wanted to make a protest may have been drawn to Social Credit.

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<sup>31</sup>See, e.g., Lipset, "Political Man", op. cit., pp. 244-6.

Certainly its association with sectarian religion was no hindrance to Social Credit in Alberta, where Aberhart offered reform in sufficient quantity to attract the disenchanted but not so extreme as to alienate a basically conservative population.

In so far as any conclusions can be drawn from ecological analysis, it seems that religious-ethnic differences were significant factors in the political division of the farming population in Saskatchewan until the nineteen forties. For Alberta there is little evidence of value, although in her study of the Hanna region Burnet concludes that like most peasant immigrant groups the large German-Russian (Lutheran) minority were politically apathetic, and that those who did have an interest were probably Social Credit supporters.<sup>32</sup> In Saskatchewan the political implications of ethnic and religious differences seem to have waned under the combined processes of cultural assimilation and secularization. Certainly the church seems to have less influence today than formerly.<sup>33</sup> However, even for the thirties, religion and ethnicity are not powerful predictors of rural political alignment; there must be some other ground for division. Possibly this conclusion is biased by the lack of good data. I am forced to rely on voting as the only measure of

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<sup>32</sup>Jean Burnet, "Next-Year Country", Toronto, 1951, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup>E.g., D.R. Whyte, "Rural Canada in Transition," in the volume of the same title edited by M. Trembley and W.J. Anderson, Ottawa, 1966, esp. pp. 80-3.

political attachment and involvement, and even then only on aggregate voting patterns. Furthermore, there is no evidence on the meaning and importance of voting as an intentional political act on the part of the farmers. It is quite likely that for many voting was a product of family tradition, which the organizational efforts of the CCF and Social Credit could not break. In Saskatchewan the Liberal Party may have drawn rural support from those culturally conservative farmers, who remained outside the co-operative movement, with which the CCF had such close connections. Finally, there was the additional power which the Liberals acquired through the distribution of patronage (and also, some charged, by threatening withdrawal of relief payments).<sup>34</sup>

While all these factors may have had some influence, the most satisfying solution comes from MacPherson's thesis on the impossibility of united class conscious action by the petite bourgeoisie:

"The petite-bourgeoisie is at any time a collection of different elements, all tending, with the increasing subordination of all forms of production to the direction of large capital accumulations, to lose their original functions and position. The very cause of the existence of the petite-bourgeoisie, the development of capitalist enterprise which continually renders vestigial earlier forms of enterprise in various sectors of the economy and produces new transitional groups, is the cause of the heterogeneity of the class and of its lack of any consciousness of class."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Escott M. Reid, "The Saskatchewan Liberal Machine before 1929", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, vol. 2, 1936, pp. 27-40.

<sup>35</sup>MacPherson, op. cit., p. 226.

However, MacPherson finds that in western Canada a section of the class, the farmers, have been united:

"...being more homogeneous than the petite-bourgeoisie as a whole, (they) have been able to organize both politically and economically to promote their immediate interests, and in the course of this organization they have developed a vigorous consciousness of common interests. But it is an agrarian consciousness, not a class consciousness...."<sup>36</sup>

I have already argued that the homogeneity is an illusion of the investigator, but in so far as there is an agrarian consciousness, it is necessary to agree with MacPherson that it is based on an illusion of independence, produced by farmers' activity as independent commodity producers, (but producers who are powerless to control the operation of the price system).

"The agrarian consciousness is thus at once hostile to and acquiescent in the established order. It is here that we find the fundamental explanation of the oscillation between radicalism and conservatism which is characteristic of Alberta politics."<sup>37</sup>

But here MacPherson is concerned with oscillation over time by the farmers as a whole in response to changes in the impact of the price system on their income, whereas I have been concerned in this section with the co-existence of agrarian conservatism and radicalism. Farmers are indeed subjected to conflicting pressures of commitment and opposition to the existing system, but this does not mean that at any one time all farmers are going to experience these pressures to the same degree.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

Some may carry a hostility to the price system (and those who are thought to control it) through even the most prosperous period; others, less conscious of the forces which control their living, may retain an identity with the ideology of free enterprise, even during depressions. What we find is not a history of complete vacillation by the whole group in accordance with economic changes, but rather a changing distribution of orientations within the farming community. Hence radical populism of both the CCF and Social Credit variety can co-exist with conservative acquiescence. This study has documented the development of the populist movements and tried to establish the conditions under which populism, the radical side of petit bourgeois consciousness, predominated and declined in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

## Chapter Ten

### Summary and Concluding Remarks

#### 10.1. Summary

The development of populism in Alberta and Saskatchewan has its historical origin in the confederation of the Canadian state, the founders of which envisaged the creation of a western frontier region, which, when settled, would stimulate the growth of eastern capitalism. This task was soon attempted when the federal government promoted a series of national policies, which were intended to bring about the settlement of the west, the expansion of the railroads, and the growth of eastern manufacturing industry under a protective tariff. Eventually a western satellite area occupied by small scale producers of primary products was successfully established (chapter two).

From the earliest days the people of the satellite area felt exploited at the hands of the eastern railroad company, elevator and milling companies, banks, suppliers of manufactured goods, and speculators on the Grain Exchange. The farmers began to unite for self-protection by forming marketing and consumer co-operatives, and by challenging the existing parties in the field of politics. In Alberta the United Farmers actually elected a government committed to delegate democracy, while in Saskatchewan the Liberals remained



in office (chapter three).

The severe depression of the thirties aggravated long standing feelings of relative deprivation and opposition to metropolitan based, monopoly capitalism. New third parties, Social Credit in Alberta, the CCF in Saskatchewan, grew indirectly from the structural stress created by the impact of depression and drought. However, the extent of destitution was so severe and produced such demoralizing effects over much of southern Saskatchewan that the CCF was only able to win power when conditions improved during the forties (chapter four).

In Alberta, William Aberhart popularized the economic doctrine of Social Credit, which promised to be a panacea for all social ills, including the cure of poverty, by having the government issue credits to all citizens, thus restoring their purchasing power. This, combined with the long standing appeal to the oppressed of Aberhart's fundamentalist protestantism, brought overwhelming victory to Social Credit in 1935. However, Social Credit legislation was always thwarted by the courts or the federal government, and Aberhart, surviving an attack on his leadership, compromised by giving conservative administration to the affairs of the province until his death in 1943. Social Credit had received enthusiastic support from all sections of the petite bourgeoisie and some of the urban wage earners (chapter five).

The Saskatchewan CCF was part of a national party,

founded in 1932, which was identified at the beginning with socialism. As long as the Saskatchewan section retained policies which included the socialization of land, it could make little progress. The CCF, after it recovered from this early association with socialism, warded off the 1938 invasion of Social Credit (which had not produced the promised utopia in Alberta), and won power in 1944 as a pragmatic party of populist reform. CCF members were outspokenly anti-capitalist, but to be anti-capitalist in the west means to be against monopolies in industry and finance; it does not mean support for a fully socialized state. The electorate to which the party had to appeal to win power, not an entrenched party bureaucracy, was the main reason for the Saskatchewan CCF moving in a conservative direction. Its greatest support en route came from the farming population, then the urban working class (chapter six).

Following World War II both parties retained power in provinces which were now undergoing an urban, industrial transformation, a change which each party encouraged, but a change which reacted back on the leadership inducing an increasing conservatism. In each province, but more so in Alberta, a prosperous electorate gave maximum support to conserving the gains they had made. There was no need for a pragmatic people to sanction further experiments in reform for doctrinal purposes. Furthermore, the old social base of support, the petite bourgeoisie, was declining in

relation to the total population. Still the Saskatchewan CCF did undertake major reforms in social welfare, which were consistent with the populist history of the party (chapter seven).

Having reviewed the history of change in policy and considered the social sources of support, the nature of leadership, legitimation and internal social relations in each party were examined. Social Credit was found to have a centralized, authoritarian organizational structure compared with the more decentralized organization of the CCF, which emphasized membership participation in decision-making (chapter eight).

Finally, each party was assessed against the categories of populism which were presented in the introduction - a reaction to the impact of capitalism; directed against an out group; exalting of the common people; advocacy of a direct relationship between leader and followers; reformist ideology. Each party was found to contain all the suggested characteristics of populism, but differences in organizational structure were such that the CCF was interpreted as democratic populism and Social Credit as authoritarian populism. It was then suggested that the separate development of Social Credit and the CCF can be explained in terms of the earlier histories of the provinces. By 1935 the United Farmers of Alberta, a democratic populist party, had been in office for fourteen years and was condemned by its failure to control the impact of depression.

In this context people were more likely to confer legitimacy on the charismatic claims of an authoritarian leader such as William Aberhart, who promised to solve, at a stroke, the immediate and pressing problems. The pattern was not repeated in Saskatchewan where only the "old" parties had held office. Next the development of populism was considered in relation to other features of the social structure in the provinces. Factors such as differences in the type of production, ethnicity and religion were considered as possible explanations for the failure of the farming people to unite behind their own populist parties. It was suggested that the best explanation is found by modifying MacPherson's theory of the ambiguity of the class position of the petite bourgeoisie, which leads to oscillation between radical and conservative political attachment. It was suggested that this tendency to oscillate operates to create division not only between segments of the class (such as shopkeepers and farmers) but within these segments at any one time (chapter nine).

#### 10.2. Some Concluding Remarks

In the course of this study I have viewed the populism of Alberta and Saskatchewan as the expression of the radical sector of the petite bourgeoisie, while recognizing that this radicalism never amounted to more than reformism. Populism represents the opposition of satellite to metropolis, and because of this opposition

I have tended to present it as if it were a divisive force with regard to Canada as a whole. In closing the study it is worth while to speculate about populism in quite a different way. Although populism is a force for reform and change, a movement of opposition to the status quo, yet it may well contribute in a 'negative' way to the survival of the Canadian federation. This idea has its origin in Guenther Roth's research on "The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany", in which he interprets the SPD as having contributed to the survival of Imperial Germany by channelling the revolutionary impulse of the working class into an organization, the leaders of which, although opposed to the existing society in principle, became committed to maintaining the place of the SPD (and hence their own positions) in that society. Considering the SPD as a subculture Roth writes:

"The subculture was 'negatively' integrated into the dominant system because by its very existence it provided an important means for the controlled expression and dissipation of conflict and thus contributed, for decades of peacetime, to the stability of the Empire."<sup>1</sup>

Western populism never posed a revolutionary threat to society like that of the German working class, nor were western populists subject to similar repression. But there are some important similarities. The populist parties of Alberta and Saskatchewan funnelled petit bourgeois disenchantment through institutional channels.

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<sup>1</sup> Guenther Roth, "The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany", Totowa, N.J., 1963, p. 315.

Having once accepted institutional means to power and social change, the populist politicians could be controlled if they went to any "excess" in reform, because the institutionalized powers of the federal government were superior in all important respects to those of the provincial governments. Populism was a safety-valve mechanism in the Canadian socio-economic system, which was so dependent in the first half of the twentieth century on petit bourgeois production of export commodities. Paradoxically, populism may have 'negatively' contributed to the survival of the Canadian federation during periods of crisis. (Federation itself may be seen as a strategy of 'negative' integration of the state.) Some support for this comes from Mann's interpretation of William Aberhart as integrative for Alberta:

"Aberhart's denunciations of greedy, unscrupulous money lenders, of eastern financial interests, and of wealthy churches, merit special mention as furnishing an outlet for the grievances of important marginal and economically depressed groups. If utterly suppressed, the deep hostilities of such groups might ultimately have had serious repercussions upon the province's social stability."<sup>2</sup>

The same might be said with regard to the survival of the Canadian state as a whole.

Such a functional theory is plausible, but it is difficult to see on what grounds it might be rejected.

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<sup>2</sup>W.E. Mann, "Sect and Cult in Western Canada", in B. Blishen et al., eds., "Canadian Society", Toronto, 1968, pp. 518-9.



It is impossible to rerun history without our populist movement being present, and so we can never be sure what would have happened had it not been present. Nor can we find support for the theory in evidence of the motivation of participants, since there is no claim that populism was intentionally encouraged by eastern capitalists or politicians as a means of ultimately preserving their society. The theory is plausible in retrospect because Canadian society has survived without revolutionary changes.

This study has thrown up for me a number of subjects which could well stand further investigations, although some would involve a research commitment of many years. It proved impossible for me to undertake more than a sketchy outline of post war developments in Alberta. A history of the Social Credit government comparative in depth to what Johnson has done for Saskatchewan remains to be written.<sup>3</sup> Such a study might also consider the failure of the NDP to win support from the growing working class of Albertan cities.

The research also threw up the absence of information on the meaning of politics in the lives of Canadian people. By this I mean more than crude questionnaire studies of party images, but research employing such techniques as focussed depth interviewing to get at the

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<sup>3</sup>A.W. Johnson, "Biography of a Government: Policy Formulation in Saskatchewan, 1944-1961", Ph.D. thesis, Harvard, 1963.

reasons for lack of interest and detailed knowledge of parties, policies, government and the state, on the part of many people. There is still a need for research into the meaning of the act of voting, the results of which form the basis of so much inference in political sociology.

Further comparative research on populism in different times and places would no doubt contribute to a refinement of categories and theories about the origin and development of populism. It is possible that the concepts I have developed here will not stand up to widespread comparative application (e.g., important features of populism may have been ignored), but that is how a science progresses - by building on or rejecting earlier conceptualizations and theories. In relation to research on populism, it seems that a study of the relationship between populism and fascism in terms of ideology, policy, leadership, social base of membership and support, etc., would be a valuable, if difficult, contribution to the sociology of politics. Perhaps fascism of the thirties in Europe is best interpreted as a special form of populism.

Finally, I would suggest that there is a need for a sociological study of the development of the Canadian federation, one which gives greater attention to social class in Canadian development than we find in the work of Canada's historians. Of course, this is not to suggest that we ignore the long standing divisions

between French and English Canada. The work of S.D. Clark has opened many lines of investigation for a sociological interpretation of Canadian history;<sup>4</sup> if this study of populism in Alberta and Saskatchewan contributes to that task, then it will have been worth while.

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<sup>4</sup>See his "The Social Development of Canada", Toronto, 1942; "Church and Sect in Canada", Toronto, 1948; "Movements of Political Protest in Canada", Toronto, 1959; and "The Developing Canadian Community", Toronto, 1968.

**Appendix A**

**Statistical Data on Class, Economic Development,  
Religion and Ethnic Groups  
for Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario,  
1901 - 1970**

Table 1. Population: Rural - Urban.

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
<u>Alberta</u>							
Total population	73022	374295	588454	731605	769169	939501	1331944
% urban	16.2	29.4	30.1	31.1	31.5	45.8	63.9
% rural	83.8	70.6	69.9	68.9	68.5	54.2	36.1
% rural farm				51.3	48.2	36.7	21.6
<u>Saskatchewan</u>							
Total population	91279	492432	757510	921785	895992	831728	925181
% urban	6.1	16.1	16.8	20.3	21.3	30.2	43.0
% rural	93.9	83.9	83.2	79.7	78.7	69.8	57.0
% rural farm				61.2	57.4	48.0	33.0
<u>Manitoba</u>							
Total population	255211	461394	610118	700139	729744	776541	921686
% urban	24.9	39.3	39.2	42.1	41.0	46.2	65.0
% rural	75.1	60.7	60.8	57.9	59.0	53.8	35.0
% rural farm				36.6	34.2	28.2	18.8
<u>Ontario</u>							
Total population	2182947	2527292	2933662	3431683	3787655	4597542	6236092
% urban	40.3	49.5	55.6	58.7	59.9	58.5	79.2
% rural	59.7	50.5	44.4	41.3	40.1	41.5	20.8
% rural farm				23.3	18.6	15.3	8.4

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1961, Bulletin 7.1-2 and 5.3-1, 2 and 3.

Until 1951 urban population was defined as the population residing in incorporated cities, towns and villages. The rest was defined as rural. Beginning in 1951 the whole of a metropolitan area, whether incorporated or not was classed as urban. Any community of less than 1000 persons was now classed as rural. The effect of these changes in 1951 was to make the urban population for that year 8.7% greater than if the old definition had been used. However, inspection of Table I (D.B.S., Census, 1961, Bulletin 7.1-2, p. 2) shows that the changed definition had an opposite effect in Alberta and Saskatchewan. This was especially marked for Saskatchewan

because here there were large numbers of incorporated villages below 1000 people which were formerly classed as urban.

Beginning in 1931 the rural farm segment was defined separately from the rural. The category "rural farm population" refers to the population living on farms in localities classes as rural. "Changes of definition of rural and urban in recent censuses have made it impossible to provide population figures on this subject on a uniform basis back to the 1901 census." D.B.S., Census, 1961, Bulletin 7.1-2, p. 3.



Table 2. Farms: Number, Area, Improved Acres.

	1921	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951	1961
<u>Number of farms</u>							
Alberta	82954	97408	100358	99732	89541	84315	73212
Saskatchewan	119451	136472	142391	138713	125612	112018	93924
Manitoba	53252	54199	57774	58024	54428	52383	43306
Ontario	198053	192174		178204		149920	121333
<u>Average size (acres)</u>							
Alberta	353.1	400.1	403.9	433.9	462.9	527.3	645
Saskatchewan	368.5	407.9	399.6	432.3	473.0	550.5	686
Manitoba	274.5	279.2	271.1	291.1	306.2	338.5	420
Ontario	114.3	118.9		125.6		139.2	
<u>% of farms over 640 acres</u>							
Alberta		15.2		16.8		21.8	28.9
Saskatchewan		19.1		20.4		30.9	42.0
Manitoba		8.7		9.6		12.8	19.7
Ontario		4.8		5.7		8.1	10.4
<u>Improved land (thousand acres)</u>							
Alberta	11768	17749	18363	20125	20032	22271	25288
Saskatchewan	25037	33549	33632	35577	35590	38807	43118
Manitoba	8058	8522	9829	9773	10761	11454	11963
Ontario	13169	13273		13263		12693	12033
<u>% of total land area in farms</u>							
Alberta	18.4	24.5		27.2		27.9	29.7
Saskatchewan	31.2	39.5		42.6		43.8	45.7
Manitoba	10.8	11.2		12.5		13.1	13.4
Ontario	10.6	10.7		10.5		9.8	8.7

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1921, 1931, 1941, 1951, 1961; Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, 1946.

Table 3. Farms and Tenure Characteristics.

	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
<u>Alberta</u>					
% of farms owner operated	79.5	72.6	62.5	62.7	59.1
% tenant operated	9.7	12.2	17.1	11.6	9.2
% part owner operated	9.9	14.9	19.8	25.0	31.1
% manager operated	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.6
<u>Saskatchewan</u>					
% of farms owner operated	76.7	66.1	52.6	54.6	51.5
% tenant operated	10.8	15.4	24.6	14.7	10.1
% part owner operated	11.6	18.2	22.4	30.2	38.0
% manager operated	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.4
<u>Manitoba</u>					
% of farms owner operated	81.0	69.7	66.0	71.0	64.9
% tenant operated	11.4	18.2	18.9	9.7	8.0
% part owner operated	6.7	11.7	14.4	18.6	26.7
% manager operated	0.9	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.4
<u>Ontario</u>					
% of farms owner operated	84.4	81.5	78.4	81.7	80.1
% tenant operated	10.2	11.2	12.1	5.9	4.6
% part owner operated	4.6	6.9	8.6	10.6	14.7
% manager operated	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.8	0.6

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1961, Bulletin 5.3 - 1, 2, 3.

Part owner operated farms refers to those farms which are composed of land which is owned by the operator and additional land which he has rented. In recent years this has been a common way for farmers to increase the size of their operations without the considerable expense of buying new land.

Table 4. Farms and Age of Operator, 1921-1961.

	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
<u>Alberta</u>					
% of operators less than 25 years old	5.2	5.3	3.4	4.3	3.2
% 25-34 years	27.9	20.8	18.5	20.2	16.2
% 35-39 years	57.5	61.1	60.6	58.4	62.6
% 60 and older	9.4	12.8	17.5	17.1	18.0
<u>Saskatchewan</u>					
% of operators less than 25 years old	4.5	4.5	4.3	5.5	3.6
% 25-34 years	30.3	19.9	19.8	22.2	15.7
% 35-39 years	57.1	64.4	58.3	54.4	62.0
% 60 and older	8.1	11.2	17.6	17.9	18.7
<u>Manitoba</u>					
% of operators less than 25 years old	4.7	2.9	2.9	3.6	2.7
% 25-34 years	26.2	17.8	18.8	21.1	14.2
% 35-39 years	57.1	61.9	59.6	59.1	64.1
% 60 and older	12.0	17.4	18.7	16.2	19.0
<u>Ontario</u>					
% of operators less than 25 years old	3.3	1.9	2.0	2.5	1.9
% 25-34 years	17.6	14.1	12.9	14.8	12.8
% 35-39 years	58.6	58.1	57.9	60.6	61.6
% 60 and over	20.5	25.9	27.2	22.1	23.6

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1961, Bulletin 5.3 - parts 1, 2, 3.

Table 5. Employment in Agriculture, 1921-61.

	1921	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951	1961
<u>Agricultural labour force<sup>1</sup></u>							
Alberta	114202	145707	158386	141196	121795	114830	104162
Saskatchewan	174486	204473	217315	187396	163965	147701	119520
Manitoba	86908	93431	101626	92230	80688	73695	59924
Ontario	295104	305304		269677		201482	172171
<u>No. of farmers and stockraisers</u>							
Alberta	81946	92027	93610	92182	85343	82076	65140
Saskatchewan	116193	122751	126767	123759	117710	108980	85343
Manitoba	52464	48864	52228	53979	52438	49104	38694
Ontario	117369	165689		159980		132803	96159
<u>Farmers as % of labour force<sup>2</sup></u>							
Alberta	37.9	32.2	31.3	29.5	28.2	23.2	13.3
Saskatchewan	43.5	36.2	36.6	36.4	37.9	36.0	26.2
Manitoba	24.2	18.1	19.4	18.6	18.7	16.4	11.3
Ontario	15.0	12.3		10.8		7.0	4.0
<u>No. of agricultural wage earners<sup>3</sup></u>							
Alberta	16734	26291	31888	23002	14923	18990	17624
Saskatchewan	31324	37870	41087	27566	17547	18591	13450
Manitoba	17243	20108	20243	16166	10762	10769	8477
Ontario	54420	66017		57424		42641	41473
<u>Workers hired the year round</u>							
Alberta		7200	9267	4805	3700	8113	7699
Saskatchewan		11744	11421	5636	4851	6928	4389
Manitoba		6118	5787	3096	3236	4769	3086
Ontario		25276		17820		21768	18419
<u>Wage earners<sup>3</sup> as % of agricultural labour force<sup>2</sup></u>							
Alberta	14.7	18.0	20.1	16.3	12.3	16.6	16.9
Saskatchewan	18.0	18.5	18.9	14.7	10.7	12.6	11.3
Manitoba	19.9	21.6	19.9	17.5	13.3	14.6	14.1
Ontario	18.4	21.6		21.3		21.2	24.1

Table 5 (contd.)

	1921	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951	1961
<u>Farms having hired labour as a % of all farms<sup>4</sup></u>							
Alberta		40.5	43.2	36.4	31.4	39.2	39.1
Saskatchewan		41.8	43.2	34.0	29.6	38.7	35.5
Manitoba		42.7	42.4	39.8	38.9	43.1	34.5
Ontario		44.7		46.9		45.4	43.2
<u>Average weeks of hired labour per farm having any hired labour<sup>4</sup></u>							
Alberta		26.3	28.4	27.9	23.8		24.2
Saskatchewan		27.1	24.5	23.9	20.4		16.3
Manitoba		31.2	29.3	28.1	21.7		20.5
Ontario		28.3		29.7			36.7
<u>Unpaid family labourers</u>							
Alberta		27039	32141	26173		13697	11407
Saskatchewan		43581	49002	35513		20031	10253
Manitoba		23674	27698	22010		12775	11874
Ontario		66881		52154		24568	18799
<u>Farmers plus unpaid family labour as % of labour force<sup>2</sup></u>							
Alberta		41.6	42.1	37.9		27.0	15.6
Saskatchewan		49.1	50.7	46.9		42.7	29.4
Manitoba		26.8	29.6	26.2		20.7	14.8
Ontario		17.3		14.3		8.3	4.8

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1921 to 1961; Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936 and 1946.

#### Notes

- 1 Before 1951 the gainfully occupied concept was used rather than the labour force. The main difference is that the labour force concept measures employment at a given point in time, whereas the gainfully occupied concept does not specify the time interval to which the question refers. D.B.S., Census of Canada, 1961, Bulletin 7.1-12, p. 2. Before 1936 data was collected on the occupations of those 10 years and over; from 1936 to 1946 all those 14 years and over were considered; from 1951 the lower age limit became 15 years.

- 2 These calculations are based on raw data from the censuses.
- 3 Includes managers of farms.
- 4 The figures here refer to the year preceding the year of the census.



Table 6. Percentage Distribution of the Labour Force, 15 years of age and over, by Occupation Division, for Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1911-1961.<sup>1</sup>

<u>Occupation</u>	1911		1921		1931	
	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskat</u>	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskat</u>	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskat</u>
Professional and Managerial	7.9	6.0	10.5	9.7	9.9	9.2
Clerical	3.1	2.2	5.2	3.9	4.5	3.4
Agricultural	49.9	63.9	52.8	65.2	50.9	60.3
Fishing, hunting, trapping, logging	1.0	1.1	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.7
Mining	3.2	0.3	3.4	0.1	3.1	0.2
Manufacturing	4.8	3.2	4.3	2.3	5.0	3.4
Construction	4.7	3.9	2.6	2.0	2.7	2.1
Transportation	5.4	3.6	4.7	3.4	4.8	4.1
Commercial	3.0	2.8	3.7	3.6	4.2	3.7
Financial	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.5
Service	6.3	5.3	6.6	5.6	7.7	7.1
Labourers	10.5	7.7	4.6	3.2	5.9	5.5
Not stated	-	-	0.1	-	-	-

Table 6 (contd.)

<u>Occupation</u>	1941		1951		1961	
	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskat</u>	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskat</u>	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskat</u>
Professional and Managerial	10.6	9.8	14.0	13.9	17.6	15.5
Clerical	4.7	3.5	8.3	6.2	11.0	7.9
Agricultural	49.0	59.3	32.5	48.8	21.3	36.7
Fishing, hunting, trapping, logging	1.4	1.1	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7
Mining	2.6	0.3	2.1	0.3	1.1	0.6
Manufacturing	6.5	4.2	8.3	5.3	9.2	6.4
Construction	2.8	1.7	5.1	2.5	4.8	3.4
Transportation	5.2	4.5	7.4	6.8	8.0	7.4
Commercial	4.3	3.9	5.8	5.1	6.6	5.3
Financial	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.8	0.5
Service	9.0	8.8	10.0	7.7	12.2	9.8
Labourers	3.6	2.6	4.7	3.0	4.5	3.3
Not stated	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.5	2.4	2.4

<sup>1</sup>Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1961, Ottawa, Bulletin 3.1-1, Table 3.

Table 7. Average Per Capita Personal Income, for Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, 1926-1970 (in dollars).

	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskat</u>	<u>Ontario</u>		<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskat</u>	<u>Ontario</u>
1926	488	437	491	1950	1019	858	1205
1927	559	448	512	1951	1299	1266	1355
1928	500	469	540	1952	1343	1418	1440
1929	430	309	569	1953	1368	1300	1499
1930	387	264	532	1954	1236	914	1489
1931	276	159	453	1955	1318	1178	1561
1932	234	161	366	1956	1499	1341	1665
1933	197	127	342	1957	1466	1158	1758
1934	245	159	342	1968	1580	1272	1798
1935	248	197	397	1959	1595	1302	1862
1936	251	191	431	1960	1615	1461	1904
1937	332	163	462	1961	1607	1146	1908
1938	352	219	461	1962	1711	1604	2007
1939	340	296	478	1963	1767	1788	2111
1940	399	310	549	1964	1821	1616	2222
1941	413	306	668	1965	1992	1879	2409
1942	660	646	777	1966	2281	2154	2648
1943	581	517	857	1967	2419	2089	2842
1944	728	787	900	1968	2658	2396	3064
1945	705	646	931	1969	2918	2517	3371
1946	867	773	930	1970	3074	2391	3584
1947	905	762	977				
1948	1054	933	1091				
1949	1033	958	1140				

Source: Data supplied by Dominion Bureau of Statistics, National Income and Expenditure Division, Ottawa, 1971.

Table 8. Selected Components of Personal Income, Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1926-1970: Net Farm Income; Income from Interest, Dividends and Miscellaneous Investments; Wages, Salaries and Supplementary Labour Income (millions of dollars).

	Net Farm Income		Interest, Dividends, Misl. Inv.		Wages, Salaries, Supp. Labour Income	
	Alberta	Saskat	Alberta	Saskat	Alberta	Saskat
1926	98	166	13	10	135	119
1927	142	173	13	11	142	124
1928	101	181	15	12	153	134
1929	55	48	16	13	164	143
1930	52	35	16	13	154	134
1931	10	-33	15	13	132	114
1932	13	- 3	14	13	108	92
1933	4	-16	14	12	97	81
1934	32	- 4	14	12	104	86
1935	27	26	14	12	110	90
1936	19	15	13	11	117	94
1937	62	-38	14	11	131	103
1938	80	27	14	11	128	97
1939	63	93	14	11	133	101
1940	84	85	15	11	147	112
1941	63	59	16	11	171	124
1942	195	271	16	11	185	132
1943	106	151	18	12	208	144
1944	190	323	19	12	233	163
1945	124	169	23	13	244	176
1946	186	238	26	15	289	204
1947	215	235	30	20	323	219
1948	285	351	35	21	385	242
1949	232	335	38	21	437	262
1950	177	237	46	23	485	277
1951	377	521	58	27	544	310
1952	344	602	57	27	628	342
1953	287	469	63	26	742	404
1954	170	128	66	28	762	434
1955	183	298	79	31	832	445
1956	232	386	90	37	1000	505
1957	149	167	100	46	1051	544
1958	213	198	104	53	1115	575
1959	200	205	118	65	1214	616
1960	162	272	121	73	1274	634
1961	185	60	140	82	1333	635
1962	233	396	170	101	1430	663
1963	265	521	178	116	1505	700
1964	214	302	200	133	1624	749
1965	269	447	211	142	1821	829
1966	352	572	238	159	2073	927
1967	262	341	258	176	2334	1058
1968	365	447	299	195	2604	1168
1969	276	420	399	220	3057	1241
1970	207	158	380	242	3383	1276

Source: Data supplied by Dominion Bureau of Statistics, National Income and Expenditure Division, Ottawa, 1971.

Table 9. Net Value of Commodity Production by Industry, Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1948-1963 (in millions of dollars).

	<u>Alberta</u>						
	Agric.	Mining	Elec.	Power	Manufact.	Construction	Other
1948	360	77	11		107	120	12
1949	277	107	12		115	143	9
1950	346	123	14		124	148	11
1951	506	152	17		142	187	13
1952	522	171	20		178	205	14
1953	430	227	22		200	300	11
1954	307	257	26		219	309	14
1955	339	304	29		263	339	15
1956	402	381	33		286	406	17
1957	292	378	36		312	415	18
1958	358	309	41		339	432	15
1959	357	337	46		346	451	19
1960	341	353	49		353	446	24
1961	320	460	51		369	491	23
1962	360	527	53		385	438	28

	<u>Saskatchewan</u>						
	Agric.	Mining	Elec.	Power	Manufact.	Construction	Other
1948	430	45	8		45	67	7
1949	386	32	9		47	66	5
1950	489	27	10		49	64	7
1951	697	39	11		61	73	7
1952	810	30	13		81	94	5
1953	667	33	15		80	125	6
1954	250	36	17		105	171	5
1955	514	45	19		113	151	9
1956	625	76	22		114	199	9
1957	314	130	24		107	196	7
1958	353	159	26		119	191	7
1959	368	161	30		124	187	7
1960	538	165	32		120	191	8
1961	219	169	36		132	207	7
1962	685	182	39		135	210	8
1963	881	208	43		140	225	8

Value of Agriculture as Percentage of Total Value of Production

	Alberta	Saskatchewan		Alberta	Saskatchewan
1948	52.3	71.4	1957	20.1	40.2
1949	41.9	70.8	1958	24.0	41.1
1950	45.2	75.7	1959	22.9	41.9
1951	49.8	78.5	1960	21.8	51.0
1952	47.0	78.4	1961	18.7	28.4
1953	36.1	72.0	1962	20.2	54.4
1954	27.1	42.8	1963		58.7
1955	26.3	60.4			
1956	26.4	59.8			

Source: Alberta Bureau of Statistics, "Alberta: Industry and Resources", Edmonton, 1964, p. 13; Saskatchewan Economic Review, No. 18, March, 1964, p. 7.

Table 10. Distribution of the population by specified ETHNIC group for the provinces, 1901-1961.

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
<u>Alberta</u>							
British Isles	47.8	57.5	59.8	53.2	50.2	48.1	45.2
French	6.2	5.5	5.3	5.2	5.4	6.0	6.3
German	10.7	11.1	6.0	10.2	9.8	11.5	13.8
Italian	0.1	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	1.1
Jewish	-	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3
Dutch	0.5	0.9	1.6	1.9	2.6	3.1	4.2
Polish	0.6	0.6	1.2	2.9	3.4	3.2	3.0
Russian	6.6	2.1	3.6	2.2	2.4	1.6	1.3
Scandinavian	5.4	7.9	7.6	8.1	8.0	7.5	7.2
Ukranian	0.9	4.7	4.0	7.6	9.0	9.3	8.0
Asiatic	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.8	0.9
Indian and Eskimo	18.4	3.0	2.5	2.1	1.6	2.3	2.1
Other East European	1.9	3.8	5.9	4.5	4.8	4.1	5.4
<u>Saskatchewan</u>							
British Isles	43.9	54.7	52.9	47.5	44.4	42.3	40.4
French	2.9	5.2	5.6	5.5	5.6	6.2	6.5
German	12.9	14.4	9.0	14.0	14.5	16.3	17.1
Italian	-	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3
Jewish	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.2
Dutch	0.4	0.6	2.2	2.7	4.0	3.6	3.2
Polish	0.7	0.8	1.1	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.1
Russian	11.9	3.6	6.0	3.8	2.9	2.3	2.4
Scandinavian	1.6	7.1	7.7	7.9	7.7	7.5	7.3
Ukranian	1.2	4.5	3.7	6.9	8.9	9.4	8.5
Asiatic	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5
Indian and Eskimo	19.4	2.4	1.7	1.7	1.5	2.7	3.3
Other East European	4.5	5.4	8.7	6.0	5.2	4.8	6.5
<u>Manitoba</u>							
British Isles	64.4	59.9	57.5	52.6	49.4	46.7	43.0
French	6.3	6.8	6.7	6.7	7.3	8.5	9.1
German	10.7	7.6	3.2	5.4	5.7	7.0	10.0
Italian	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.7
Jewish	0.6	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.1
Dutch	0.4	0.7	3.4	3.6	5.4	5.5	5.2
Polish	0.7	2.7	2.7	5.7	5.0	4.9	4.8
Russian	1.3	1.7	2.3	1.7	0.9	1.1	0.9
Scandinavian	4.7	3.8	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.2	4.1
Ukranian	1.5	6.7	7.2	10.5	12.3	12.7	11.4
Asiatic	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.5
Indian and Eskimo	6.4	2.9	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.7	3.2
Other East European	2.5	2.9	6.8	3.5	3.3	2.9	3.4



Table 10 (contd.)

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
<u>Ontario</u>							
British Isles	79.3	77.2	77.8	74.0	72.1	67.0	59.5
French	7.3	8.1	8.5	8.7	9.9	10.4	10.4
German	9.3	7.7	4.4	5.1	4.4	4.8	6.4
Italian	0.2	0.8	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.9	4.4
Jewish	0.2	1.1	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.0
Dutch	1.1	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.1	3.1
Polish	0.1	0.4	0.5	1.2	1.4	2.0	2.4
Russian	-	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5
Scandinavian	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.7	0.8	1.0
Ukranian	-	0.1	0.3	0.7	1.3	2.0	2.1
Asiatic	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.6
Indian and Eskimo	1.1	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8
Other East European	0.2	0.9	1.5	2.7	3.0	3.6	5.6

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1961, Bulletin 7.1 - 6, Table 3.

Table 11. Population by Religious Denomination, Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1901-1961 (to nearest thousand).

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
<u>Alberta</u>							
Adventist		2	4	4	5	5	5
Anglican	10	56	99	113	113	123	157
Baptist	3	20	28	31	32	35	42
Christian Science		1	2	2	2	2	2
Churches of Christ		1	1	1	2	2	3
Confucian/Bhuddist		1	3	2	2	2	3
Congregationalist <sup>2</sup>		3	3				
Doukhobor				1	1		1
Greek Orthodox	5	18	36	26	35	40	47
Jehovah's Witnesses			1	1	1	1	8
Jewish		1	3	4	4	5	6
Lutheran	6	44	60	83	85	87	123
Mennonite <sup>1</sup>	1	2	3	8	12	14	16
Methodist <sup>2</sup>	11	63	90				
Mormon	3	10	11	13	15	18	26
Pentecostal			1	4	8	10	15
Presbyterian <sup>2</sup>	12	67	122	72	69	55	55
Roman Catholic	16	63	98	131	152	186	299
Salvation Army		1	2	2	2	2	3
Ukranian Catholic <sup>3</sup>				38	39	38	35
United Church			1	177	194	277	419
Other	5	23	23	19	21	36	68

Table 11 (contd.)

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
<u>Saskatchewan</u>							
Adventist		1	3	3	4	3	3
Anglican	16	76	116	127	118	95	95
Baptist	2	19	24	23	19	16	16
Christian Science			1	1	1	1	1
Churches of Christ		1	1	2	2	1	2
Confucian/Bhuddist		1	1	2	2		
Congregationalist <sup>2</sup>		2	3				
Doukhobor	9	9	7	8	8	5	3
Greek Orthodox	3	25	47	31	38	35	32
Jehovah's Witnesses			1	3	2	5	8
Jewish		1	3	4	4	5	6
Lutheran	6	57	92	114	105	91	95
Mennonite <sup>1</sup>	4	15	21	31	33	26	28
Methodist <sup>2</sup>	12	79	101				
Mormon		1	1	2	1	1	2
Pentecostal			1	5	8	8	9
Presbyterian <sup>2</sup>	16	98	162	68	55	33	25
Roman Catholic	18	91	148	190	201	199	243
Salvation Army		1	2	2	2	2	2
Ukranian Catholic <sup>3</sup>				44	43	37	35
United Church			3	244	231	247	296
Other	4	16	18	18	20	22	28

Notes

1 Includes Hutterites.

2 These churches combined to form the United Church of Canada.

3 Until the 1931 census Greek Orthodox and Ukranian Catholic were combined under the Greek Church.

Source: D.B.S., Census of Canada, 1961, Bulletin 7.1-11, Table 1.

**Appendix B**

**Voting Statistics  
for  
Alberta and Saskatchewan,  
1917 - 1971**

The following tables contain a summary of the results of all provincial general elections held in Alberta and Saskatchewan between 1917, the election preceding the rise of the United Farmers of Alberta, and 1971.

Table 1. Legislative Seats and Percentage of the Popular Vote for Parties in Alberta Provincial General Elections, 1917-1971.<sup>1</sup>

	<u>Election</u>						
	1917	1921	1926	1930	1935	1940	1944
Total number of votes	151499	298087	175047	179364	328545	340368	295180
Total number of seats	58	59	60	63	63	57	57
<u>Parties</u>							
Conservative:							
% of total vote	30.0	12.0	23.0	14.0	7.0	-	-
Seats won	19	1	4	6	2	-	-
Liberal:							
% of total vote	36.0	34.0	26.0	25.0	23.0	1.0	-
Seats won	34	15	7	11	5	1	-
U.F.A.:							
% of total vote	-	29.0	41.0	39.0	11.0	-	-
Seats won	-	38	43	39	-	-	-
CCF:							
% of total vote	-	-	-	-	-	11.0	25.0
Seats won	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Social Credit:							
% of total vote	-	-	-	-	54.0	43.0	52.0
Seats won	-	-	-	-	56	36	51
Other <sup>2</sup> :							
% of total vote	34.0	26.0	10.0	23.0	5.0	45.0	23.0
Seats won	5	7	6	7	0	20	4

Table 1 (contd.)

	<u>Election</u>						
	1948	1952	1955	1959	1963	1967	1971
Total number of votes	312700	321195	417112	413515	403444	426622	639862
Total number of seats	57	61	61	65	63	65	75
<u>Parties</u>							
<u>Conservative:</u>							
% of total vote	-	4.0	9.0	24.0	13.0	26.0	46.0
Seats won	-	2	3	1	-	6	49
<u>Liberal:</u>							
% of total vote	18.0	22.0	31.0	14.0	20.0	11.0	1.0
Seats won	2	4	15	1	2	3	-
<u>U.F.A.:</u>							
% of total vote	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Seats won	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>CCF/NDP:</u>							
% of total vote	19.0	14.0	8.0	4.0	9.0	16.0	11.0
Seats won	2	2	2	-	-	-	1
<u>Social Credit:</u>							
% of total vote	56.0	56.0	46.0	56.0	55.0	45.0	41.0
Seats won	51	52	37	61	60	55	25
<u>Other:</u>							
% of total vote	7.0	4.0	5.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Seats won	2	1	4	2	1	1	-

Notes

- 1 Percentage may not sum to 100 due to rounding to nearest whole number.
- 2 Up to 1940 the "other" category included both independents and Labour party members. In 1940 and 1944 Liberals and Conservatives joined together as Independents to run against Social Credit.

Source: Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1917-1935; Howard A. Scarrow, "Canada Votes", New Orleans, 1962, for elections 1921-1955; David E. Smith, "A Comparison of Prairie Political Developments in Saskatchewan and Alberta", Journal of Canadian Studies, vol. 4, 1969, pp. 17-26, for 1917 and 1959-67; Alberta. "Returns: Provincial Election held on August 30, 1971", Edmonton, 1971.



Table 2. Legislative Seats and Percentage of the Popular Vote for Parties in Saskatchewan Provincial General Elections, 1917-1971.<sup>1</sup>

	1917	1921	1925	1929	1934	1938	1944
Total number of votes	187635	180955	247764	361268	429620	440273	397117
Total number of seats	59	63	63	63	55	52	52
<u>Parties</u>							
Conservative:							
% of total vote	36.0	3.0	18.0	36.0	27.0	12.0	11.0
Seats won	7	2	3	24	-	-	-
Liberal:							
% of total vote	57.0	52.0	51.0	46.0	48.0	45.0	35.0
Seats won	51	46	50	28	50	38	5
CCF:							
% of total vote	-	-	-	-	24.0	19.0	53.0
Seats won	-	-	-	-	5	10	47
Social Credit:							
% of total vote	-	-	-	-	-	16.0	-
Seats won	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Other <sup>2</sup> :							
% of total vote	7.0	45.0	30.0	18.0	1.0	8.0	1.0
Seats won	1	15	10	11	-	2	-

Table 2 (contd.)

	<u>Election</u>						
	1948	1952	1956	1960	1964	1967 <sup>3</sup>	1971
Total number of votes	492906	537692	551698	679243	666497	411109	444003
Total number of seats	52	53	53	55	59	59	60
<u>Parties</u>							
Conservative:							
% of total vote	8.0	2.0	2.0	14.0	19.0	9.0	2.0
Seats won	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Liberal:							
% of total vote	31.0	39.0	30.0	33.0	41.0	46.0	43.0
Seats won	19	11	14	17	33	36	15
CCF/NDP:							
% of total vote	48.0	54.0	45.0	41.0	40.0	45.0	55.0
Seats won	31	42	36	38	25	23	45
Social Credit:							
% of total vote	8.0	4.0	21.0	12.0	0.4	-	-
Seats won	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Other:							
% of total vote	5.0	1.0	1.0	0.4	-	-	-
Seats won	2	-	-	-	-	-	-

Notes

1. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding to nearest whole number.
2. The large percentage of votes in the "Other" category from 1921 to 1929 is composed of Independents and Progressives. The interpretation of these figures for 1921 is especially difficult because the election was called at short notice leaving little time for the opposition to organize. That year the Liberals took 16 of the 63 seats by acclamation.
3. From 1967 the multiple-member city constituencies were divided into single-member constituencies. This change accounts in part for the large decline in the total number of votes cast.

Source: David E. Smith, "A Comparison of Prairie Political Developments in Saskatchewan and Alberta", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 4, 1969, pp. 17-26; *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, 24-6-71 and 30-6-71; Saskatchewan Archives Board, "Elections 1905-53", Regina, 1954.

## Appendix C

### Bibliography

This bibliography includes all sources referred to in the text, but it leaves out much material which was consulted but not directly cited.

#### A. Primary Sources

The main primary source was the CCF papers in the Archives of Saskatchewan. The papers include minutes of meetings, pamphlets, constituency records, and personal papers of leaders such as George Williams, Tommy Douglas and Clarence Fines. Also of great value were the papers of the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section), as were transcripts of interviews with H.J. Benson, G. Hindley, S.N. Horner, and M. Feeley, all of whom were active in politics in the thirties.

#### B. Newspapers

The following dailies proved to be the most valuable sources of information:

Calgary Herald  
Edmonton Journal  
Moose Jaw Times-Herald  
Regina Leader-Post  
Regina Star  
Saskatoon Star-Phoenix

The following farming papers are particularly important:

The Western Producer  
Grain Growers' Guide  
The Country Guide  
The U.F.A.

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